

THE FIGURE OF ZAINICHI: KOREAN RESIDENT FICTION AND POST-IMPERIAL  
SUBJECTIVITY IN JAPAN

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# THE FIGURE OF ZAINICHI: KOREAN RESIDENT FICTION AND POST-IMPERIAL SUBJECTIVITY IN JAPAN

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This thesis examines the production and re-production of “*Zainichi*” – formerly colonized Korean subjects still residing in Japan after 1945 – as a rhetorical figure in postwar Japan. Beginning with an analysis of official state rhetoric, academic discourse, and literary criticism, I contend that this figure has assumed an important rhetorical function in the assertion of Japan’s post-coloniality and, consequently, of the nation’s success in distancing itself from its colonial past. As a touchstone of historical progress, I argue that the postwar figure of *Zainichi* exhibits a formal and functional continuity with the pre-war rhetorical figure of the colonized Korean, which played an important role in asserting Japan’s cultural exceptionalism as the sole “world culture” in Asia. Because of the important role the figure of *Zainichi* has played in the assertion of a Japanese national self-image, fiction written by “*Zainichi*” Koreans has often been read within a very particular reading practice, in which its relation to the canon of Japanese national literature and literary language has provided the principle lens of analysis. In being read as a borderline case – which is to say, as a cultural product *against which* the limits of the Japanese national subject might be measured – I argue that “*Zainichi* literature” has often been read as the product of a subjective experience assumed to lie beyond the limits of the Japanese national subject. This assumption has only been compounded by the hegemonic rise of ethno-national discourse in both Japan and Korea; the result of both postcolonial *ressentiment* and the ideological divisions of the Cold War. With ethno-nationalism so often construed as the only ethical response to the violence of the Pan-Asian project, “*Zainichi*” fiction has often been read

as a lamentable exile-fiction. As a result, any potential commentary regarding the inevitable breakdown of national and ethnic categories following the colonial project has been effectively muted. I then provide readings of texts by three *Zainichi* Korean authors – Ri Kaisei, Yi Yang-ji, and Yang Sok-il – whose fiction attends to the postwar as an historically unprecedented landscape, rather than as the reconstitution of an assumed pre-colonial *status quo*.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Prior to entering the doctoral program in the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell University, Andrew Harding was a visiting MEXT (Japanese Department of State for Education, Culture, Sport, and Technology) scholar at Ristumeikan University in Japan. He received both an MA in Comparative Literature and a BA in Japanese Studies from SOAS, London University.

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## Introduction

On December 4<sup>th</sup> 2009, a small group of between ten and fifteen men took it upon themselves to erect a barricade in front of a Korean elementary school in central Kyoto. Representing three right-wing citizens interest groups – the *Zainichi tokken wo yurusanai shimin no kai* (“Association of citizens opposed to special treatment for Zainichi [Koreans]”), the *Shuken kaifuku wo mezasu kai* (“Association for the recuperation of sovereignty”), and the somewhat less prosaically named *Chiimu Kansai* (“Team Kansai”) – the men had gathered to protest what they claimed was the illegal “occupation” (*senyō*) of a public playpark by the school. As journalists Yasuda Kōichi and Nakamura Iisōn later explained in their respective coverage of the incident, the protestors were technically correct in their accusations: The school had neither applied for nor received formal permission from the city to use the park for school purposes. Despite the lack of a formal agreement however, both the city and local residents had allowed this arrangement to continue, chiefly due to the acknowledged impossibility of building a school field within the cramped school grounds. Indeed, this arrangement had been in effect since 1960, the year in which the school had been moved to the neighborhood, and the joint use of the park between school and local residents had continued peacefully. In February 2009 however, the size of the park was drastically reduced due to the extension of the neighboring Hanshin Expressway and tensions began to mount over who had privilege of access to the park.

The situation came to a head in the summer and autumn of that year when a resident who was relatively new to the area contacted the Association of citizens opposed to special treatment for Zainichi (hereafter referred to by its Japanese abbreviation, *Zaitokukai*) to assist the neighborhood in protesting the occupation of the park. As the chair of the Kyoto Bar Association, Murai Toyoaki, stated however, the violence of the protest which ensued



“exceed[ed] the parameters of legitimate criticism and falls into the category of committing and inciting national and ethnic discrimination (*kokuseki ya minzoku ni yoru sabetsu no jochō/sendō*)”<sup>1</sup>. For despite the relatively minor civic tiff that had precipitated the protest, the rhetoric used by the protestors was virulently anti-Korean and brimming with nationalist chauvinism. Having blockaded the school entrance with the school’s own soccer goals, protestors are reported to have used a megaphone to unleash a barrage of exclusionary, racist sentiment at the 170 children trapped inside the school. According to legal transcripts presented to the Kyoto Regional Court after the incident was taken to trial, these phrases included, “[Korean] schools are training grounds for North Korean spies!” and “this school is under the auspices of the same Korean organization that kidnapped Japanese citizens! It’s not a school at all!”. One protestor even claimed that “while the men were away at war you took this land and raped and brutalized our women!”.<sup>2</sup> For these men, it appears, what was at stake in their protest was not the fair and egalitarian use of a public park in Kyoto, but rather the broader historical and political trends that they felt it spoke to. In the words of Sakurai Makoto, chairman and founder of the *Zaitokukai*, “[we] opposed the illegal occupation of [the park]. . . to stop, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations, the apartheid-like actions of Zainichi Koreans toward indigenous (*genjūmin*) Japanese”.<sup>3</sup>

I open with this anecdote because despite its limited scale it succinctly captures the extent to which the presence of Koreans in Japan continues to be overlaid with multiple layers of historical and political signification and, subsequently, that the social visibility of Koreans in

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<sup>1</sup> Kyoto Bar Association press release, “*Chōsen gakkō ni taisuru yagarase ni kansuru kaichō seimei*”, January 19<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in articles (wa)1257 and (wa)1641 in the transcript of the trial proceedings that took place at Kyoto Regional Court, published April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Yasuda, Koichi, *Netto to aikoku – zaitokukaki no ‘yami’ wo oikakete*, Tokyo, Kodansha, 2012.

Japan themselves continues to be possible only via the mediation of these accrued layers of history. To the men who barricaded the school, the physical presence of Korean children was immaterial compared to the idea of a more general Korean presence across the nation as a whole. Moreover, their rhetoric makes it clear that they assume this Korean presence to be temporally flat, such that the Japan-born and Japanese-speaking students learning Korean language and history at an elementary school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are one in the same as the Koreans who they alleged to have “raped our women” and “[taken] this land” while Japanese men were away fighting during the Second World War. One in the same as the Koreans who kidnapped Japanese citizens under the orders of Kim Jong Il during the 1990s. And, tellingly, it is the same temporally flat analysis that allows for Sakurai’s historically phantasmagoric claim that the same people who were once encouraged, coerced, and in many cases forced to eke out a precarious existence on the fringes of the Japanese labor market are the very same people responsible for “apartheid-like actions toward indigenous Japanese”.

It is obvious that contorted analyses such as these are only possible in the absence of historical enquiry, and one purpose of this thesis is to determine how this lacuna came to be and to identify its contours and principle features. Why is it that over a century after the annexation of the Korean peninsula by the Japanese empire, and after seventy-five years of existing in the same national milieu, *zainichi* Koreans are still considered by many to represent the limit of the Japanese subject? Why is it that, rather than urging a reassessment of how the Japanese subject might be defined after empire, the continued presence of *zainichi* Koreans has, on the whole, prompted the kind of hysterical anxiety over national agency that we see above. Why is it, for example, that the above protest garnered the interest not only of an anti-Korean organization such as *Zaitokukai*, but also of a group concerned with the “recuperation of sovereignty”? Why is

it the presence of Koreans in Japan, more than that of non-Asian residents and so-called ‘domestic minorities’ such as Ainu and Okinawana, which is considered to be such an existential threat to the integrity of the Japanese nation?

Of course, it would be misleading to suggest that the extreme views of a handful of men are representative of the nation at large. It is also true, however, that no ideology is born from a vacuum, and that to dismiss extremist rhetoric as an aberration of discourse is, arguably, to dismiss an opportunity to reflect critically on what kind of affective ideations are permitted within current conversations regarding national belonging. More to the point, however, while those who are sufficiently confident and/or naïve to attach their name to these opinions are in the minority, anti-Korean sentiment has become an increasingly popular register for chauvinistic nationalism in Japan, particularly over the last twenty years. *Zaitokukai* chairman, Sakurai Makoto’s *Daikenkan jidai* (“The Great Era of Korean Hating”) was briefly a bestseller following its release in 2014, and the sentiment evoked on its dust jacket - “finally, the time has come in which we can all say, ‘I hate Koreans!’” - precipitated an entire industry for anti-Korean books and manga. As with Yamano Sharin’s 2005 manga, *Kenkanryu* (roughly, “I hate the Korean Wave”), Sakurai’s book and its variants are obsessively preoccupied with what their authors see as an obsessive and cynical weaponization of historical victimhood by Koreans. What these (universally male) authors all seem to agree on is that the Korean demand for Japanese penitence will never be sated, and that this in turn is nurturing a “self-defeatist” (*jigyakuteki*) Japanese national character. Unable to draw any sociologically and historically qualitative distinctions between the lived experiences and ideological convictions of North Koreans, South Koreans, and the multiple Korean diasporic populations that exist across the world, the conservative rationale in Japan insists on its construal of the ethnic “geo-body” as the limits of the natural political

community. I borrow this term “geo-body” from Thongchai Winichakul who, via an analysis of the legal and epistemic emergence of cartographic bordering in Siam during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, uses it to refer to the global homogenization of the discretely contained nation-state that occurred as a result of the universal reach of colonial projects. At a rudimentary level, anti-Korean sentiment in Japan appears to stem from the conviction that the readily visible cartographic limits of Japan correspond to an equally “visible” limit in terms of language, culture and history. The residency of peoples from another recognizable geo-body – Korea – is thus construed as an affront to the subjective cogency, or *sovereignty*, of the Japanese geo-body.

Indeed, this preoccupation with the coherency of the national subject is far from limited to the hysteria of the disaffected far-right. Beyond the cartographic plane, the absolute distinction between the geopolitical units “Japan” and “Korea” is something that has also been rigorously protected and policed by Japanese immigration policies. Census data, for example, is very transparent when it comes to defining what constitutes “Zainichi”; it only counts Korean nationals (either Republic of Korea passport holders or aliens registered as “*Chōsen*” (朝鮮/조선) as Korean. What it does not attempt to either qualify or quantify is the number of Japanese passport holders who identify themselves as ethnic Korean. In other words, the Japanese state is currently unable to recognize ethnic heritage unless it also corresponds with a territorially contiguous citizenship. Thus when a Korean national adopts Japanese nationality, either through marriage or naturalization, they are no longer legally or socially visible as Korean. Through a magical process of bureaucratic transubstantiation, they *become* Japanese. Consequently, the reality that Japanese census figures paint with regards to the number of people with Korean heritage living in Japan is misleading. When the Republic of Korea conducted a census of the global population of Koreans in 2015 (which, to be sure, was not without its own

motivated reasoning), the number of individuals in Japan who claimed South Korean heritage was over double the number of South Korean residents recorded in the Japanese census<sup>4</sup>.

What these examples at least anecdotally suggest is that despite the absolute certainty with which conservative groups draw a line distinguishing the Japanese and Korean geo-bodies, the natural order of contained national subjectivity that they claim to protect and serve struggles to hold water when confronted with the grand mess of inter-subjective reality. While this is true for any political project that attempts to mark clear distinctions between what is and is not an extension of the nation, the absence of any stand-out phenotypical distinctions between Japanese and Koreans often makes attempts to do so all the more hysterical. Indeed, as we will see, a common theme in auto-biographical works by *zainichi* authors is the intense anxiety that comes with the politics of passing: Am I duplicitous for hiding my Korean heritage? What will happen when I am found out? Am I traitor to my family if I hide my Korean heritage in public? For these authors at least, navigating the politics of passing is no less fraught in Japan simply because of phenotypical similarities. It does, however, mean that the rhetorical and literary representation of Koreans is all the more important in establishing an otherwise chimerical line of absolute difference with the Japanese geo-body.

### ***Zainichi* as a rhetorical figure**

Like other peoples who continue to be labelled somehow less Japanese despite being born and raised within the geopolitical borders that currently designate Japan, *zainichi* Koreans –

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<sup>4</sup> The exact figure is quoted at 856,000. “*Chaewoe tongpo hyonhwang*” (Status of Koreans Overseas), [http://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx\\_cd=1682](http://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1682) (Online. Accessed on 9/20/2016)

construed as a singular demographic entity - have often been apprehended as a liminal subject which serves to delineate the limits of “Japan” as a subjectivity that corresponds to the territorially defined state. To this extent, due care needs to be taken when discussing *zainichi* Koreans not to conflate the *figure of Zainichi*, which performs a primarily socio-rhetorical function, with the individuals that fall under its sign. This distinction draws on what Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, referred to as the “double consciousness” of Black people in the United States. In negotiating a sense of self, he argues, Black individuals must first pass through the lens of the white ideation of Blackness. In Du Bois’ own words, such double consciousness results in a sense of self in which, “one ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body”. What was, and indeed still is, so ground-breaking in Du Bois’ psycho-social analysis of Black subjectivity in the U.S. is not only that he recognizes the color line as a Gramscian “war of positions”, in which one assertion of Blackness is rooted in a social relation of domination and extraction, and the other in nothing more nor less than the fullness and universality of the human condition, but that, as a sort of residual conclusion, he frames “whiteness” by contrast to be a consciousness which is uniquely *lacking* in this double consciousness. This is a subtle but critical intervention, for as we shall see in my discussion of the debates over “third world literature” and “national allegories”, there has been a tendency even among postcolonial scholars acting in good faith, to assume that the “double-consciousness” Du Bois speaks of is an epistemological modality common only to the victims of colonial oppression and of the racist logic which was its product and handmaiden. As Western European societies identified more and more confidently as a global modernizing force, the dialogical relation to the world which is essential for any notion of self or identity to emerge, came to be increasingly understood as an oppositional relation to the *pre-modern, pre-*

industrial past, rather than any existing social or cultural interlocuter. The result, as Edward Said asserted momentarily in *Orientalism*, was that the Other to Western Modernity came to be construed as a metaphor, as a living touchstone, of all that the Europe (and later “the West”) purported to have conquered in themselves. Ultimately, postcolonial interventions beginning with Du Bois and Said recognized that the racial other, in contrast to which Europe and “Whiteness” would come to define itself, was a fiction in the guise of non-European man – a *figure* – which corresponded to little more than a pornographic image of everything that had to be abjected from Modern-Man for his claim to global modernity to be cogent.

While the Japanese state’s self-assertion as a modernizing force was somewhat distinct from the European process – as I argue in chapter one, in addition to the recognition of other Asian peoples as figures of pre-modernity, much rhetoric in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries evinces a pre-occupation with Japan’s own civilizational belatedness in contrast to the figure of Europe – the rhetorical figure that emerges under the proper noun of *Korean*, and later *Zainichi*, functioned principally as a metaphor of the pre-modern provincialism which was being exorcised from the Japanese self-image. I thus reiterate that this thesis makes no attempt to define or delineate *zainichi* Korean subjectivity or identity. Nor, however, does it privilege any other definition of “*Zainichi*” as exhaustive, even if such a definition is made by those who identify as *zainichi* themselves. Rather, my analysis focuses on the *figure of Zainichi*, and the particular contours it has accrued over time as a historically defined and historically defining idea. Following Du Bois, I recognize that while these ideations of Korean-ness and Zainichi-ness have very little to do with the lived experiences of those who fall under their sign, they nevertheless determine the epistemological landscape that must be reckoned with.

To this extent, I demonstrate that those who identify or who are identified as *Zainichi* have often been the victims of a totalizing, prescriptive discourse on identity propagated by fellow Koreans, as much as of a racist, exclusionary discourse in Japan. After all, unlike the Ainu, Okinawans, and Burakumin, all of whom are generally considered to be internal minorities in Japan (which has its own attendant issues), *zainichi* Koreans are also claimed as biopolitical property by two other extant nation-states; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter referred to simply as the DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (the ROK). For this reason, the claims on "Zainichi" made by the DPRK and the ROK are as important to the constitution of their respective national identities as the rejection of an ethnically ambiguous figure is to the continued cogency of a Japanese national identity. What makes discussions regarding Koreans in Japan substantially different from those pertaining to so-called domestic minorities, therefore, is that it has tended to occupy the register of foreign relations. Indeed, the prevalence of this perspective has become more, not less entrenched over time as the geo-political relationship between the Japanese state and the Korean peninsula has transitioned from being one of metropole and colony to two agents competing in the marketplace of global capital. As I argue below, this steady transition toward market relations, defined largely by U.S. rather than Asian political-economic interests, has nurtured a vision of an international order which has made it increasingly difficult to acknowledge the history of colonialism as, for better or worse, one of entanglement. In the absence of a discourse that recognizes colonialism as a history of the present, it becomes difficult to comprehend the presence of Koreans in Japan as anything other than an anachronistic hangover. As Nayoung Aimee Kwon has remarked, while "the imperial encounter as a discomfiting scene of desire (coexisting, yet with repulsions) has become



familiar from other globally translated and documented colonial contexts. . . such confluences of cultures between Korea and Japan. . . have long been evaded in both postcolonial nations”.<sup>5</sup>

What Kwon also recognizes in her analysis of this disavowal of postcolonial entanglement is the important role played by literature as a site at which the tensions of this disavowal have played out. Similarly to Kwon, Christina Yi’s recent book, *Colonizing Language*, also turns to the production and exchange of cultural productions between Korea and Japan during the interwar period in order to better understand how economies of colonial desire were integral to both the production and reception of “Korean” literature and film within the Japanese cultural hegemony of empire. Following these scholars, I too am interested in how practices of consumption (i.e. modes of reading, in the case of literature) are informed by notions of cultural value and authorial subjectivity. What has been the socio-political role of “Korean literature”, and later “Zainichi Literature” for a Japanese readership? How does this differ from the role of literary texts produced by Japanese authors that are not preceded by an othering, or a preemptive sub-categorization out of the national canon? How has this extra-textual mediation encouraged radically different reading practices, and differing assumptions regarding the relationship between author & reader? And in what ways have assumptions regarding a community of readers and writers, or the absence thereof, informed related assumptions regarding the limits of political community?

Whereas Kwon and Yi’s studies focus on cultural production within the colonial period, this thesis looks to literature produced by Koreans in Japan in the postcolonial context. Specifically, it addresses texts by three *zainichi* Korean authors - Ri Kaisei, Yi Yang Ji, and

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<sup>5</sup> Kwon, Nayoung Aimee, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan*, Durham NC, Duke University Press, 2015. pp. 3, 4)

Yang Sok Il – who were collectively active between the late 1960s and the turn of the millennium, and whose subject matter is firmly rooted in the question of post-coloniality. In addition to acknowledging the legacy of imperial entanglement, therefore, this study also acknowledges the necessity of accounting for the role of ideological and epistemological shifts since the collapse of empire, and the ways in which these changes have mediated the memory of the colonial period. As we will see, while there is certainly an etymological relation between the role of the Korean in the colonial imagination and the role of *Zainichi* in the postcolonial context in terms of their passive affirmation of national subjectivity, the collapse of the moral argument for multiethnic cosmopolitanism which followed the collapse of the Pan-Asian project has had serious ramifications for the possibility of even imagining a cosmopolitan nation-state. As John Lie succinctly puts it, a hyphenated identity such as we see in many other postcolonial societies (Asian-American, Anglo-Indian, Maghrebi-French) remains an “ontological impossibility” in Japan and Korea. As with Korean literature during the colonial period, the dissemination and reception of *Zainichi* literature since the 1960s has been similarly mediated by undercurrents of desire for self-recognition, for the identification of the other, and by a sort of jouissance in the production of borders that define both. But whereas the reality of empire allowed for at least the nominal possibility of a philosophy of the human which might transcend ethnic parochialism, the clear moral failure of Pan-Asianism resulted in an absolute assertion of *ethnos* (J: *Minzoku*, K; *Minjok*) as the natural political community which removed the very possibility of approaching the question of ethnic difference as a domestic political issue. In other words, once the project of decolonization had become synonymous with the assertion of ethnic sovereignty in both Japan and Korea, it became incredibly difficult to articulate ethnic ambiguity as anything other than the *absence* of sovereignty.

This thesis proposes a different perspective, one that eschews the privileging of ethnic-national identity as a natural one and approaches the figure of *Zainichi* not as a historical aberration left over from a failed imperial project and alienated from its rightful ethnic home, but as an inevitable and irresolvable consequence of a history which, for better or worse, has forever foreclosed the possibility of returning to a world of discreet ethnic subjectivities (which is to assume that such an order existed in the first place). What is so telling about the jingoism of the Kyoto protestors is that for all their obsession with the exculpation of national shame regarding empire, their misrecognition of the historical problem of *Zainichi* stems from a complete disavowal of empire as a social reality. As I will elaborate however, the popular conviction that Korean and Japanese ethnicity is immutable and thus constitutive of two discrete spheres of experience is, despite being an epistemological hangover of empire, the very formulation that permits the continued disavowal of colonial heritage in Japan. Conversely, to accept the figure of “*Zainichi*” as an irreparable consequence of empire would be to accept the history that produced it as one that is still with us, and which continues to constitute us as historical subjects. To this extent, it would also acknowledge that, far from being the preternatural form of subjectivity, it is monolithic identities rooted in the assumed parity between ethnicity and land which are the historical aberration, requiring the abjection of figures of ethnic indeterminacy in order to be normalized. For this reason, to insist on the ethnic indeterminacy of *Zainichi* as an irreparable consequence of empire is not to force those individuals under its sign to submit to an imperial rationale but to acknowledge that ethnic-nationalism(s) in the DPRK, the ROK, and in Japan, despite their definition in opposition to one another, are in fact products of and participate in one and the same discourse. From an individual perspective, the choice to “return” to a Korean identity or to assimilate as a Japanese subject may be determined by myriad concerns, both

practical and ideological in nature, but in effect they are both forms of submission to a single, shared rhetoric which attempts to erase, or at least reverse, the historical moment which birthed them.

## Chapter outlines

In order to understand the socio-political functions of the figure of *Zainichi* in the postwar era it is first necessary to trace the formation of its predecessor, the figure of the Korean, during the colonial period. This is what I set out to do in the following chapter, which I have split into three sections; the first and second conduct genealogical excavations of the pre-1945 figure of the Korean and the postwar figure of *Zainichi* respectively. It should be noted, however, that while these analyses are presented chronologically, rhetorical invocations of the figure of *Zainichi* since 1945 do not seem to understand *Zainichi* as a figure which bears a chronologically posterior relation to colonial subjectivity. This is to say that, rather than being understood as a properly post-colonial condition, *Zainichi* (which literally translates to “being in Japan”) tends to be evoked as figure which remains anachronistically trapped within the condition of coloniality. Of course, most scholars of post-coloniality would argue, quite rightly, that the “post” of post-coloniality does not imply to the absolute pastness of coloniality as a social, political, and economic reality, but rather as a *fait accompli*, an inheritance, which continues to determine social relations at all levels. One of the principle functions of the figure of *Zainichi* within postwar Japan and Korea, however, has been as a touchstone of historical atrophy that, by contrast, evinces an eschatology of “overcoming” on the part of the historical subjects of Japan and Korea. In other words, *Zainichi* has tended to be construed as figure which is either lamentably or suspiciously attached to the historical conditions of coloniality, and thus its erasure

(either by being “returned” to the fold of its native place or by being transfigured, via the naturalization process, into a de-Koreanized Japanese citizen) serves as the horizon of national claims to post-coloniality in Japan. To the extent that the figure of the colonized Korean served to evince Japanese claims to modernity (and thus its “overcoming” of pre-modernity) during empire, the figure of *Zainichi* has in fact served a similar role in evincing claims to post-coloniality (and of having “overcome” empire) since 1945. Indeed, as the political landscape in post-1945 Japan became more reactionary in keeping with the anti-Communist U.S. line, and many of the imperial ideologues from the pre-defeat regime found themselves politically reinstated, the apparent residual coloniality of *Zainichi* became all the more important in proving that Japan and its people, by contrast, had made a clean break from the imperial past. So quickly and so confidently were such assertions made, that as early as 1956 a government white paper on the state of the Japanese economy asserted that the “postwar period is now over” (“*mohaya sengo dewanai*”). Such a claim makes it abundantly clear, as did the large-scale repatriation drive that would follow over the next half-decade or so, that the question of what should be done about the well-being of Japan’s ethnically Korean subjects was simply not considered a problem of *Japanese* post-coloniality.

In analyzing the emergent figures of the colonized Korean and of *Zainichi* chronologically, therefore, I am actually trying to assert that there is a continuity in their rhetorical function, but that this function has been to disavow this very continuity, or at the very least to contain the possibility of continuity to the “minority” subjectivity of *Zainichi*. The third and final section of the first chaptr considers how the sub-categorization of “*Zainichi* Literature” as a minority canon has reinforced the idea that *Zainichi* constitutes a historical unit that contends with a fundamentally different set of political and historical questions than that of

Japan. Moreover, I argue that by categorizing a genre of literature in terms of the ethnicity of its authors, “Zainichi literature” implicitly encourages a reading practice which is more anthropological than literary in approach. To this extent, *Zainichi* Literature must contend with the same horizons of expectation that are presumed of Black Literature, Jewish literature or, where it persists, “Women’s Literature”. After discussing the political-libidinal impulses that inform this kind of sub-categorization, as well as its epistemological and philosophical consequences, I conclude with some thoughts on how texts by *zainichi* authors might be rescued from this anthropological gaze and afforded a reading practice that could account for artistic commentary, by which I mean a commentary that encompasses a properly philosophical engagement with universal concepts and not just ethnically or nationally parochial concerns. How, I ask, might a better understanding of *Zainichi* as a rhetorical figure, as something which conjures a historical reality that so often diverges from and exceeds the lived experiences of individuals living under its sign, allow us to acknowledge those moments of non-identity between author and subject matter in *zainichi* fiction? In short, how might we read *Zainichi* literature as, well, literature?

By acknowledging that this highly charged figure of “Zainichi” does not necessarily always coincide with each individual who occupies it - that the relationship between the figure and the person is, as with any social identity, always split – we render “Zainichi Literature” legible as a *response* to this figure. This is not to say that all writers who are Zainichi approach their fiction as a means to critique ethnic-nationalism. Indeed, as we will see, there have been a number of writers and commentators for whom ethnic difference (from Japan) has remained the cornerstone of their claim to agency. In chapters two, three, and four however, I provide readings of texts by three writers who are all deeply invested in an examination of the *zainichi* condition

as a properly post-colonial positionality, rather than as an ethno-national claim. In chapter two, I examine two short stories written by Ri Kaisei (Yi Hoesŏng), *Warera no seishun no tojō ni te* (“In the Midst of our Youth”) and *Shōnin no inai kōkei* (“Scene Without a Witness”) published early in his career in 1969 and 1970 respectively. Like much of Ri’s work, both texts are heavily autobiographical and portray the author’s coming-of-age as a young Korean man in the ashes of the Japanese empire. As per a convention of the “I-novel”, which Ri’s texts have often been typified as (cf. Takeda Seiji 1983), *Warera no seishun no tojō ni te* portrays a young man’s transition between the native place of his family home and the public arena of society. However, whereas the distinction between home and society in classic Bildungsroman narratives often serves as a metaphor for a host of other analogous binaries such as self and other, private and public, and perhaps even pre-political and political, the added valence of nationality over these pairings problematizes the putative coherency of the subject they serve to triangulate. With “home” in Ri’s text being synonymous with Korea and “society” with Japan, the novella subverts the usual assumptions regarding the division of the private and the political and prompts a consideration of how “public” the public square can really be within the limits of the nation form. From this perspective, Ri begins to approach an awareness of what I call the *grammar of nationalism*; a recognition that the rhetorical and affective scaffolding of claims to national exceptionalism are common to all such claims. Recognizing the grammar of nationalism allows Ri to break free of the zero-sum game of Japanese versus Korean identity, and to subsequently probe a conceptualization of political community which might account for, rather than abnegate, the border-blurring consequences of Japan’s wartime imperialization policies (*kōminka seisaku*). In my analysis of *Shōnin no inai kōkei*, I then demonstrate how Ri’s transnational purview leads him to examine the politics of colonial memory. As justification for the postwar order of ethnic

sovereignty in East Asia, the horror of empire has been an important object-to-be-abjected. But for those living under the sign of *Zainichi*, their very interpellation as social beings cannot be made sense of without tracing lines of continuity between the colonial and post-colonial periods. Told from the perspective of two estranged friends, one Korean and one Japanese, who were classmates in colonial Karafuto (Sakhalin), Ri's novella attempts to tackle the tricky question of how empire might be remembered, yet not mourned, as the history of a present that we are yet to come to terms with.

Continuing with the problem of how to reckon with abject histories, in chapter three I move to an analysis of Yi Yang Ji and her experimentation with narration from what I have called the *abject position* (in contrast to the normative subject position). Drawing on the lessons learned by the Black radical feminists of the Combahee River Collective as they found themselves coming in to conflict with both whitewashing by second-wave feminism and the latent misogyny within the Black Panther leadership, I demonstrate how Yi's fiction demonstrates a similar sensitivity to the unique status of the "ethnic-woman" as a figure whose abjection is necessitated by both Japanese and (*Zainichi*) Korean men in their attempts to establish a homosocial order that transcends the parochial limits of ethnicity. Occupying an othered body that has the potential to produce yet more othered bodies, I second Christina Yi's recent assertion that the conflation of ethnic parochialism with the mother in mid-century discourse meant that Korean women were rhetorically forbidden from the symbolic transcendence that imperial institutions offered Korean men. I argue that this mode of interpellation is just one of the ways in which the rhetorical and affective investment in the structure of empire has carried over into the postcolonial era. In her attempts to capture this experience of remaining trapped within this socially and historically interpellated figure, I argue



that Yi Yang-Ji abandons the trap of the subject position (which will be discerned as the ethnic-woman in any case), and instead presents tentatively “Korean” women who struggle to be present to themselves, beyond the noise of persistent geopolitical rhetoric, let alone to the reader. To use the parlance of our time, Yi ultimately “trolls” the readers attempts to locate the Korean woman at the center of her texts, instead taking us down circuitous and solipsistic paths of subject-formation that ultimately reveal more about the limits of the reader’s own identitarian boundaries than of her own.

Finally, in chapter four I turn my attention to a comparison of two texts; Kaiko Takeshi’s *Nihon sanmon opera* (1959) and Yang Sok Il’s *Yoru wo kakete* (1994). Despite being written thirty-five years apart, both texts portray the so-called “Apache tribe” of postwar Osaka; a moniker coined by the press in reference to a group of predominantly Korean black marketeers who briefly made a living by stealing scrap metal from the ruins of the former Osaka arsenal (in what is now the environs of Osaka Castle Park and Osaka Business Park) under cover of night. Pak Yuha has argued that the portrayal of Koreans in Kaiko’s novel is steeped in imperialist affect, framing the presence of Koreans in postwar Osaka as a “sickness” which continues to infect Japan with the savagery of premodernity beyond the collapse of the material structures of Japanese empire. This framing, however, posits Kaiko as an imperialist ideologue; an accusation which not only stands at odds with his later role as a prominent voice in the Beiheiren movement protesting the U.S.’s (and by association Japan’s) imperialist ventures in Vietnam, but also fails to account for the sympathetic tone that Kaiko affords the “Apache tribe” throughout his novel. While Pak is not entirely wrong to suggest that there is something problematic about Kaiko’s representation of Korean’s in his text, in failing to identify his peculiarly *sympathetic* mode of othering Koreans, Pak stops short of a more nuanced critique that might recognize the cooptation

of imperialist affect by a discourse that, in the postwar era, hastened to equate liberal democracy with ethnic sovereignty. By focusing on Kaiko's choice to double-down on the use of the "Apache" simile, I argue that the representation of the Korean ethnic other in *Nihon sanmon opera* was deeply influenced by a new genre of whitewashed colonial narratives coming out of the U.S. (settler) movie industry. Drawing on work by scholars of indigenous representation in North America, who argue that the immediate postwar years saw a tendency among film producers to repurpose narratives of indigenous struggle in such a way that they became incorporated into a national teleology of a struggle against tyranny, broadly defined, I argue that Kaiko similarly draws on a rather shallow interpretation of Korean ethnicity as a shorthand for social liminality. As per the criticism levelled at North American film makers, however, in doing so Kaiko creates a palimpsest which not only disavows the ongoing parsing and exclusion of Koreans from the Japanese political community, but indeed actively contributes to the achievement of that extroversion. Reading Yang's later novel as response to precisely this rhetorical sleight of hand, I demonstrate how Yang seizes on scrap-metal collecting as a metaphor for an emerging history of the present; one which is, in this case, quite literally unearthed as a result of activity, rather than given as a completed (~~hi~~)story in the pre-packaged, immutable form of ethnic subjectivity. In doing so, I argue, Yang provides us with nothing short of a historiographical exit route from the zero-sum game of (post)colonial *ressentiment*.

## Chapter One

### The Figure of “Zainichi”

#### **A pre-history of *Zainichi*: Colonial difference and class anxiety**

Japan is certainly not alone in having what effectively amounts to a hierarchy of national membership, and as with other nations, the way in which subject positions are produced on the spectrum between the perfect national archetype and those with little more than legal permission to remain can be read forensically. In Japan, the institutional infrastructure that continues to allow a “myth of ethnic homogeneity”<sup>6</sup> to exist alongside an ethnically diverse population is largely founded on two separate yet interlocking systems of legal registration; the “nationality laws” (*kokuseki hō*) and the “family registration system” (*koseki seido*). Inspired by the French Napoleonic Code, the nationality laws were introduced as a series of government edicts issued between the Meiji restoration (1867) and the formalization of Japan’s socio-political order in the form of the Civil Code (1898). It sought to bring a modern Japanese nation in line with international standards on citizenship.<sup>7</sup> The *koseki* system on the other hand found its precedent in the tradition of local family registration (usually conducted by temples), but was given a complete overhaul in 1871 with the introduction of Edict 170, otherwise known as the family registration law.<sup>8</sup> Under its new guise, what was previously intended to record local feudal affiliations was now centralized under a new national department and used to define Japanese

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<sup>6</sup> As coined by Ogura Eiji in his analysis of the phenomenon, *Tan’itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: “Nihonjin” no jigazō no keifu*, Tokyo, Shinyosha, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Kamoto, Itsuko “Creating spatial hierarchies: The *koseki*, early international marriage and intermarriage” in Chapman & Krogness (2014), p.80.

<sup>8</sup> Chapman, David. “Managing ‘strangers’ and ‘undecidables’: Population registration in Meiji Japan” in Chapman & Krogness (2014), p.94.

national subjects.<sup>9</sup> Kamoto Itsuko argues that, in practice, the implementation of the nationality law was primarily for the benefit of satisfying the international community – clear borders are essential for relations between nations after all – but that within Japan itself it was the *koseki* which served as the principle means by which to distinguish between Japanese and non-Japanese. Kamoto refers to these two systems of citizenship metaphorically as “*ie no hako*”, or “household container”, by which citizenship was determined domestically by household, and “*fune no hako*”, or “ship container” which refers to the international system of mutual national recognition, symbolized here by the merchant ships that flew the *Hi no maru* flag of the modern Japanese nation-state.<sup>10</sup> The result of this dual system was a distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* Japanese citizenship, with the distinction between the two remaining largely invisible outside Japan.<sup>11</sup> According to David Chapman, in the Diet proceedings prior to the implementation of the new nationality laws, Japanese statesmen Hozomi Nobushige stated that “despite the imminent introduction of modern legal codes such as the *kosekihō*, the local family-based system would be retained as the primary determiner of status as ‘Japanese’”.<sup>12</sup> The discrepancy between *de jure* and *de facto* nationality status gave the Japanese government a large degree of maneuverability when it came to deciding the extent to which foreign nationals were to be included in the Japanese national community.

Just how these two systems functioned together as a subject producing mechanism becomes particularly clear in the case of international marriages and the national status of any children they produced. Throughout the Tokugawa period (1603–1867) the *koseki* system, as

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.96.

<sup>10</sup> Kamoto. p.80.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.79

<sup>12</sup> Chapman (2014), p.99

mentioned above, was a means by which social membership (to a caste, to a *kuni* (pre-national fiefdom) and to a household) was recorded. As it was almost always a man who was the head of a household, upon marriage women would (and indeed still are) transferred from their father's to their husband's *koseki*. After the proclamation of Edict 170 in 1871, this move also entailed taking her husband's surname, as would any children they produced. This was also the case with non-Japanese wives and their children, meaning that children with a Japanese father were considered Japanese both domestically (through their *koseki*) and internationally (by their passport). But in the case of marriages involving a non-Japanese man and a Japanese woman, any children of that union would enter their mother's *koseki*, while their father was granted nominal citizenship through the new nationality laws but kept out of his wife's *koseki*.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, the only other time in which children entered their mother's *koseki* was in the case of illegitimacy, meaning that children with non-Japanese fathers were, by legal convention, considered illegitimate. Consequently, while foreign men and women could become *de jure* Japanese from the perspective of international law, *de facto* Japanese status, particularly when it came to their offspring, was carefully guarded by the patriarchal structure of the *koseki* system.<sup>14</sup>

Following the annexation of Korea in 1910, the question of who should and who shouldn't be admitted to the national community of Japan was complicated by the need to address colonial subjects. As David Chapman has identified, unlike the case of Taiwan where the distinction between Japanese and non-Japanese was still determined by one's *koseki* (i.e. through patrilineal descent), the fact that Korea was to be fully annexed by Japan meant that its inhabitants were to be fully incorporated as Japanese (imperial) citizens (J: *teikokushinmin*).

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<sup>13</sup> Kamoto (2014). pp.84, 85.

With no means of distinguishing “mainland” (*naichi*) Japanese from peripheral (*gaichi*) colonial subjects, not a few statesmen in Japan were perturbed by the prospect that Koreans could become fully enfranchised members of the national community simply by moving to the “mainland”.

One such individual was Yamada Saburō (1869-1965), principal of Keijo (Seoul) University and a legal advisor to the imperial household during the Taisho era, who was concerned that,

Recently, problems have arisen as to whether *Chōsenjin* (Koreans) living on the Japanese home islands (*naichi*) should be afforded the same status as mainland Japanese (*naichijin*). Koreans are not foreigners (*gaikokujin*), but subjects of the empire (*teikoku kokumin*) and without special regulation or debate those living on the mainland will be able to register families in local town centers, gain the right to vote and be eligible for military service... If we are to completely separate Koreans from mainland Japanese, prevent them from residing on the mainland, prevent those living on the mainland from becoming Japanese and make it necessary for them to naturalize like foreigners, then it is vital to promptly establish the requirements and regulations for Koreans to become mainland Japanese. If we do not, then Koreans will become Japanese simply by moving to the mainland.

“Koreans registering on the Japanese mainland” in *Ōtsuka Tsunesaburō Bunsho*, undated.<sup>15</sup>

Apparent here is an emergent anxiety over status which is born of a fundamental contradiction common to all expansionist, multicultural empires. For while imperial expansion is justified through an appeal to the broadening enfranchisement of new subjects into the sphere of modernity (later to be labelled a “co-prosperity sphere” in the case of the Japanese empire), the paternalistic bent of such a project often demands a clearly recognizable distinction between the giver of modernity and the receiver. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki observes, the Japanese empire “was always haunted by the problem of drawing dividing lines between the ‘mother country’ and the ‘colonies’”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cited in Chapman (2014), p.103

<sup>16</sup> Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, “Northern lights: the making and unmaking of Karafuto identity” in, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 60(3), p.646

In answer to this conundrum the *kosekihō* proved to be both a convenient and powerful means of drawing such a distinction. It was convenient because a similar form of household registration already existed in Korea, although as Sonia Ryang has pointed out, the Korean *hojōk* (J: *koseki*) was not intended to identify national subjects but to provide a record of patrilineal descent and clan affiliation.<sup>17</sup> In this respect it was not dissimilar to the pre-Meiji iteration of family registration. Despite the similarities between the two systems however, the Korean *hojōk* was maintained separately from the Japanese *koseki*, meaning that it soon became the primary means by which to distinguish Japanese mainlanders from Korean colonial subjects. This method received the official seal of approval in 1909, one year prior to Korea's full annexation, when the Japanese occupation authorities introduced the *Minsekihō* or Registry Law, which transformed the Korean *hojōk* from a document of primarily private family interest into a far weightier legal document of social identification.<sup>18</sup>

The interlocking but, crucially, distinct bureaucratic functions of the *koseki* and *kokuseki* systems thus afforded a space in which the similarly separate but interlocking concepts of nationality and ethnicity could merge and overlap in ways that were domestically legible but internationally disavowed. As it turns out, this space was an ideal vessel for the emerging concept of *minzoku*, a concept whose definition and characteristics would be hotly debated in Japan throughout the first half of the twentieth century, but which was (and is) generally evoked in attempts to explain the historical process of nation formation in terms of the natural cohesion of ethnic groups. What Yamada Saburo's intervention suggests, however, is that rather than

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<sup>17</sup> Ryang, Sonia. "Between the nations, diaspora and Koreans in Japan" in S. Ryang and J. Lie eds. *Diaspora Without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009. p.6

<sup>18</sup> Kim, Michael, "Sub-nationality in the Japanese Empire: A social history of the *koseki* in colonial Korea 1910-1945" in Chapman & Krogness (2014). p.112

being implemented as a response to an already codified notion of *minzoku*, the concept emerged from intellectual efforts to square a political order rooted in patrilineal kinship with a new vision of community called “nation”. As in Europe, therefore, the discovery of nationhood was made necessary and possible only after the nation’s encounter, after the fact, with the colonial Other. In other words, the very idea of a historically, linguistically and culturally bound collective subject, whether that be articulated as *minzoku* or “nation”, reflects an anxiety that emerged regarding the essence of the national body politic at a time when imperial expansion was rendering that body more and more diffuse. Just as the labels “British” and “English” were metonymically related but semantically distinct, the interactivity of the *koseki* and *kokuseki* systems allowed for a regime of classification that could euphemistically mark an unbridgeable class distinction while also capturing the self and the other within a rhetorically shared community.

Indeed, when we observe how the *koseki/kokuseki* system has been mobilized to account for mixed race families, it becomes clear that the system was not merely a response to the idea of *minzoku* but also integral to the *production* of ethnic difference. For just as the *koseki* laws in Japan prohibited foreign men from forming their own household registries and required foreign women to register as members of their (Japanese) husband’s household, so it prohibited male Korean subjects from entering Japanese households and required female Korean subjects to leave their Korean *hojōk* on entering a Japanese husband’s *koseki*. Japanese women marrying Korean men however, while being registered in their husband’s Korean *hojōk*, were not required to leave their Japanese *koseki* and thus retained documentation of their “mainlander” status even after marriage (although their children did not).<sup>19</sup> The result of this legislation was a hegemonic system of patrilineal descent in which both Japanese and Korean ethnicity could only be passed

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<sup>19</sup> Kim, Michael (2014), p.116



through one's father. In effect this meant that ethnic indeterminacy could be 'bred out', with any residual "Koreanness" disappearing from official documentation behind an inherited Japanese name, and any hint of "Japaneseness" eradicated by a Korean one, with separate registers dedicated to recording each. And yet, while this system was intended to limit the unavoidable ethnic ambiguity that resulted from inter-ethnic marriages, in practice it actually had the opposite effect. With little in the way of phenotypical differences with which to distinguish Korean from Japanese, surnames became one of the few means by which ethnic (and thus class) difference could be ascertained. But because the *koseki* system legislated for "mixed race" children with a Japanese father to take a Japanese name, this meant that Korean elements could also exist covertly behind a Japanese veneer.

This did not necessarily contradict official imperial policy which had always been invested in the complete cultural and linguistic assimilation of the Korean peninsula, at first nominally and then, particularly once the empire entered its period of total war mobilization from 1937, in practice. Throughout the period of Japanese occupation, officially sanctioned idioms such as "*Naisen ittai*" ("The mainland and Korea are one"), and "*Isshi dōjin*" ("Equal favor under the gaze of the Emperor") were proliferated widely. (See fig. 1)



Japan and Korea racing (on three legs) to modernity. Text below reads “Cooperation and Unity – World Winners”

For many of those in Japan who identified themselves unequivocally as “mainlanders”, the idea that there might be Korean colonial subjects passing as Japanese and living and working alongside them often bordered on the intolerable. Added to this was the fear that the lower pay with which Korean workers were subjected to effectively undercut the market wage for “local” mainland workers. As with similar complaints today, there was little evidence to suggest that Japanese mainlanders and Korean colonial subjects were actually competing for the same jobs, or even within the same labor markets. Considered by most employers to be preternaturally suited to dirty, dangerous, and physically demanding work, Koreans were generally employed in work typically avoided by mainlanders.<sup>20</sup> But, as is still the case in postcolonial societies around the world, material evidence to the contrary did little to stop “mainlanders” – who, we must

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<sup>20</sup> Weiner, Michael, *The Origins of the Korean Community in Japan, 1910-1925*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Humanities Press International, 1989. p.201.

remember, were often exploited by employers themselves – from feeling that they were being forced onto an equal footing with a subject people. It would not take much for this anxiety over class status to brim over into physical acts of retaliation against Koreans living in Japan.

As it happened, the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, which decimated Tokyo and the surrounding region, provided the perfect storm for this animosity to reach boiling point. Only a few hours after the quake, as the authorities scrambled to re-establish order and to muster some sort of coordinated response, rumors began to spread around the capital that Koreans were using the chaos as an opportunity to poison wells and other water supplies, as well as to form ad hoc militia groups which were then seeking to direct violence against Japanese citizens. According to Michael Weiner, these rumors (which were later proven to be unfounded) were eventually traced back to one Yamaguchi Seiken, a labor agitator who was well known to the authorities.

Yamaguchi had hurriedly formed the “*Yokohama Shinsai Hogodan*” (“Yokohama Earthquake Protection Brigade”) at around 3 p.m. that afternoon, just one of many self-assembled citizen protection groups that attempted to fill in for the absence of central authorities.<sup>21</sup> By 7 p.m. police substations in the same area of Yokohama were being inundated with reports of armed citizen groups attempting to repulse Koreans who were alleged to have been setting fires, poisoning wells, and raping and looting. By the following morning, similar reports of a Korean uprising were being submitted to police stations in central Tokyo. When the police managed to mobilize forces to investigate these claims in the afternoon of September 2 (the day after the earthquake), no signs of mass Korean-instigated violence could be found anywhere.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, rather than attempt to quell the public’s suspicions, the Ministry of Home Affairs

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.165.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp.166, 167.

instead circulated an official request to prefectures nation-wide that local authorities “increase secret surveillance in all areas and take firm measures in dealing with the activities of Koreans”.<sup>23</sup> In a number of instances the police even provided weapons to the *ad hoc* civilian groups with which to defend themselves against the phantom Korean mob.<sup>24</sup>

The consequences of these rumors for Koreans living in Japan were nothing less than tragic. Armed with bamboo spears, axes, knives, and other makeshift weapons, the “Self Defense Brigades” (*Jikeidan*) which took to the streets in the days following the earthquake continued to harass any Koreans they could find and in many cases conducted summary executions. Understandably it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many Koreans were killed during this time, nor is an exact figure necessarily important. What we do know however is that over September and October 1923, more than 23,000 Koreans across the country were taken into protective custody by the police, with Tokyo and Kanagawa accounting for around half that figure.<sup>25</sup>

Why the panic and chaos which followed the Great Kanto Earthquake transformed so quickly into a pogrom against Koreans is a question which has received much speculation. One explanation has been the so-called “white terror” theory, which has likened the aftermath of the quake to the purging of Hitler’s political opponents following the Reichstag fire of 1933. This theory stems from the fact that, in addition to Koreans, communists and anarchists also fell victim to lynching by the citizen *jikeidan*, the murder of anarchist scholar and activist, Ōsugi Sakae, being perhaps the most high-profile incident.<sup>26</sup> But while Koreans were certainly

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<sup>23</sup> Cited in Kang, Tok-sang, *Kantō daishinsai to chōsenjin*, Tokyo, Misuzu Shobō, 1963. p.18.

<sup>24</sup> Weiner, (1989), p.172

<sup>25</sup> Weiner (1989), p.180

<sup>26</sup> Beckman & Okubo (1969), and Reischauer & Craig (1965) are examples of this argument.

associated with political agitation (a huge protest in Keijō's (Seoul's) Pagoda Park, known in both Japan and Korea as the March 1<sup>st</sup> Protest, had almost toppled the Japanese occupation just four years earlier in 1919), and communist internationalism in particular<sup>27</sup>, the theory that the earthquake was used as an opportunity by the state to rid itself of is not really corroborated by the evidence. For while we have seen that the police certainly did little (at least at first) to refute the rumors which their own investigations revealed to be unfounded, it is clear such rumors were instigated by citizens in a non-official capacity, and thus were more likely the result of widespread panic, fear, and prejudice, than of any centrally coordinated conspiracy. As Miriam Silverberg has argued, the interpretation that this was firstly a pogrom against political agitators and secondly against Koreans by association, "does not clarify the relationship between perpetrators", who were mostly blue-collar Japanese workers, "and the victims", who were overwhelmingly Korean<sup>28</sup>. Nor does it take into account the prejudicial attitudes towards Koreans which had been festering in the Japanese public imagination for at least thirteen years by this point.

A more convincing explanation for this outburst of violence is that it was precipitated by the conjunction of an imperial rhetoric which asserted Japanese racial superiority over Koreans, even as it officially promoted the cultural assimilation of the two, and a recent explosion in Korean migration to the Japanese interior. On one hand, the exodus of Korean laborers to Japan had occurred as a direct result of the primitive accumulation of productive enterprise on the peninsula, but on the other, the domestic Japanese economy had been experiencing a slump since

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<sup>27</sup> See Mun Kyong Su's chapter on the deep ties between the early Korean community in Japan and the Japanese communist party in *Zainichi chōsenjin mondai no kigen* ("Origins of the Korean problem in Japan"), Musashino, Crane Publishing, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Silverberg, Miriam, "The Massacre of Koreans after the Great Kanto Earthquake", M.A. Thesis submitted to Georgetown University, 1979. p.4

the end of the First World War, with global demand for industrial production having declined.<sup>29</sup> Predictably, the Governor General's policies in Korea produced a huge pool of landless peasants in a country which had precious little mechanized industry. This created the perfect environment for predatory labor brokers who, working on behalf of Japanese industrialists, easily enticed Koreans to work for much less than their Japanese counterparts

Until 1922, the Japanese market had been insulated somewhat from an influx of cheap Korean labor thanks to anti-immigration laws directed specifically at Koreans which, in turn, had been implemented as a response to security concerns following the aforementioned March 1<sup>st</sup> uprising in Seoul<sup>30</sup>. In December 1922 however, these attempts to curb Korean immigration into Japan were abolished and Koreans, as imperial citizens, were free to live and work anywhere in the empire. The explosion in Korean migration to Japan after this date is truly astounding, if not at all surprising given the economic circumstances in Korea. Between 1917 and 1921 the annual number of Koreans (both men and women) crossing to Japan rose from around 10,000 to about 47,000; not a negligible increase to be sure. But in 1922 this number almost doubled to over 80,000, while the following year saw more than 120,000 Koreans moving to Japan in search for work<sup>31</sup>. While not a huge number in comparison to the overall population of Japan at the time – which, in 1922, stood at around 55 million – the relative increase year on year coupled with what must have been an already pronounced anxiety over the domestic labor market would surely have made the influx hyper-visible. Moreover, this phenomenon also coincided with a mass

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<sup>29</sup> Following annexation in 1910, the Governor General's office required that new documents be submitted to account for land ownership. While the larger landowners, predominantly of the aristocratic *yangban* class, were sufficiently able to adjust to this requirement, small-scale landholders and tenant farmers tended to be illiterate and more likely to fall victim to the coercive bureaucracy of colonial governance. Weiner (1989) estimates that by the end of 1912, just two years after annexation, the Governor-General had confiscated around 5% of all farmable land, thus displacing a significant amount of the population, most of whom were subsistence farmers.

<sup>30</sup> Silverberg, p.56

<sup>31</sup> Figures cited in Weiner (1989). p.67

migration of Japan's own peasant population from the villages to the cities, and a significant proportion of Japanese workers must surely have felt a profound sense of precarity. For these workers, the rhetorical distinction between Japanese and Korean was the only form of capital they had.

Bearing in mind that the Korean pogroms which occurred after the Great Kantō Earthquake were instigated not by the police or any other centrally authorized body, but by groups of self-organized citizens, it seems much more likely that class tension, exacerbated by the inflammatory combination of explosive immigration and a sluggish domestic economy, was its principle motivating factor. However, while it is tempting to suggest that this massacre occurred despite, rather than because of, government rhetoric that foresaw the complete cultural (and ethnic) assimilation of Koreans with Japanese, this does not account for the sheer scale with which the retribution occurred. Simply put, this was an extreme but nevertheless *popular* response for which there was clear socio-historical precedent. For despite the benevolent embrace of Koreans which was encouraged by the imperial state, the Japanese paternalism that this tacitly implied also assumed an ethnic superiority over those of Korean 'stock'. While the contradiction of a rhetoric of equality being used to describe a practice of subjugation may have been a moot point for policy-makers and capitalists who had no real stake in making the political system more egalitarian, it was simply intolerable for many "mainlanders" who, despite all the talk, must have often struggled to find material evidence for their supposedly elevated social status.

An illustrative example of this phenomenon, from a different but nonetheless comparable example, is provided by David Roediger in *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991). The book takes as its departure point Du Bois' premise, put forward in the first two chapters of *Black Reconstruction*

(1935), that the idea of “whiteness” provided a “public and psychological wage” for white workers that compensated for the social status that their low monetary wage otherwise suggested.<sup>32</sup> Roediger argues that this sentiment originating in the antebellum period, when the institution of chattel slavery drew a clear distinction between “free labor” and “slave labor”. This distinction became so integral to the labor markets of both the agricultural South, which relied on cheap slave labor, and of the rapidly industrializing North, which came to view the institution of slavery as being in direct competition with “free” labor, that by the postbellum era the category of ‘worker’ came almost exclusively to refer to white workers. Roediger recognizes, as did Du Bois before him, that this color-line did not so much exacerbate a sense of economic competition between two social groupings as much as it produced the very epistemological framework from which a relationship rooted in competition could take root. So ingrained was the idea that racial difference was a ‘natural’ manifestation of social hierarchy in the popular psyche of Anglo-European Americans that Black slaves, and later “Freedmen”, were often blamed, merely by association, for the institutions they were victim to. As an ever-present example of the depths to which enslavement could reduce the individual, Black slaves became, to quote Roediger, “a wretched touchstone against which to measure their [white workers’] fears of unfreedom and a friendly reminder that they were by comparison not so badly off”.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in emphasizing the dehumanizing effects of slavery by pointing to slaves themselves as being less than human, racial discourse in the antebellum U.S. was not only able to criticize the institution of slavery without having to make a corresponding demand for Black civil equality, but it also served as a disciplinary mechanism with which to encourage harder work for lower pay from white workers.

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<sup>32</sup> Roediger, David R., *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Verso, London & New York, 1991. (p.12)

<sup>33</sup> Roediger, p.49



Indeed, Roediger argues that the very concept of inalienable rights accorded to the human – the practicing of free, individual will within a democracy of peers – which the founding fathers appealed to, was so powerful precisely because it was articulated in the presence of a labor system which exemplified the consequences of its absence or denial. Thus John Adams, writing pseudonymously in a revolutionary pamphlet, could assert with no apparent sense of irony or hypocrisy that, “we won’t be their [Britain’s] negroes. Providence never designed us for negroes. I know, for if it had it would have given us black hides and thick lips... which it hadn’t done and therefore never intended us for slaves”.<sup>34</sup>

I should clarify that I do not draw on this discussion of racial discourse in the US to suggest that the position of Korean migrant laborers within the Japanese empire is comparable to chattel slavery in antebellum America. As Du Bois famously asserted, what distinguishes chattel slavery from “wage slavery” is not the degree of material compensation that is received in exchange for labor but rather the psychological damage which is wrought by “the enforced personal feeling of inferiority, the calling of another Master; the standing with hat in hand. It was the helplessness. It was the defenselessness of family life. It was the submergence below the arbitrary will of any sort of individual”<sup>35</sup>. Rather, I cite this example because it illustrates two consequences of pinning class distinctions to race and ethnicity. The first of these consequences is that the exploited themselves become identified with and consequently blamed for their exploitation. They stand as proof, in their abjection, of that human vice of the same name, but amid attempts to abject the act of abjection they, the abject, become confused with abjection itself. Not only does this blame result in the further social exclusion of the figure in question,

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<sup>34</sup> Cited in Roediger, p.28

<sup>35</sup> Du Bois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. New York, The Free Press, 1998 (1935), p.9

which then justifies the continued exploitation of those who happen to fall under its sign, but it also allows a whole host of structural contradictions to continue without scrutiny. The second consequence however, and one which should remind us that racism is poison not only to those who happen to fall on the wrong side of its borderline but to human society in its entirety, is that it disciplines those invested with the full privileges of social recognition by presenting them with a similarly narrow idea of the human. This conceptualization, which is also one and the same as Arendt's notion of "bare life", thus continues to haunt the aspirations of societies in which self-recognition and self-worth have come to hinge on this distinction between two classes of human. Faced with the threat that they too, by similar luck of history, may one day be consigned to social death, the very awareness of 'bare life' precipitates a disciplinary mechanism in which the preservation of racial and/or ethnic difference becomes all the more crucial to those whose social precarity is materially obvious. As James Baldwin argued so elegantly in the pages of *Essence* in 1984, "whiteness" is the truly lamentable subjectivity, because "in this debasement and definition of Black people, they debased and defined themselves. And have brought humanity to the edge of oblivion: because they think they are white they cannot allow themselves to be tormented by the suspicion that all men are brothers [...] Because they think they are white, however vociferously they may be and however multitudinous, they are as speechless as Lot's wife – looking backward, changed into a pillar of salt."<sup>36</sup>

Like Du Bois before him, Baldwin recognized that the engine powering white supremacy is fear; not of people of color *per se*, but of the potentiality – evinced by the 'swarms' of non-white, servile bodies which surrounded them – of their own latent bestiality, and of the fragility of the framework upon which their self-recognition as human rested. The image Baldwin uses

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<sup>36</sup> Baldwin, James, "On Being White... And Other Lies" in *Essence*, April 1984.

above, of Lot's wife being turned into salt as she looks back, speaks to the fragility of whiteness by recognizing its suicidal forward momentum. In many ways it is the very opposite of Walter Benjamin's visualization of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*; rather than forlornly surveying the ruins of the past as it is flung into the future, the transmogrification of Lot's wife as she is literally petrified, speaks to a fear of having to reflect on the tragedies that we inherit, as well as the desire to keep marching on, eyes forward, into a future of progress. This is the idea of whiteness as Baldwin understood it, and the reason for its continued strength so long after the formal end of slavery. Rooted in the idea of mastering humanity, and of expelling any hallmarks of subhuman animality, whiteness can only define itself as a constant overcoming of its past; a past which it often perceives in darker faces. Baldwin's words suggest that the fear which disciplines those who number themselves alongside other whites is the fear of historical atrophy, of not being able to overcome one's unasked for heritage, of being a product of history rather than the producers of history. Subsequently it is darker bodies which become the repository of all those things which white men fear. They become invested as figures who are subject to history but not agents of it. They are depicted as the very definition of atrophy; unproductive, lazy, and backward.

These are important discussions to bear in mind when we discuss the figure of the Korean in interwar Japan because, while the Korean worker was not enslaved in the sense of being *owned* by his or her employer as property, it functioned similarly as a "touchstone", to continue in Roediger's register, for a past that was assumed to have been conquered and transcended by modern man. For while the difference between Japanese and Korean was construed in terms of ethnicity (encompassing the realm of culture) rather than the simple physicality of race, it was emphasized in relation to colonial difference; a line in the sand which was propped up on the same fetish of historical progress as the "color line" in the postbellum United States. Fukuzawa

Yukichi, for example, in his extremely influential essay “Goodbye Asia” (*Datsu ron*, 1885), appears uncertain that any notable racial distinctions exist between Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, accepting that their differences are more likely the result of “heredity and education”. And yet he did not doubt that the explanation for Japan’s civilizational progress, despite being “located in the eastern extremities of Asia” was that “the spirit of her people have already moved away from the old conventions of Asia to the Western civilization”.<sup>37</sup> Fukuzawa writes this prior to the annexation of either Taiwan or Korea, and well before Japanese incursions into China, but already we see Japan being distinguished from its Asian neighbors in terms of progress, mapped on to a linear – in fact, clearly Hegelian – historical teleology.

What is interesting about Fukuzawa’s essay however, and what places it so squarely in the same discussion on race and racism that we have seen from U.S. thinkers above, is that it tacitly acknowledges the fear and anxiety that lie at the heart of supremacist ideology. Fukuzawa compares the “wind of Western civilization” with an outbreak of measles, for example, describing both as similarly inexorable forces, but he also states that whereas with a disease “people receive only damages”, with civilization, “damages may accompany benefits, but benefits always far outweigh them”.<sup>38</sup> “Western civilization” is thus depicted as an unstoppable force, and the anxiety over the prospect of being subjected to, rather than recognized by it, fosters a regime of comparison in which Japan’s “progress” is asserted in contradistinction to its “backward” neighbors. Fukuzawa asserts that, “the Chinese and Koreans are more like each other and together they do not show as much similarity to the Japanese”. Why? Because they “do

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<sup>37</sup> Fukuzawa, Yukichi, “*Datsu-a ron*” in Takeuchi Yoshimi ed. *Ajia shugi: Gendai nihon shisō taikei*, vol. 8, Tokyo, Chikuma shobō, 1963. p.39

<sup>38</sup> Fukuzawa, p38

not know how to progress either personally or as a nation”.<sup>39</sup> From here it is only a short step, as Roediger points out, to see within them the very causes of their newly assigned historical failure: “While professing their abhorrence to ostentation, in reality they show their ignorance of truth and principles. As for their morality, one only has to observe their unspeakable acts of cruelty and shamelessness. Yet they remain arrogant and show no sign of self-examination”.<sup>40</sup>

What distinguishes Japan from either Korea or China for Fukuzawa is that only one of them is moving in the right direction, forward that is, toward “civilization”. Despite being qualified as “Western”, it is important to note that this is the only manifestation of civilization that is referred to in the essay. It reveals the temporal moment of this essay to be one in which ‘the West’ ceases to exist side by side with ‘Asia’ as one-among-many and begins instead to constitute a claim of universality. In contrast, it is the ‘Asian’ cultures which are now provincialized, their cultural productions no longer intelligible as interrogations of the human broadly conceived, but instead denigrated to the status of local cults which “violate the natural law” of civilization (no longer requiring the qualifier “Western” at this stage in the essay).<sup>41</sup> What is also striking is that Fukuzawa acknowledges that Japan’s acquaintance with “Western civilization” had only occurred a mere thirty years prior to the time of this essay’s publication. Indeed it seems almost petty that Fukuzawa would pity his neighbors for their backwardness, and to condemn them as lesser humans because of it, when they were separated by a mere thirty years of exposure to European thought and technology. And yet, as postulated by the likes of Du Bois and Baldwin above, this becomes more conceivable, if the more pitiable, when we consider

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p39

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

such acts of abjection as attempts to overcome the self; to absolve oneself of perceived weakness by excoriating others for them instead.

Harry Harootunian observes that in later years, particularly from the interwar period onwards when imperial expansion had emboldened claims to Japan's contributions to the cultivation of universal humanity, thinkers such as Nishitani Keiji would be emboldened to re-evaluate the parochial, premodern Japan which had been so unceremoniously discarded by the likes of Fukuzawa a half-century before. But Harootunian also recognizes that by this point, the idea of a premodern, unmediated ideal of Japan had become a supplemental response, rather than a viable alternative, to the uneven development being wrought by rapid industrialization. He argues that the figure of Japan-as-the-premodern, which was precisely what modern thinkers such as Fukuzawa had attempted to overcome, was later turned to as a means of overcoming the dislocating and deterritorializing experience of that same modernizing process, such that what was enacted was in fact a hysterically solipsistic "overcoming of an overcoming"<sup>42</sup>. The dislocating experience of modernization led thinkers to postulate a premodern, provincial and particular "Japan" as an anchor in the storm; a historical constant that would resist the ugly but inevitable changes wrought by industrial development. This eternal Japan was not divorced from the temporality of modernity (the premodern was a movement forward in the sense that its recuperation was articulated as an overcoming) but instead enacted a dehistoricization of modernity by depicting a move backwards, to a premodern national essence, as a move forwards, and a move forwards, the further cultivation of a Japanese national spriti/*geist*, as a move backwards. "In this regard," Harootunian argues, "it was precisely the modernist dismissal of an

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<sup>42</sup> Harootunian, Harry, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*. Princeton [N.J.]: Princeton University Press, 2000

antecedent history that supplied the capitalist sociopolitical order in Japan, and wherever else capitalist modernization had taken hold, with the image (representation) of an eternality that could never be overcome”.<sup>43</sup>

What thinkers such as Nishitani Keiji had in fact put their finger on, however, was a fundamental aporia that lay at the heart of the very idea of “civilization”, and one which could only be recognized by a people who had themselves embarked on a road to modernity that was also acknowledged to be a process of self-cultivation. In contrast to the white European relationship to modernity, in which European premodernity was confined to a hypothetical past and could only be visible in the examples of presently backward, “uncivilized” peoples, Japan by contrast was a figure whose modernity could be measured alongside the still extant vestiges of its own premodernity. As we have observed in “Goodbye Asia”, the abjection of the premodern in the name of the modern was thus unavoidably a process of self-denial, in which local cultural forms and institutions had to be jettisoned in favor of universal (European) ideas. What we see in the 1942 debate on “Overcoming Modernity” is an attempt at resolving this aporia by re-presenting premodern “Japan” as an ahistorical foil to modernization; no longer a figure of historical atrophy to be overcome, but as a project of recuperation which places that figure in a very modern state of constant becoming. What Harootunian does not give enough attention to, however, and which is crucial for our consideration of the function of the figure of the Korean in imperial Japan, is that this rearticulation of Japan as something which is eternal as opposed to backward was only possible by extricating “Japan” from “Asia”, and by shifting the shame regarding civilizational backwardness and belatedness from a Japanese past to an Asian past. Koreans, along with other colonized peoples in Asia, were understood as the very manifestation

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid (45).

of Asian premodernity and, consequently, both the subject of and justification for a project of human cultivation which was universal, and necessarily imperial, in its scope.

Travis Workman has explored this moment of aporetic resolution in terms of a shift from what he calls “civilizationalism”, in which human cultivation is understood to be a project with a single, universal end goal and in which peoples and nations are positioned either ahead or behind on a single spectrum of development, to a “culturalist” understanding of human development, which conceived of nations as “anthropological, cultural, and moral entities with their own life, language, and internally constituted organic form”.<sup>44</sup> As with the participants of the “Overcoming the Modern” colloquium, Workman argues that the intellectual work of Kuwaki Gen’yō was similarly preoccupied with transforming Japan from an “indexical category” against which universal humanist claims could be made, to a “transcendental idea” that could furnish an entire worldview.<sup>45</sup> At stake, then, was nothing less than the ultimate *aufhebung*, in Hegelian terms, of the particular and the universal. Workman argues that Kuwaki, heavily influenced by the Neo-Kantian relation between culture and morality, developed a theory of human experience that saw individual cultivation (*Bildung*), rather than competition between nations, as being the key to the progress of humanity. Such a formulation did not abandon the notion of the ideal human, or the fulfillment of spirit in the Hegelian sense, but it presented “Japanese” culture as a passage through which to arrive at a more universal understanding of human experience. In short, thinkers such as Kuwaki and Nishitani were able to universalize the parochial so as to render “Japan” and “humanity” interchangeable figures.

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<sup>44</sup> Workman, Travis, *Imperial Genus: The Formation and Limits of the Human in Modern Korea and Japan*. Oakland, California, University of California Press, 2016 (17).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. (3)



For this reason, Workman quite rightly identifies the hegemonic idea of the human within the Japanese imperial sphere as a properly biopolitical regime.<sup>46</sup> With Japanese culture having been raised to the privileged subject position of *civilization*, particular cultural practices and fields of cultural knowledge served as regulative ideas for moral human activity, such that to become more Japanese meant that one would also come closer to the human ideal. In practice however, the impossible task of sublating the one and the many was not achieved by empire, so much as empire had shifted responsibility for the resolution of that aporia to the figure of the colonized. The figure of the Korean thus became a liminal one that was essential to the continued coherency of the human ideal in imperial Japan. In being marked as backward, the figure of the Korean became the negative example of the transformative potential of Japanese culture. Assimilation thus became the Japanese empire's *raison d'être*, as the transformation of Koreans into culturally Japanese subjects was understood not as a means of subjugation but as a process of liberating them from their historical arrest and setting them on a path to join the common project of humanity. And yet as a liminal figure, the colonized Korean was also crucial for defining the limits of this project. As with the figure of the Black slave in the U.S., the Korean also performed the function of the scapegoat, being forced to bear the shame of the barbarous tendencies which "civilized" man had exorcised from himself. The upshot of tasking Korea and Koreans to evince both the ever-expanding franchise of Japanese civilization *as well as* its limits, to render visible the immutability of the Japanese subject while also establishing the fated mutability of Koreanness, and to evince both of these processes in the form of a temporally and spatially singular moment of transubstantiation, is that Koreans during empire were required to both become Japanese but, crucially, remain distinct from Japanese. A sentiment which we have

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. (30)

already seen illustrated in Yamada Saburo's concern that the erasure of geopolitical borders separating Korea from Japan would, without intervention by other means, create a situation in which Koreans would be indistinguishable from Japanese 'mainlanders'.

By the time of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1924, being "Japanese" meant, to many who identified themselves as such, being a fundamentally different kind of human to that of a "Korean". It meant being a teacher, not a student. It meant setting an example, not being made an example of. But what it effectively came down to was recognizing in one's own heritage the historical victory of empire and seeing in other Asian peoples a historical destiny of tutelage. The subjugated peoples of the Japanese imperial "peripheries" provided a constant reminder to those who saw themselves as Japanese that to be human was not a matter of immanence but something that could only be realized through cultivation. Humanity was a process of constant self-improvement. But by marking the distinction between cultivated humans and uncultivated humans in ethno-national terms within a multiethnic empire, a biopolitical disciplinary regime was produced in which Koreans were encouraged to aspire to a model of humanity from which they were ultimately barred, and Japanese imperial subjects were expected to uphold an image of the civilized, imperial patron which was defined in opposition to colonial subjects. Empire had produced two mutually opposed and thus ontologically irreconcilable definitions of humanity, even as the horizon of that project remained committed to the belief that they could be.

In making the eventual enfranchisement and cultural assimilation of Koreans a cornerstone of its imperial project, the rhetoric of empire in Japan between 1910 and 1945 succeeded only in confusing the tenuous borderline which separated exploited-but-colonized Koreans from exploited-yet-Japanese colonizers, and thus escalated anxiety over both class and ethnic status (which were now the same thing). As Michael Weiner notes, "despite later attempts

by government officials to portray the events of 1923 as no more than an ‘unhappy’ interlude, which had only temporarily interrupted the process of assimilation, the gulf which separated the rhetoric of *dōka* from the realities of colonial control and exploitation had been tragically revealed”.<sup>47</sup> Far from an aberration of an otherwise benevolent government policy towards Korean colonial subjects, the tragic aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake was the result of the contradictory messages which those policies conveyed.

### **The figure of “Zainichi”**

As we move from discussing the rhetorical function of the figure of Korean during empire to that of the figure of Zainichi in the postwar period, we must draw distinctions between the two even as we acknowledge their essential continuity. From 1945, the Korean peninsula was no longer considered the patrimony of the Japanese empire, and concerted attempts were made to disentangle their respective national historical trajectories. In 1951, following the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the return of national sovereignty to Japan, those Koreans who remained were stripped of Japanese citizenship. Decolonization/de-imperialization was a pressing concern for both the Japanese and Korean governments following the collapse of empire. For the fledgling Korean state(s), this meant the speedy retrieval of social institutions to national control.<sup>48</sup> For Japan, it meant the erasure of all vestiges of its former empire, including the deportation of former colonial subjects to their assumed country of origin and the repatriation of Japanese settlers and colonial officials from the empire’s peripheries. To this extent however, and as this

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<sup>47</sup> Weiner (1989), p.201

<sup>48</sup> A process which, as Bruce Cumings has described, was frustrated by Allied plans to place the peninsula under a lengthy trusteeship (Cumings, 2002).

section will argue, decolonization in the form of disentanglement was, for all parties concerned, also a disavowal of the mutual experience of empire in the form of an announcement of returning normality. Today, August fifteenth is still commemorated in Korea as “*Kwangbok chŏl*” or the “day of returning light”. But just as the figure of the “Korean” in the first half of the twentieth century persistently evoked the very history its erasure was supposed to resolve (that of a pre-modern and thus pre-historic Asia), so too did the figure of *Zainichi* continue to expose the colonial relations which had produced it, even as it underwent a “return” to its assumed native place. In both instances, we see the articulation of a figure in need of rescuing from a prior historical stage. Just as Koreans during the imperial era were seen to be in need of rescuing from historical atrophy, a similar sentiment in the postwar years depicted *Zainichi* as a residual problem of the colonial era. In fact, these figures were not relics of a bygone world but objects whose anachronism was imposed in order to emphasize an absolute break with a shameful past. In each case, we see the forced assimilation of individuals justified as being in their best interests.

I want to reiterate here that when I refer to *Zainichi* I refer to a figure, which is to say that I refer to an idea of *Zainichi* as it has been appropriated and mobilized rhetorically, and not to any individuals who may identify or be identified as such. For many Koreans in Japan, August 15<sup>th</sup> 1945 was a date that undoubtedly represented a long-awaited liberation from the yoke of a foreign oppressor. Of the two million or so Koreans residing in Japan at the time of the empire’s defeat, roughly three quarters had returned to the Korean peninsula within a year.<sup>49</sup> For those who initially remained in Japan the question was not so much *if* they should return to Korea, but

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<sup>49</sup> *Zainihon daikanminkoku mindan chou minzoku kyoiku iinkai, “Zainichi korian no rekishi”*, Tokyo, Meiseki (Myŏnsok) Shoten, 2006. (64, 65)

when. Bruce Cummings paints a grim picture of the devastation left by the Japanese occupation in the wake of its withdrawal from the Korean peninsula, describing a “torched earth policy” in which factories and other industrial centers were burnt to the ground, industrial goods warehouses were raided, and the economy was flooded with newly printed money.<sup>50</sup> In short, the economy on the peninsula was devastated. The prospect of inevitable hardship on returning home must have made many Koreans think twice about doing so straight away. Adding to and compounding this concern over future precarity was legislation which forbid returning Koreans from carrying any more than two hundred and fifty pounds of luggage and one thousand yen in currency (per person) out of Japan.<sup>51</sup> Rampant inflation on the peninsula would have rendered this money all but worthless within a short space of time, meaning that most returning Koreans arrived home with little more than the clothes on their back and whatever else they could carry by hand. Furthermore, by 1948 two separate Korean states had been unilaterally declared and the descent towards civil war was becoming increasingly inevitable. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that so many Koreans chose to remain in Japan; not out of any ideological conviction but to bide time for a more opportune moment to return.

But regardless of the myriad practical considerations that might have informed their decision, those Koreans who opted to stay in Japan were increasingly burdened with the sign of *Zainichi* and forced into a state of ideological overdetermination. Falling between the identitarian crevices produced by a new, post-imperial order of nation states, *Zainichi* could only be legible as a figure of temporary existence; a historical loose end awaiting resolution. To opt for this indeterminate status as an end in itself was, as John Lie puts it, an “ontological impossibility”

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<sup>50</sup> Cummings, Bruce, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Seoul, Yuksabipyungsa, 2002. (90?)

<sup>51</sup> *Zainihon daikanminkoku mindan chou minzoku kyoiku iinkai*, 2006 (66, 67)

within the postwar discourse of political subjectivity in Korea and Japan<sup>52</sup>. To become naturalized as a Japanese citizen is still seen by many *zainichi* Koreans, particularly those of the immediate postwar generation, as an acquiescence to forced assimilation. And yet the choice to ‘return’ to the Korean peninsula or adopt South Korean citizenship<sup>53</sup> would be, for the vast majority of Zainichi Koreans today, a choice to become part of a political community in which one has never lived and in a language that one may not speak. This is not to mention that the choice to be Korean also entails a commitment to one side of an ongoing civil war.

To many it might seem paradoxical that the ideology of a national polity could transmogrify so quickly from one which envisioned Japanese cultural identity as a vessel within which the people of Asia could be forged into world citizens, to one which insisted on a parochial, ethnically-bound nation-state as the *a priori* subject of history and historical experience. But as we have already seen above, the dialectical tension between cultural particularism and cultural universalism had been a prominent driving force in Japanese imperialism. As Oguma Eiji identifies, even in the midst of official imperial rhetoric which saw assimilation as the historical horizon of Pan-Asianism, there were a number of prominent academics who voiced concern over the potential dilution of Japanese stock by Asian peoples. In 1915 for example, Kawakami Hajime, who would later become a prominent member of the Japanese Communist Party, published a paper entitled “The blood and hands of the Japanese people” (*‘Nihon minzoku no chi to te’*). Inspired by the new field of eugenics (which was something of a fad at the turn of the century, particularly among Anglo-American scientific

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<sup>52</sup> Lie, John, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. (85)

<sup>53</sup> As of the time of writing, South Korean citizenship is the only Korean nationality which Japan allows those with a “special right to remain indefinitely” (*tokubetsu eijū ken*) to adopt while still residing in Japan. The DPRK’s claim to statehood is not recognized by the Japanese government.

circles) he argued that racial interbreeding was effective up to a certain point, but that having once achieved a degree of genetic superiority, a ‘good stock’ should be isolated so as to preserve its superiority.<sup>54</sup> According to Kawakami, genetic mixing in Japan had ended around two thousand years ago and that it was precisely this lengthy isolation which had preserved the Japanese people as a superior race. Throughout Meiji and Taisho, these ideas found themselves at odds with theories of mixed racial heritage touted by government bureaucrats such as Tokutomi Sōho, Yanagita Kunio, and Kita Sadakichi, all of whom argued that it was the destiny of Japanese culture to act as a sort of alloy which could unite Asia’s disparate but ethnically related peoples. Oguma states that from around 1937, the year in which the second Sino-Japanese war began and the Japanese empire began to mobilize for total war, the discrepancy between an official policy of assimilation on the one hand, and anxiety over the pollution of Japanese blood on the other, became increasingly polarized.

The Korean peninsula’s geopolitically crucial positioning between the islands of Japan and continental Asia had encouraged officials to accelerate their efforts to achieve “*naisen ittai*”, or the complete cultural integration of the Korean peninsula and Japan. Originally a process which Governor General’s office under Saito Makoto had envisaged taking between fifty and a hundred years, the climate of total war prompted the Japanese government to produce two reports in September 1938 which sought to provide a blueprint for the expedited assimilation of Koreans.<sup>55</sup> Citing the recent success of assimilation policies, which were themselves based on such spurious evidence as the purported increase in visits to Shinto shrines by Koreans, the

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Oguma Eiji, *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images*, trans. David Askew. Melbourne: Trans-Pacific Press, 2002. (205)

<sup>55</sup> Caprio, Mark, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, Seattle & London, University of Washington Press, 2009 (92, 145)

reports prompted the implementation of policies which were designed to further reduce the cultural and linguistic distance between the peninsula and the “interior” (*naichi*).<sup>56</sup> One such policy was the now infamous *sōshi kaimei*, or “name change” mandate, which from 1939 required all Koreans to adopt a recognizably Japanese name. The policy continues to be remembered by many Koreans in Japan as a particularly egregious measure, partly because of the importance of family names within the patriarchal hegemony of Confucianism but also, perhaps, due to the ongoing pressure for Koreans in Japan even today to use a Japanese name for the purposes of ‘passing’, and effacing their Koreanness in public.<sup>57</sup> Of arguably much more lasting impact was the implementation of a far-reaching program of cultural education aimed at younger Koreans in the empire. Caprio notes that from the late 1930s through to the end of the war, “the focus of Korean education shifted from training students as members of the local (Korean) community to training them as members of Japan’s extended empire” which was facilitated in practice by merging the previously separated “*kōritsu gakkō*” – ‘public schools’ tasked with providing a Japanese education to Japanese settlers - with “*futsū gakkō*”; ‘normal schools’ which were attended by colonial subjects.<sup>58</sup> Although intended to erase the distinction between Japanese and Korean students, in practice the merging of the two systems simply resulted in the eradication of the Korean language, as well as Korea related subjects, from the school curriculum.

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<sup>56</sup> Todd Henry provides an excellent study of the manipulation of data concerning shrine visits in, *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> *Zainihon daikanminkoku mindan chou minzoku kyoiku iinkai*, 2006 (page?)

<sup>58</sup> Caprio (153). For more on the social function of these two systems, see Tsurumi, Patricia, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895-1945*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1977.



At the same time that efforts to turn Koreans into model Japanese citizens were accelerated however, proponents of pure-blood ideology were gaining increasing traction within the branches of domestic government. Oguma states that from 1940, a leadership transition in the Ministry of Health and Welfare led to an increasing preoccupation with preserving the purity of the Japanese race. In 1943, the Ministry published a report titled, “Consideration of a world policy centered on the Yamato people” (*“Yamato minzoku o chūkaku to suru sekai seisaku no kentō”*), which suggested sending Koreans, Manchurians, and Taiwanese to “open up” (*kaitaku*) areas of the empire struggling with low population growth (such as Papua New Guinea for example) and keeping the center of the empire populated by pure-blood Japanese.<sup>59</sup> The suggestion was met with vociferous criticism by the Governor General of Korea’s office, which still envisaged complete integration. By the time the war was in its closing stages however, Oguma argues that pure-blood ideology had been tacitly accepted to the extent that from 1944 “the mixed nation theory almost completely disappeared from the pages of the major magazines”, although it was not until after the Pacific War and the collapse of the Japanese empire that an ethnocentric definition replaced culturalism as the more commonly accepted conceptualization of national subjectivity.<sup>60</sup>

Of course, the collapse of the Japanese empire provided the perfect environment in which a discourse emphasizing the ethnic particularity of the Japanese people could thrive. With a vision of ethnic pluralism in a culturally singular community having constituted the bedrock of imperial ideology, a reactionary discourse emphasizing the affinity of ethnicity, culture, and language within a defined territorial patrimony came to be viewed as ethically favorable.

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<sup>59</sup> Oguma (222)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. (296)

Scholars such as Tsuda Sōkichi for example, who had been criticized by Miki Kiyoshi before the end of the war for refusing to accept that there was any common historical experience between Japan and the Asian continent, found themselves in the good graces of the establishment after the war for the very same idea.<sup>61</sup> In fact Tsuda's theory that the emperor system constitutes the trans-historical baseline of a Japanese national community would become extremely influential in the postwar era.<sup>62</sup> But to suggest that the ethnic and territorial downscaling of Japanese national identity was purely and simply a result of the loss of empire would be to ignore that an anxiety over the relationship between the universal and the particular had festered at the heart of Pan-Asianism from the outset. On the contrary, as we have seen above, in order to justify Japan's "historical destiny" – as Takata Yasuma put it – and to unite the peoples of Asia, imperial theorists were obliged to provide a cultural superiority that was *ethnically* bound as corroborating evidence.<sup>63</sup>

Another factor that contributed to the cultural hegemony of ethnocentric nationalism in the postwar era was its wide acceptance among Korean nationalists and anti-imperialists. Since at least 1919, a year which saw peninsula wide protests against Japanese colonial rule, Korean independence activists had staked their claim to political sovereignty in an appeal to their right to (ethnic) self-determination. The proclamation of Korean independence, composed largely by one of Korea's first national historians, Choe Namson, and presented to the Japanese Governor General on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1919, was largely inspired by Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" of the previous year, in which the U.S. President proclaimed each nation's right to self-determination.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Miki, Kiyoshi, *Toa kyodotai ronshu: Sengo nihon shiso no genten*, Tokyo, Kobushi shobo, 2007. (20)

<sup>62</sup> Tsuda, Sōkichi, "Kenkoku no jijō to mansei ikkei no shisō", in *Sekai*, April 1946

<sup>63</sup> Takata, Yasuma, *Minzoku ron*, Tōkyō, Iwanami Shoten, 1942.

<sup>64</sup> Robinson, Michael, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925*, Seattle : University of Washington Press, 1988. (43)

Penned by Wilson as an attempt to curb the expansion of the European empires in the wake of the collapsing Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the anti-imperialist sentiment conveyed by the “Fourteen Points” had hardly been intended as a blueprint for nation-building in the colonial world outside of Europe (it is highly doubtful, for example, that Wilson was arguing for Filipino self-determination in 1914). Nevertheless, the language of rights and ethnic subjectivity understandably struck a chord with Korean independence activists. Mirroring the tone of Wilson’s speech, the Korean declaration of independence roots the Korean people’s “inherent right to nationhood” by emphasizing its “five-thousand-year history” and framing annexation by Japan as “the right to existence deprived”; an experience which is expressed in clear terms as an affront to the national subject.<sup>65</sup>

Despite evoking the authority of a “five-thousand-year” national history however, the language of the proclamation is decidedly modern. Its demands are justified in terms of the natural rights of an autonomous national subject; a far cry from the pre-colonial political ideals of the Chosŏn dynasty, which rooted its legitimacy in the preservation of a strictly Confucian, Sinocentric world order. Indeed, as Michael Robinson has observed, Choe Namson was openly and regularly critical of Confucianism, along with other ancient traditions which he blamed for Korea’s historical tardiness in terms of civilizational development. In his magazine *Chŏngchun* (“Youth”) which enjoyed a short run between 1914 and 1918, he often decried the “feudal” nature of the political tradition and the “tyranny of the Confucian social system”.<sup>66</sup> He was not alone in having this opinion. Along with other prominent Korean nationalists of his time, such as

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<sup>65</sup> Proclamation of Korean Independence, sourced from [en.wikisource.org/wiki/Proclamation\\_of\\_Korean\\_Independence](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Proclamation_of_Korean_Independence), on 6/14/2017. The English translation of the original text is on permanent display alongside the Korean text in Seoul’s Pagoda Park.

<sup>66</sup> Robinson (54)

the novelist, Yi Kwangsu, Choe was a member of an elite cadre who had received a modern education through the lens of private Japanese universities. This small but extremely vocal group, which Robinson refers to as the “cultural nationalists”, followed a precedent which had been set by the earlier Enlightenment Movement (K: *Kaehwa undong*) to modernize Korea’s political and social institutions by modelling them on those existing in Europe and the U.S.

The ideas which the cultural nationalists propounded, as with the Enlightenment Movement before them, were often (and unsurprisingly) very similar in tone to the philosophy of the earlier Meiji ideologues. They acknowledged that Korea was, in all respects, a backward country in dire need of a complete socio-political overhaul if it was to survive. Like the Meiji bureaucrats before them, in addition to forging a nation they were also concerned with the creation of national subjects. But as with Japanese thinkers in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the way in which this could be achieved was not entirely obvious. The Enlightenment Movement, Robinson notes, recognized that “nationalist sentiment, at its core, is an emotional state” which contradicted the rationalism demanded by enlightenment thinking.<sup>67</sup> In short, it seemed that the institutions which continued to bind the people to a sense of collectivity were the very same hallmarks of tradition which were understood to be antithetical to Enlightenment ideals of progress.

Japanese occupation provided, in many ways, a simple answer to this conundrum, for after 1910, the question as to what united the Korean people spiritually was essentially a moot point. Before any agreement could be reached as to what constituted the immutable characteristics of the Korean nation, the possibility of nationhood itself had been foreclosed by

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<sup>67</sup> Robinson (35, 36)

the Japanese occupation. During the first nine years of colonial rule, a particularly brutal period for Koreans thanks to the hardline military rule (J: *Budan tōji*) of Governor General Terauchi Masatake, resistance to the Japanese occupation became a truly nation-wide affect. In the face of autocracy, what exactly constituted Korea's "five-thousand-year history" was of less immediate concern than the fact that it had been taken away, or at the very least forestalled. Moreover, the stark antagonism between the colonizer and the colonized made it very difficult to recognize that these respective national ideologies were born of a shared discursive space. The main thrust of the Enlightenment Movement, as well as the short-lived "Independence Club" (K: *Tongniphoe*) which was its vehicle of reform, were pre-occupation phenomena which did not necessarily see a problem in locating themselves within the same intellectual-discursive space as the Japanese modernization project.<sup>68</sup> Thus the language used in the Proclamation of Independence to justify Korea's claim to nationhood was remarkably similar in sentiment to that which was being used to justify the natural destiny of a Japanese empire in Asia. Prior to annexation, Soh Jae-pil and Yun Chi-ho, two founding members of the Independence Club, could conspire with the Japanese to topple what they saw as a traditionalist, reactionary Korean government (in what became known as the Kapsin Palace Coup) and still be celebrated as nationalists. But by the time Yi Kwangsu penned his *Minjōk kaejoron* ("On National Reconstruction") in 1922, the same reformist politics had been tainted by the Japanese annexation to the extent that its discourse was no longer considered shared but imposed. By this time, Yi Kwangsu's insistence that "national

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<sup>68</sup> For more on the Independence Club see Chandra, Vipan. *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club*. Berkeley, CA: Center for Korean Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1988.

reconstruction is a task that will take at the very least fifty or a hundred years” sounded uncannily like the official policy of the Governor General’s office.<sup>69</sup>

The stance taken by the Cultural Nationalists which insisted that Korea would need time to develop the cultural groundwork for lasting national institutions, despite taking its cue from over a quarter century of intellectual labor by Korean nationalists, smacked far too much of collaboration by the 1920s. Complicating this issue was the about turn in colonial policy adopted by the Korean Governor General Saitō Makoto following the March First Movement. Perhaps recognizing that zero-tolerance military rule was having counterproductive effects with regards to the assimilation of the Korean people, Saitō instead inaugurated a period of “cultural rule” (J: *Bunka seiji*) in which Korean nationalist sentiment was, to an extent, tolerated. For the three years or so that the grace period was in effect, the Governor General relaxed censorship and opened the way for the publication of a slew of nationalist magazines and Korean language newspapers. However, Robinson argues that in practice this period of cultural rule was used by the Governor General’s office to co-opt figures of the middle-class and intellectual elite who they saw as being potentially sympathetic to the colonial administration as a vehicle of modernization. “From his first days in Seoul”, Robinson writes, “Saitō established a habit of consulting directly with prominent Korean leaders (...) Intellectuals were plied with concessions in the cultural sphere in the form of permits for publications and seats on advisory boards.”<sup>70</sup> As a nationalist rhetoric born of the same discursive milieu as Japanese imperialist ideology, cultural nationalism in Korea was particularly vulnerable to being co-opted. It’s insistence on cultural development as a necessary preparatory measure prior to full national independence chimed all

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<sup>69</sup> Cited in Robinson. (70, 71)

<sup>70</sup> Robinson. (101)

too well with Japanese colonial policy which, as we have seen, sought to tutor the Korean people so they might one day participate in world culture.

With cultural nationalism having been discredited and with traditionalism and Confucianism having become synonymous with premodernity, Communism became an increasingly popular alternative avenue for the Korean independence movement. But as Bruce Cumings and Charles Armstrong have argued, Communists in Korea tended to be less interested in world revolution and the empowering of the global proletariat and more concerned with Lenin's anti-imperialism and its potential to spark a national uprising in Korea.<sup>71</sup> Many of those who would later become prominent Communist leaders in Korea, such including Kim Il Sung himself, had been anti-colonial guerilla's operating on the fringes of Manchuria before they were absorbed into the Comintern bureaucracy.<sup>72</sup> In short, Communism was popular among Korean nationalists after 1920 predominantly because it was a vision of political community which hadn't been coopted by the Japanese authorities and, in fact, had been vociferously quashed even during the period of cultural rule between 1920 and 1925.

In both countries after 1945, the process of decolonization/de-imperialization involved the curation of a particular memory of empire which necessitated their parsing. In Japan, the failure of the imperial project resulted in a shift in academic opinion which saw the proponents of a plurality of "nations under one roof" (J: *happō ichiu*) give way to a vision of national homogeneity which may no longer have been expansionist but was very much exceptionalist. As we have seen however, although this exceptionalism found fertile soil in a post-imperial Japan it was certainly not born of it, and in fact was a central pillar of imperialist ideology. Likewise, the

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<sup>71</sup> See Cumings (1989) and Armstrong, Charles. *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. (33)

<sup>72</sup> Armstrong (33)

commonly held opinion that Japanese aggression had forestalled Korea's national development meant that the postwar years saw attempts, in both Korean states after 1948, to produce a narrative of national foundation which long preceded the colonial experience. But this too ignored the reality that the national framework which enabled nationalists to speak of their country's "five-thousand-year history" was itself an accoutrement of a "modernity" which could not be separated from the imperial milieu which had inaugurated it. This is not to mention that the vast majority of industrial ventures that survived the Japanese "*hikiage*", including many of the *chaebŏl* (J: *zaibatsu*) conglomerates which would form the bedrock of capitalism in the ROK, had been established and patronized with Japanese capital.<sup>73</sup> In a newly liberated country that sought to repossess a sense of national agency, the colonial origins of many of Korea's postwar institutions (particularly south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel) was a truth too painful to bear. In his study of nascent Korean capitalism for example, Carter Eckert recognizes the tendency among Korean economic historians to argue for the presence of pre-colonial fledgling capitalism on the peninsula but concludes, poignantly, that "[c]olonialism, for better or worse, was both the catalyst and the cradle of industrial development in Korea, and in studying it we are brought face to face with the very origins of Korea itself".<sup>74</sup>

But there was simply no time, nor space in the discursive sense, during the postwar years for Korean historians in either the North or the South of the peninsula to be so stoic about their nation's experience of colonialism. For in the same way that the Japanese occupation and its direct attack on all that it considered "Korean" had rendered moot any academic debate over what might constitute the Korean nation, so too did the factional strife which engulfed Korea

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<sup>73</sup> Eckert, Carter J. *Offspring of Empire: the Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945*. Seattle, District of Columbia: University of Washington Press, 2014.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* (253)



after the collapse of empire further entrench Korean national identities (for there were now two) as subjectivities defined by opposition.

Despite the narratives of antagonism which defined the postwar ethnocentric nationalisms of the DPRK, the ROK, and Japan, it is crucial to remember that the three states were also bound together by the very same. It is precisely this mutually accepted ideology that perhaps best exemplifies the way in which colonialism and colonial ideology continued to bind Japan and the peninsula to a commonly held worldview. In turn, it allows us to appreciate the magnitude and pervasiveness of the hegemony it produced; for the common roots of this politics of exclusion remained secluded behind a rhetoric of antimony until relatively recently. But what has further obfuscated the common discursive foundations of East Asian nationalisms in the postwar era is the conflation of national antagonisms with political-ideological antinomies. For once the Korean War had “cooled” and a ceasefire had effectively deferred any real resolution to a (thus far) permanent “demilitarized zone” along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the line dividing differential views on the future of the Korean nation became one in the same as the iron curtain which represented two irresolvable visions of the future of humanity.

It was not long – no longer than a year or two following the ceasefire on the peninsula in 1953 – before the ideological division that had torn Korea in two also started to define the political landscape for Koreans in Japan. Ultimately, this rift was imposed by two organizations, *Mindan* and *Sōren*, that had emerged from regional support groups for Koreans living in Japan. These regional committees had initially been formed in response to the total absence of state support from either the Japanese government (which had essentially abandoned Koreans in Japan to the care of the Occupation authorities until 1951, when they finally had their Japanese citizenship rescinded) or the Korean government(s), which were effectively under U.S. and

Soviet trusteeship until the end of the Korean War. By 1955, however, these regional committees had been replaced with two monolithic organizations, with *Mindan* representing the interests of the Republic of Korea, and *Sōren* those of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The replacement of civil interest groups with national interest groups not only had the effect of imposing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on Korean neighborhoods, families, and enterprises, but it also succeeded in reframing the problem of *Zainichi* from a civic, domestic issue, to one of foreign relations. A brief analysis of why this shift occurred and its consequences for Koreans living in Japan is thus crucial if we are to better understand the vision of history and community that has been captured within the figure of *Zainichi*.

The first organization to be formed with the intention of representing the interests of the Korean community in Japan was the short-lived *Zainippon chōsenjin renmei* (“The League of Koreans Residing in Japan”), or “*Chōren*” for short, which was established in October 1945 as a national aggregate of regional Korean community organizations<sup>75</sup>. At its inaugural meeting in Tokyo, Kim Chōnhae laid out the organization's principle aims as, “transforming Japan into a place we might more comfortably live by quashing the emperor system, establishing a democratic government and strictly excluding pro-Japanese reactionary elements (from it), with a mind to the achievement of the complete independence and unification of Korea”.<sup>76</sup> Unlike the organizations that would eventually replace it, it is clear that *Chōren* located itself within a properly regional (rather than national) context, acknowledging the immediate reality that the establishment of an independent and stable Korea to which people could feasibly return to might take years to achieve and that, until such time, the lived circumstances in which Koreans resided

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<sup>75</sup> Mun, Kyongsu, *Zainichi chōsenjin mondai no kigen*, Tokyo, Kurein, 2007. (90)

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* (91)

in Japan was of more pressing concern. To this extent, *Chōren* was much more representative of its members' concerns than its successors, who are arguably little more than representatives of their respective home governments. And yet the call for “strictly excluding pro-Japanese reactionary elements” (*Shin'ichi hangyaku bunshi wa genjū ni shodan shi*), which references Koreans who collaborated with the Japanese empire (collectively referred to in Korean as *chinil-pa* and in Japanese as *Shin'ichi-ha*) is indicative of the extent to which a politics of *ressentiment* was already defining the limits of a postcolonial Korean national subject. Indeed, as Mun Kyongsu argues, it was precisely because of the absolute exclusion of those accused of collaboration from *Chōren* that a break-away organization was established and the split which would come to eviscerate the possibility of local advocacy for “Zainichi” as citizens in Japan took root.<sup>77</sup>

The splinter group which formed - the *Zainihon chōsen kyoryū mindan*, or *Mindan* for short, soon became a beacon not just for those branded as collaborators but also for anti-Communists (as in many cases they were one in the same). This political antimony was not, initially at least, due to the ideological convictions of the Korean states (although the same association of anti-Communism with pro-Japanese collaborators, and Communism with anti-imperial nationalism was present on the peninsula) but because of the strong links that the founding members of *Chōren* had with the Japanese Communist Party. Pak Wŏnchŏl, Kim Chŏnhae, and Kim Duyŏng were all members of the Japanese Communist Party and had only been released from political imprisonment five days prior to the inaugural meeting at Hibiya Hall.<sup>78</sup> If we recall that the appeal of communism for many Koreans was its promise of national

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. (92)

<sup>78</sup> Mun (83)

liberation from colonialism, more than the achievement of the socialist internationale, it is hardly surprising that prominent anti-imperialists were also members of the Japanese Communist Party. Thanks in large part to the U.S. shift towards a policy of “containment” following the “loss of China” to Communism in 1949, as well as the U.S. backed proclamation of the Republic of Korea by the zealously anti-Communist President Syngman Rhee the previous year, *Chōren*’s Communist connections would lead to it being forcibly disbanded by the U.S. occupation in 1949.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, *Mindan*’s anti-Communist bent led to that organization being incorporated as an unofficial representative body for the Republic of Korea in Japan – there would be no ROK diplomatic delegation to Japan until relations between the two countries were normalized in 1965 - and was subsequently refashioned as the *Zainihon daikanminkoku kyoryū mindan*. As *zainichi* historian Yun Konja has argued, this name change was a fateful one with significant consequences for the subsequent history of Koreans in Japan. By changing the country’s name from “*Chōsen*” (K: *Chosŏn*) to “*Daikanminkoku*” (K: *Daehanminguk*), *Mindan* had cast their lot with the new southern state. As a consequence however, the word “*Chōsen*” underwent a drastic resignification from something that had once signified the whole of Korean peninsula to a word that was synonymous with communism and, eventually, the DPRK regime.<sup>80</sup> This association was cemented when the counter organization “*Zainihon chōsenjin sōren gōkai*” (“*Sōren*” for short) was established in 1955 as a direct representative of the DPRK in Japan.

Unlike their predecessor, both *Mindan* and *Sōren* received the direct mandate of their respective governments and, far from attempting to secure civil rights and guarantees for the Korean population in Japan, obliterated any possibility of a united front by enforcing a choice

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. (140)

<sup>80</sup> Yun, Konja, *‘Zainichi’ wo ikiru to wa*, Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992. (170)

between returning to Korea or “becoming” Japanese through naturalization. In short, as Yun argues, the counter claims on the *zainichi* population by the DPRK and the ROK through *Sōren* and *Mindan* respectively, rendered the *Zainichi* problem one of foreign relations instead of a domestic one. To exemplify this, Yun points to the shift in the legal status of *zainichi* Koreans following the treaty which normalized relations between Japan and the ROK in 1965. Now recognizing the Southern regime as a legitimate state, the Japanese government agreed to afford the children of Koreans who were residing in Japan prior to August 1945 a “negotiated right to remain” (J: *kyōtei eijū ken*) provided they had South Korean citizenship. This is not to mention that the passport which came with South Korean citizenship provided access to international travel which the nominal “*Chōsen*” status had made nigh impossible. The result, as one might guess, was a stampede by *zainichi* Koreans to become South Korean citizens. Thousands of people received the right to vote for the first time in their lives; only the country in which they could vote was not the one in which they had been born and continued to live but in a country that many had never been to before. Yun argues that not only did South Korean citizenship do little to alleviate the precarious social conditions experienced by Koreans in Japan. but that “sweeping away [the problem] via a “foreign affairs negotiation” with the Republic of Korea (...) was nothing other than a self-interested response that completely ignored the historicity of *zainichi* Koreans and their lived experiences”.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Yun’s intervention is also reminiscent of a more recent negotiation between the Japanese and South Korean states in which both governments agreed to “resolve” the so-called Comfort Women issue in exchange for a lump sum cash payment from Japan, yet failed to address any of the remaining survivors of the Comfort Women system. The palpable anger with which the *halmoni* responded to being made

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<sup>81</sup> Yun (215)

the muted object of a politics which actively sought to render them done, forgotten, and dead, gives us some idea of the injustices served to Koreans in Japan by parties which allege to represent them. In both cases, the political performance of national sovereignty utterly drowns out the more nuanced and, ultimately, more meaningful questions of historical responsibility, justice, and what it might mean to live with and after historical atrocities.

As with the dissolution of *Chōren* and the subsequent rift that rent the Zainichi community in two, the 1965 normalization of relations treaty, and indeed the continued configuration of the figure of *Zainichi* in the postwar period, cannot be fully understood without also acknowledging the role of U.S. Cold War policy in East Asia. Gregg Brazinsky has noted, for example, that the notion of normalizing relations with Japan was an incredibly unpopular one in South Korea at the time, with the memory of colonial subjugation still fresh in the minds of many. He argues that the main impetus for what was ostensibly a forced warming of relations came from Washington D.C., where the Kennedy administration was concerned that the huge cash injections which were being repeatedly sunk into the South Korean economy were not really producing the sustainable economic growth that had been hoped for. By forcing the reestablishment of a working – and trading – relationship, Washington hoped that it could create a regional market that would stabilize both the Japanese and South Korean economies without having to resort to trade with the Communist bloc.<sup>82</sup> It is unsurprising, then, that the issue of the continued status of Koreans in Japan was effectively sidelined, with the “negotiated right to remain” constituting little more than an indefinite deferral of real resolution. The primary goal of the treaty was to shore up the current world order, not come to terms with the legacy of a past

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<sup>82</sup> Brazinsky, Gregg. *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. (140, 141)

one. From this perspective, we are also better able to understand the recent “agreement” over the Comfort Women as merely a continuation of this deferral.

Far from “entering a new era”, what continues to define the figure of “Zainichi” are the traces of history, insinuated in the very words which clothe it, that anchor it to a past which it is never permitted to overcome. Like the figure of the “Korean”, who in the colonial era was expected, but never actually permitted, to cross the line of colonial difference from pre-modernity to modernity, the figure of *Zainichi* in the postwar era has likewise been expected to overcome its anachronistic, residual coloniality by transitioning from an extra-national to a properly national framework. In both cases however, these imperatives have served to veil contradictions which have been produced by the very systems the “Korean” or “Zainichi” have been pushed to conform to. In the colonial era, the figure of the Korean was tasked with resolving an aporia which was central to Pan-Asianism; a vision of universal culture legitimized by the exceptionalism of Japanese culture. In the postwar era, “Zainichi” have likewise been pushed to affirm the absolute distinction of the Korean and Japanese national spheres and thus disavow the continued discursive complicity which renders them ‘other’.

In the following section I will address the consequences of this configuration in the field of literature; particularly the way in which the function of “Zainichi” as a figure of transition from the pre-national to the national and, concomitantly, from the colonial to the post-colonial, has engendered a somewhat limited practice of reading. As we will see, the strategy of reading which has been commonly employed in response to “Zainichi Literature” – as well as in the definition of that sub-category itself – has often been complicit in reaffirming the immutability of the nation on the one hand and the fated transience of “Zainichi” on the other. By readdressing Frederic Jameson’s contentious claim that “third world” literatures cannot help but be allegories

of the nation as a whole, I examine how this tension between literature-as-art and literature-as-sociological-artefact cannot be divorced from the anxiety over the relationship between the particular and the universal that constitutes the aporetic heart of imperial desire. Just as the appeal of ethnic sovereignty had chimed with postcolonial *ressentiment* among Koreans following the demise of Pan-Asianism, so too was the search for a distinctly *Korean* literary voice an unsurprising consequence of having so long been denied political agency on ethnic grounds. Acknowledging, then, that the allure of ethnic sovereignty and its establishment through the identification of a national voice is a reaction to the very real threat of the outright erasure of ethnic difference from the Japanese political landscape, it is clear that simply doing away with “Zainichi” as a qualifying noun risks at best a misrecognition and at worst a complete disavowal of the tension between the particular and the universal and its material consequences. Instead, I suggest that an attention to the split nature of subjectivity itself – a split which I acknowledge by distinguishing the rhetorical figure of *Zainichi* from individuals who are identified as such, but which is ostensibly no different from the “double consciousness” of Black and colonized peoples that Du Bois theorized in *The Souls of Black Folk* – allows us to approximate a reading practice that has, in fact, been afforded by default to the male, ethnically unambiguous authors of national canons.

### **“Zainichi” Literature/Minority literature as anthropological evidence**

While sociological and historical discussions regarding Koreans in Japan until the mid-1970s tended to emphasize the necessity of recuperating one’s “Koreanness” in the face of ethnic erasure, discussions after this watershed increasingly recognized that the *lack* of ethnic determinacy which had heretofore characterized the figure of *Zainichi* could in fact be insisted



upon as a form of historical testament. This response recognizes that so long as the “*Zainichi* problem” continues to be defined in terms of national subjectivity (or lack thereof) its solution must also entail its disappearance. As far as the Japanese state is concerned, the *koseki* system continues to demand that the conferral of Japanese citizenship be met with the erasure of all signs which might point to “Koreanness”, while the ROK and the DPRK, acting through their representatives in Japan, *Mindan* and *Sōren*, have eschewed the fight for civil rights for Koreans in Japan and instead defined *zainichi* as Korean nationals overseas. The result has been a strange complicity between the Japanese and ROK/DPRK governments (but not between the ROK and DPRK governments) with regards to the long-term solution, which in turn has led to a widely held assumption that the problem is now resolved and that any lingering *zainichi* malcontents are simply whipping a dead horse. From around the mid-1970s, at a time when second-generation *zainichi* Koreans started to become the dominant voice in discussions surrounding the figure which they had inherited, this insistence on an either/or choice over one’s ethnic-national determination began to be questioned. Unlike their parents’ generation, for whom Korea remained a tangibly *real* topology, for many in the second-generation Korea was a far more abstract notion; something which was experienced through anecdotes and second-hand memories, through household routines and community traditions. In contrast, “Japan” was a more immediately concrete *habitus*, although one which was patently unwilling to house them indefinitely. Faced with this imposed contradiction between a “native place” that remained abstract and a lived *habitus* that could never be their own, second-generation *zainichi* began to question the need to choose between one or the other and, consequently, the validity of the assumption that ethnic nationality constitutes the baseline of historical and political experience.

An early debate that was particularly influential in building this discussion was one between second-generation *zainichi* Korean, Kim Tongmyŏng, and the social historian, Iinuma Jirō, published as “The *Zainichi* Korean ‘Third Way’” (“*Zainichi chōsenjin no ‘daisan michi’*”) in 1978.<sup>83</sup> Kim opens the discussion by expressing his frustration that first-generation *zainichi* Koreans continue to dominate the leadership of *Sōren* and *Mindan* despite the fact that as of 1978 they constituted little more than ten percent of the Korean population in Japan. Despite the second-generation having a fundamentally different relationship with Korea and Japan, Kim argues that the first-generation’s reluctance to include the younger generation in debates over the future of the *zainichi* community has resulted in a lingering ethno-nationalism that no longer serves the interests of those it purports to represent. Furthermore, he notes that the co-opting of *Sōren* and *Mindan* by the DPRK and the ROK respectively has meant that both organizations have sought to further the interests of their home nations rather than address the issues actually faced by the resident community in Japan.<sup>84</sup> “I genuinely think the first generation have done so much for the unification effort (*sokoku no tōitsu*) and protecting the ethnic rights (*minzokuteki kenri*) of the *zainichi* community”, he says,

But after thirty years, now that the social structure of the community is weighted in favor of the second and third generations who have been born and raised in Japan, and now that the unification of Korea is very far indeed from being an immediate prospect, I think that [what it means to be] *zainichi* is being reassessed. *Zainichi* today are no longer ‘temporary residents’ like the first generation. Born and raised in Japan, us second generation don’t know our homeland and we are unfamiliar with its culture and traditions. We are no longer the type of *zainichi* who can say that this is a temporary shelter, or a port in a storm to which we have retreated because our country is not yet unified, or because there are circumstances that prevent us from returning, or because our home has become a dictatorship. Now we strive to live in Japan as Koreans, to establish ourselves as

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<sup>83</sup> Kim, Tong-Myong, “*Zainichi Chosenjin no ‘daisan michi’*” in Iinuma Jiro ed. *Zainichi kankoku chosenjin: sono nihon shakai ni okeru sonzai kachi*. Osaka, Kaifūsha, 1988.

<sup>84</sup> Iinuma (21, 22)

ethnic others (*iminzoku toshite*) in Japanese society. That is what it now means to be *zainichi*.<sup>85</sup>

The penultimate sentence of this citation effectively constitutes the mission statement of Kim Tong-Myong's "third way"; "to establish ourselves as ethnic others in Japanese society". In another context this might appear to be a modest and eminently realizable proposition but Kim and Iinuma's dialogue reveals how it is precisely this request which prior discussions concerning the fate of *zainichi* Koreans had ignored. While the debate remained dominated by first generation Koreans, for whom historical justice necessarily entailed the restoration of a full national subjectivity which had been stripped in the colonial era, any questioning of the relevance of that form of subjectivity for the current generation of Koreans in Japan was met with accusations of ungratefulness at best and treachery at worst. It is for this reason that throughout his dialogue with Iinuma, Kim takes great care to acknowledge the incredible efforts made by first-generation *zainichi* in building a Korean community in Japan in the midst of a very volatile and often hostile environment. He also recognizes the danger of his "third way" argument being coopted by Japanese nationalists, who would "embrace [it] with arms wide open [saying] 'Yes! We might well discriminate and oppress and exclude *zainichi* Koreans but final responsibility lies with each and every Korean!'"<sup>86</sup>, and thus task *zainichi* themselves with the resolution of the ontological aporia that continues to necessitate their discrimination.

Kim thus fully acknowledges that the risk he runs with his "third way" is to question the relevance of Korean cultural nationalism in an environment which would welcome its disappearance altogether. But to avoid the issue altogether so as not to concede 'points' to the other side is a potentially greater danger, he argues, because it can justify censorship. Indeed, he

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid (22,23)

<sup>86</sup> Iinuma (36)

argues that this is precisely what has happened in the case of *Sōren* and *Mindan*, both of which have stifled any critique of their own politics in the name of preserving a united front for the interests of Koreans.<sup>87</sup> But Kim takes pains to argue that his doubt over the relevance of Korean cultural nationalism for future generations of Koreans in Japan does not equate to an automatic acquiescence to Japanese cultural nationalism. Rather, his “third way” calls for a vision of a future for Koreans in Japan which can “overcome [the] history” which produced it; that is to say, one which will overcome the regime of colonial difference and the whole gamut of linguo-historical signifiers which continue to (re)produce the figure of “Zainichi”.<sup>88</sup> This reference to an “overcom[ing of] history” is an interesting one because, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it implicitly references the “Overcoming Modernity” symposium that had attempted to gauge the extent to which Japanese national subjectivity had successfully “overcome” its intrinsic aporia; the apparently irresolvable antinomy between “Asia” and “modernity”. As we have seen in Harootunian’s analysis of this debate, this attempt at identifying an overcoming of modernity was instead “overcome by modernity” itself; the process of the material modernization of Asia paradoxically fossilizing “Asia” as a synonym for the always already pre-modern. In this context, we can understand Kim’s call for an overcoming of history as a similar critique of ethnic nationalism *per se*. By insisting on a single, ethnically monolithic model of “Koreanness” as the only recourse to full subjectivity, *Sōren*, *Mindan*, and other Korean ethnic nationalists bind the future of *Zainichi* to a model which is also always already in the past: a national identity whose birth was only remembered after the act of its murder. Despite their best attempts at overcoming history – to achieve the full agency of national subjectivity that was denied to Koreans by colonial subjugation – Kim proposes that these

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. (3)

<sup>88</sup> Iinuma. (30)

community leaders have in fact buried Koreans in Japan in their own history. In other words, attempts to liberate the figure from historical atrophy have merely served to redefine it as such.

Kim Tong-Myōng emphasizes the irrevocable pastness of this figure of Korea by describing his “third way” as a philosophy for “*Zainichi* for living” (*ikiru tame no zainichi*).

If ‘*Zainichi*’ is to be a word which refers to more than just something that is occupied. . . but to people who have lives, who raise children, who work, who give shape to society, then I think those of us in the second and third generations are “*Zainichi*” in the true sense of the word. For our generation, except for a particular minority, there are no longer any that would cut their ties to family and loved ones, including Japanese friends, to return to a homeland where they can’t even understand the language. . . For us, being *Zainichi* is not just a matter of convenience. We are *Zainichi* for living.”<sup>89</sup>

Bearing in mind that in Japanese and Korean the word “*zainichi*” denotes a status – of “being in Japan” – in addition to serving as a proper noun, Kim’s assertion that “being *zainichi* is not just a matter of convenience” (“*zainichi wa bengijō no mono janaindesuyo*”) can also be translated as “*being in Japan* is not just a matter of convenience”, while his argument that “those of us in the second and third generation are *zainichi* in the true sense of the word” could likewise be rendered, “those of us in the second and third generation are *in Japan* in the true sense of the word”. Both statements are criticisms of a discourse which has tended to insist on the significance of the figure of “*Zainichi*” within the grand scheme of geopolitical history, and which has dismissed the practical, everyday struggles of those who live under its sign as being of secondary importance. To insist on “*zainichi*” as a permanent category, which is to say, to insist on *being in Japan* as a permanent status rather than a temporary measure is, for Kim, to

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<sup>89</sup> Inuma. (26)

acknowledge *Zainichi* as a living figure, occupied by living people, not as a prophylactic place holder to resist further assimilation until the long-awaited return to a unified homeland.

An early English language study of the Korean community in Japan by Lee & de Vos (1981), is firmly rooted within an epistemic framework that equates ethnicity with nationality and vice versa, and thus fails to recognize that this assumption is in fact an ideological conviction which requires “Zainichi” to be a perpetual outside to the normative “self” of national subjectivity. As such it merely complies with the then prevailing opinion that Koreans in Japan are foreign nationals exiled in a former colony. To this extent, it also echoes the nationalist sentiments of *Sōren* and *Mindan* by identifying ethnic autonomy as the main political objective for *zainichi* Koreans. Nevertheless, the authors are forced to admit that the trend in the *zainichi* community is for individuals to move away from “Koreanness” rather than rally around it, a pattern which is evinced by the sheer numbers of those with “*chōsen*” or “*kankoku*” status who marry outside of the community, refuse to send children to Korean schools, or naturalize as Japanese citizens. But by equating ethnicity with nationality, and then assuming ethnic-cultural agency to be the same as political agency, the authors fall into the same trap of assuming a lack of “Koreanness” must denote a lack of agency, and that all vestiges of ethnic and cultural difference are erased at the moment of naturalization. This explains a problematic statement by the author of chapter nine, Thomas Rohlen, that Korean ethnicity is becoming “thinner” over time.<sup>90</sup> Assuming Korean ethnicity to be a quantifiable quality, Rohlen’s concern over the future of “Koreanness” ends up reiterating *Sōren* and *Mindan*’s fear that the achievement of more encompassing civil rights for Koreans in Japan will “encourage, ironically, greater social

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<sup>90</sup> Lee, Changsoo & George de Vos eds. *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation*. University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 1981. (219)

assimilation” and thus lead to the disappearance of the community altogether.<sup>91</sup> If, as Kim Tong-Myŏng argues, we must envisage a future for the *zainichi* community as ethnic others in Japan, rather than as foreign nationals awaiting return to a native place, there is no reason to assume that greater social enfranchisement in Japan should also lead to the erasure of difference.

More recent sociological and anthropological studies however have acknowledged the peculiar experience of ethnic indeterminacy for second, third, and now fourth generation Koreans, and have used Kim’s “third way” as a departure point for a more nuanced critique and theorization of *zainichi* politics. Sonia Ryang has been an important voice in English language discussions, where she has made a point of acknowledging the agency that Korean resident organizations have had in their own socialization without trivializing the prevailing environment of discrimination in which this has occurred. In *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity* (1997), she credits Foucault’s concept of governmentality, as well as Wittgenstein and Bourdieu’s interpretations of Austin’s speech act theory, as key influences in her decision to analyze the *Sōren* community as one that promotes an identity which is uniquely “structured” within a specific network of addressers, addressees, and speech acts, even as it promotes that identity as a pre-discursive one. In thus recognizing the *textuality* of *zainichi* identity, Ryang avoids the common pitfall of assuming a singular *Zainichi* community/subjectivity, allowing instead for a range of subjective experiences and articulations that are as much defined by claims and counter claims between each other, as they are by any monolithic opposition with the figure of “Japan”. A graduate of a *Sōren* managed Korean school herself, Ryang critiques the policing of language which occurs at these institutions, which strictly dictate the terms by which Korea, the DPRK, and the history of colonialism are referenced. “The effect of censorship devices” she

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. (182)

argues “is to freeze, if not reduce, the number of usable Korean words. A speaker tends to stick to the Korean words she feels confident of, since she might otherwise unwittingly speak Japanese, which would be frowned upon”<sup>92</sup>. Such an observation acknowledges the way in which the historical antinomy of Japanese and Korean nationalisms has engendered an epistemic regime in which ethnic nationalism can only be reasserted as pre-discursive. As with Kim Tong-Myŏng’s critique, it suggests that while both parties compete over the same object of ethnic-national subjectivity, the debate over its relevance for *zainichi* (and for Japanese for that matter) living in Japan today is being passed over. Similarly, Kim’s conclusion that a static, essentialized articulation of Korean ethnicity is antithetical to the changed conditions which living, breathing *zainichi* Koreans face is echoed in Ryang’s observation that a prescribed lexicon of Korean words serves to “freeze, if not reduce” as much as it preserves culture. Both scholars thus argue, in as many words, that within cultural defensiveness lurks the very real danger of cultural death.

Likewise, in *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (2008), John Lie also critiques the single-mindedness of ethnic-nationalism and its tendency towards censorship. Here he recognizes the way in which the imperative of shoring up “Korean culture” in a hostile environment has exhibited a propensity to default to nationalism. Pre-empting the common counterargument that *Zainichi* politics cannot be nationalist because Koreans in Japan do not have a nation (the only homeland they recognize being a unified Korean peninsula), Lie argues that first and second generation *zainichi* intellectuals have exhibited a “diasporic nationalism” that pins all its hopes of a future community-to-come on the single event of Korean unification, not unlike the messianic projections of Jewish Zionism. Far from

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<sup>92</sup> Ryang, Sonia. *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997. (35)



distinguishing “bad” nationalism from “good” diasporic or postcolonial nationalism, Lie argues that the latter may in fact be the precursor or nascent stage of the former.<sup>93</sup> He points to Kim Sŏk-bŏm and Ri Kaisei, two public intellectuals and authors who insisted on Korean reunification as the answer to *zainichi* precarity and thus the only political battle worth fighting, and argues that for both men the material conditions of exile experienced by the first generation have congealed into a “pathos of exile” in the second. By “exult[ing] in the pathos of exile”. In turn, this insistence on a messianic return to the homeland is in danger of “eliding thereby the lives of local yokels, migrants, and refugees”<sup>94</sup>. While this intimation is not wrong – the fetishization of ethnic-national subjectivity has indeed exhibited a tendency to malign the day to day concerns of “being in Japan” – I would argue that by discrediting commentary made by “Zainichi intellectuals” for being too esoteric and disconnected from the daily struggles of other, less privileged, Koreans in Japan, Lie ends up proposing that we replace one assumption of epistemic privilege (that only those who have embraced their “Koreanness” can comment on the futurity of “Zainichi”) with another (that only those who continue to experience the material reality of discrimination should be permitted to speak). Lie’s critique in fact raises a much-traversed question in political theory: “Which comes first, race or class?” “Does class structure race, or race structure class?” Lie’s intervention seems to suggest that he agrees with the former and that in order to resolve the problems of racial divide we must *first* address the problem of class divide. As Roedigger has argued in more recent work however, this is a false antinomy. While analyses of racial and ethnic constructs must indeed be placed firmly within the context of the globalization of the capitalist mode of production via the vehicle of colonialism, the subsequent actualization of race and ethnicity as social realities means that we must address them

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<sup>93</sup> Lie, 2008 (59)

<sup>94</sup> Lie, 2008. (61)

as categories that are now so inextricably bound to the signification of class that neither can be understood without reference to the other.

The discussion of *Zainichi* in the social sciences has thus seen something of a generational shift since Kim Tong-Myung's 1978 dialogue with Iinuma Jiro, from one which assumed Korea to be the fated (and fêted) "native place" (J:*furusato*, K:*kohyang*) of all Koreans in Japan, to one which recognized this assumption for what it in fact was; a requirement. But a similar discursive shift to the same degree has not been so evident in the field of literary criticism, where Korean subjectivity continues to be posited as categorically distinct from Japanese subjectivity, and the pre-linguistic bass note that inevitably colors all *Zainichi* experience. In short, literary criticism of "Zainichi Literature" is still in the habit of conflating the figure of *Zainichi* – along with all its historical and political baggage – with the individuals who fall under its sign; in this case, the authors. The consequence of assuming the absolute equivalence of the agent-who-speaks with the socio-political coordinates from which they are understood to be speaking from is that "Zainichi Literature" is often read as a *symptom* of, rather than a commentary on, the socio-historical circumstances that together form the narrative of the figure of "Zainichi".

Within this framework there can be no separation between the writing subject and the subject being written. Much like the individuals themselves who are bound to the narrative of "Zainichi" and imprisoned within its semiotic field, "Zainichi Literature" is a compound term in which "literature" remains subordinate to its qualifying adjective. Such assumptions lead to a highly deterministic reading of literature in which the text cannot be parsed from the political subjectivity of the author such that, to paraphrase Trinh T. Minh-Ha's observation, *Zainichi*

writers are “only permitted to speak of themselves”.<sup>95</sup> It is precisely this demand that we hear, for example, in Hayashi Kōji’s book length analysis of “*Zainichi Literature*” in which he draws a distinction between fiction about “*Zainichi*” and fiction written by “*Zainichi*”.

To the extent that literature is the pursuit of truth and the expression of thought, under the closed (*heisateki*) conditions of current Japanese society it is unavoidable that *Zainichi* Korean writers should try to unveil their own sense of ethnic belonging through it. There are also writers, such as Tsuka Kōhei, who choose not to focus their literary expression on the fact that they are Korean, but seeing as his role [as a writer] is a far cry from the pursuit of truth and thought, this is unsurprising. For Tsuka Kōhei, writing novels is a business and their content has nothing to do with ethnic contradiction but simply the struggles of a single individual.<sup>96</sup>

One is sympathetic to Hayashi’s attempt to draw a distinction between literature written *by zainichi* Koreans and literature *about zainichi* Koreans. Indeed, we might read this as an attempt to avoid the indiscriminate politicization of all writers who are labelled *Zainichi*. But in confining *Zainichi* politics to a discussion of its “own sense of ethnic belonging”, Hayashi limits the breadth of possible subject matter to the self-referential. His criticism that, by contrast, Tsuka Kōhei’s fiction is only concerned with the “struggles of a single individual”, thus comes across as somewhat ironic when we consider that his definition of “*Zainichi Literature*” forecloses the possibility of individuality to ‘serious’ writers. It privileges the subject position over the subject who occupies it, priming the reader to expect the cry of a people, not the hushed murmurings of an individual.

The distinction that Hayashi draws here suggests that what tends to define literariness in the case of *zainichi* authors is not so much a question of *how* a text is written but rather a

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<sup>95</sup> Minh-Ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989.

<sup>96</sup> Hayashi, Kōji. *Zainichi chōsenjin nihongo bungakuron*, Tokyo, Shinkansha, 1991. (55)

combination of *what* is written and *who* presumes to write it, in which one justifies the other and vice versa. This was made particularly apparent with the 2006 publication of the “Complete Works of ‘Zainichi’ Literature” (*‘Zainichi’ bungaku zenshū*) which, although an admittedly comprehensive collection of texts by *zainichi* authors, was very far from constituting an exhaustive collection.<sup>97</sup> The collection thus insinuates a transparently representative capacity which is ultimately at odds with its curatorial practice. Having ascertained that this is a selection, rather than a truly complete anthology, we are left to assume that this claim to representation pertains to the figure of *Zainichi* which is purportedly enclosed therein, not to the works as texts *per se*. The message the “Complete Works” implicitly conveys is that the writers and texts chosen for inclusion are *the most representative* of the *Zainichi* condition.

But of course, this is a phenomenon which is hardly unique to “*Zainichi* Literature”. The formation of a distinct body of women’s literature in Japan, commonly referred to as “*joryū bungaku*”, has been similarly plagued by the expectation that all articulations therein emanate from a very specific and always predetermined subject position. Nor is this by any means a problem unique to Japanese literary criticism, as comparable subfields in the U.S., such as “Black Literature”, “Queer Literature”, “Third-World Literature”, and indeed any other incidence in which the term “literature” is qualified by a demographic or regional taxonomy, have similarly struggled to avoid the kind of ‘genre-fication’ which renders only self-referential commentary legible. The fated ghettoization of literary sub-fields was perhaps most clearly, and controversially, articulated by Frederic Jameson in 1986, when he claimed in no uncertain terms that “all third world texts are necessarily... allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be

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<sup>97</sup> Isogai, Jiro & Kuroko Kazuo eds. *Zainichi bungaku zenshū*. Tokyo, Bensei shuppan, 2006.

read as what I call *national allegories*” (Jameson’s emphasis).<sup>98</sup> Unsurprisingly, many scholars were quick to criticize this sweeping generalization. Most notably, Aijaz Ahmed criticized Jameson’s over-reliance on the “Third World” as a stable category, arguing that the assumption that such countries are “constituted by the singular experience of colonialism and imperialism”, together with the related assumption that this experience can only be articulated as a national one, can only lead to the conclusion that, “there is *nothing* else to narrate” (Ahmed’s emphasis).<sup>99</sup> “For if societies are defined not by relations of production but by relations of intra-national domination” he asks, “then what else can one narrate but that national oppression?”<sup>100</sup>

The bind which Ahmed identifies at the heart of Jameson’s formulation was also recognized by Rey Chow in a phenomenon she calls “coercive mimeticism”. As with Ahmed’s argument that any Asian, African, or Arab intellectual who writes in English is “immediately elevated to the lonely splendor or a representative – of a race, a continent, a civilization, even the Third World!”<sup>101</sup>, Chow argues that the particular conditions of relation between the “First” and “Third” Worlds forces a reading of the latter which denies the same distance between the writing subject and the socio-historical conditions of (in this case literary) production that is afforded to the former. Whereas Ahmed questions Jameson’s use of the term “Third World” in his understanding of “Third World Literature”, Chow’s decision to concentrate on the problem of mimeticism suggests that she is more concerned with how the “literature” side of this formulation functions, and with how it relates to the “Third World” as its qualifier. The question of mimesis, which of course is also a principle question of literature, naturally entails questions

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<sup>98</sup> Jameson, Fredric. “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” in *Social Text*, No. 15, Autumn 1986 (69)

<sup>99</sup> Ahmed, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London, Verso, 1992. (102)

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. (98)

concerning its relationship with its referent; the original. “Mimeticism”, she argues, “touches on precisely mutually implicated questions such as: what/who is there first, and what/who is second? What/who is the more authentic? What/who is the copy, the ‘mere’ reproduction?”<sup>102</sup> Since the past few hundred years of Western imperialism and colonialism have created the imperative of “the white man as the original”, she contends that readings of texts written by anyone other than white men have been implicitly comparative in their methodology.<sup>103</sup> Chow’s take on the representational imperative placed on “Third World” texts thus differs from Ahmed’s in a significant way: Whereas Ahmed assumes Jameson’s critique to be directed at the *production* of Third World Literature, Chow recognizes it as a criticism of their *reception* in the “First World” (or “the West”, as Jameson is also wont to call it). Ahmed’s vitriol is therefore understandable when we consider that he reads Jameson’s essay as a statement on the impossibility of literature in the Third World, but it begins to appear somewhat misdirected when Chow points out that it is in fact a critique of the particular practice of reading which is endemic to “literature” as a “First World” concept.

It is for this reason that Chow calls our attention to the first three pages of Jameson’s essay, separated from what follows by a single asterisk, in which Jameson is careful to situate his claim within the context of a “First World” reader reading a “Third World” text and, “how the unequal material conditions – economic, political, cultural – between the first and third worlds affect the *reading* process” (emphasis is my own), not the *writing* process.<sup>104</sup> Recognizing that any reading within the conditions of this relationship inevitably ends up a comparative one, Jameson warns us that “the strategy of trying to prove that [Third World] texts are as ‘great’ as

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<sup>102</sup> Chow, Rey. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2002.(103)

<sup>103</sup> Ibid (104)

<sup>104</sup> Jameson (66). Cited in Chow (97).

those of the [First World] canon itself” is essentially a futile one, because such a reading can only result in the re-centering of the White, male, and thoroughly Eurocentric canon. The success of texts is determined either by their proximity to that model of “literature” or, as Chow identifies in more recent postcolonial criticism, by pointing out their difference from it.<sup>105</sup> In either case, “First World Literature” remains the immutable, immobile constant, “Third World Literature” the category subject to *required* change.

Indeed, the fact that Jameson does not contrast the term “Third World Literature” with what one would assume to be its opposite number, “First World Literature”, but instead with the “canon”, suggests that the sub-categorization of literature as a field is a unidirectional one; that is, it can only move away from original copy of “white, male literature” which is inscribed within the very term “literature”. “First World Literature” would, then, be nothing but a tautology, akin to “white, male literature”, or at least a specification that could only be possible *after the fact* of “Third World Literature”. Therefore, when Jameson makes the claim that the irreversible alienation of subject from object which has provided the motor for literary production in the “First World” is simply not present anywhere else, Ahmed may be correct in criticizing him for making such an outlandish generalization of the “Third World” but he misses the fact that Jameson has provided a normative claim with regards to what constitutes “literature” itself. The question that Jameson raises then (although I would argue that this is only made clear through Chow’s intervention) is not so much “why is Third World literature always a national allegory?”, but rather “what is it about our understanding of ‘literature’ that makes this reading the only one possible?” Picking up on this, Chow calls our attention to the way in which such Eurocentric assumptions with regards to mimesis – literary or otherwise – serve to frame the

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<sup>105</sup> Chow (105)

representation of those coming from its outside in an always already highly determined way. Comparing the act of reading to viewing animals in a zoo, or looking at paintings lined up in a gallery, Chow argues that one cannot criticize the viewer for viewing things “out of focus” when it is the zoo and the gallery that are designed to prompt “a certain kind of gaze to which they play as, to act like, to exist in the manner of something [...] The point remains that the objects under scrutiny are dislocated and displaced to begin with, and subordinated even as they appear as themselves”<sup>106</sup> Or, in Jameson’s words, we (in the “First World”) cannot but come to a text as though it has been “already-read. We sense, between ourselves and the alien text, the presence of another reader, of the Other reader”.<sup>107</sup>

While certainly not clear when we read Jameson’s essay on its own terms – his essay is replete with generalizations and Orientalisms that often difficult to dismiss as self-aware, performative gestures - the discussion that it has prompted has raised productive questions with regards to what kind of reading practice constitutes ‘literary criticism’, and how this has informed a notion of literature *per se*. What the discussion makes apparent is the presence of two very different strategies of reading; one that we “do” to canonical texts and another, completely different thing, that we “do” to texts from the “Third World”. This differentiation of practice is, I would argue, an iteration of a more general differentiation of types of knowledge that also falls along the line of colonial difference. Naoki Sakai has described this epistemic divide in terms of what he calls, following Husserl’s distinction, *humanitas* and *anthropos*.<sup>108</sup> Focusing on the practice of knowledge production in Area Studies departments in U.S. universities, Sakai argues

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<sup>106</sup> Chow (100)

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Sakai, Naoki. “Theory and Asian humanity: on the question of *humanitas* and *anthropos*” in *Postcolonial Studies*, 13:4, 2010.



that this field has continued to reproduce a division of intellectual labor in which each geopolitical “area” is assumed to offer up knowledge, in the form of data, which pertains only to itself (*anthropos*), while the Area Studies professor analyzes this data and transforms it into general ‘theory’ (*humanitas*).<sup>109</sup> As with literary production, the train of knowledge production only goes one way. Any attempt by the “Third World” to wrest control of the means of knowledge production from the “First World” results, unavoidably, in a regime of comparison. And as with the example provided by Jameson via Ahmed and Chow, this regime of comparison always assumes the fixity of one type of knowledge (*humanitas*) at the expense of necessitating the constant transience of the other (*anthropos*). To exemplify this, Sakai provides the example of “Asian theory” which, in attempting to account for a regional manifestation of a knowledge-type which aspires to universal applicability, not only frames itself as an act of mimicry – of coming after the fact - but a hopelessly oxymoronic one at that.<sup>110</sup>

My contention is that the inherently self-defeating structure that is unshakeable in Sakai’s example of “Asian Theory” is also at work in Jameson’s notion of “Third World Literature”, or indeed in any instance of literary sub-categorization. In both cases, the claim to differentiate one type of knowledge, or one type of literature, from another through the addition of demographic or regional modifiers *undoes* the claim to universality which is made by either “theory” or “literature”. In effect, what we are doing when we say we are doing “Asian theory” or “Third World Literature” is not really theory or literary criticism at all, but rather the identification and classification of *types* of knowledge (*anthropos*) which can later be assimilated into general knowledge (*humanitas*). One needs take only a cursory glimpse at the way in which literary sub-

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<sup>109</sup> Sakai (2010).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

categories are relentlessly organized into representative anthologies to see this in action. As with the “Complete Works of Zainichi Literature”, anthologies of “Black Literature”, “Third World Literature”, and perhaps most tellingly of all, “World Literature”, seem to respond to a desire for auxiliary information, for different flavors of literature, rather than to the question, “what is literature?”. They cater to our inner tourist, providing a (purportedly) representative glimpse of worlds which, because we always already “know” them to be different from ours can be enjoyed at a distance, with no danger of any experience of dislocation on our part.

“Zainichi Literature” as a practice of reading is, then, fundamentally no different from that of “Third World Literature”, in that the figure of the writing subject is always assumed, and for the most part constituted, before we even come to the text. In the same way that “Third World Literature” is always opposed to a somewhat tautological notion of “Western Literature”, so “Zainichi Literature” also functions as an auxiliary category that serves to reaffirm the *a priori* status of “Japanese Literature”.<sup>111</sup> The text is, to reiterate Jameson’s observation, “already read”, because its principle use value is to flesh out a figure – the figure of “Zainichi” – whose existence is always already assumed. It may, as Chow identifies in her critique of Homi Bhabha, lead to a proliferation of further sub-categorizations – such as we see with “Zainichi Korean Women’s Literature”, or in the propensity for literary scholars to divide Zainichi authors generationally – but these only serve to entrench the claim to a figure of “Zainichi” by bracketing its internal incoherencies and contradictions as special cases. But what remains illegible is any

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<sup>111</sup> It should be noted that the socio-historical relation that governs the opposition of “Third World Literature” to somewhat tautological notion of “Western Literature” is somewhat different in the case of “Zainichi Literature” and “Japanese Literature”, although I would argue that the effect on reading practices is the same. Historically, “Japanese Literature” has been subject to the same regime of comparison with “the West” as “Third World Literature”, meaning that Japanese texts have also been read as national allegories and treated as some form of anthropological data. But given that the line which governs a different practice of reading is, in both cases, that of colonial difference, the comparison is justified.

attempt by an author to deconstruct the figure itself. This is simply impossible while the reader's horizon of expectation remains firmly within the framework of "Zainichi Literature". Within this structure the transcendence of the third-person position is completely denied to the writer always already designated as "Zainichi". They are assumed to be subjects of history but never credited as agents and, consequently, the texts they produce "even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory".<sup>112</sup>

With all this in mind, how might we start reading "Zainichi Literature" as literature rather than as raw anthropological data? One might suggest that we would be better off eschewing the term "Zainichi" altogether but that, of course, would simply be feigning ignorance, like the person who (with all best intentions) responds to the claim that "Black Lives Matter" by asserting that "all lives matter!" For those who happen to fall under its sign the figure of "Zainichi" is not an optional subject position that can be picked up and put down strategically. It is a shadow which follows its owner, claiming their movements as its own. Even Chŏng Tae-gyun, who in 2001 called for "The End of Zainichi South Koreans" (*Zainichi kankokujin no shūen*) based on the argument that South Korean citizens in Japan had now attained all the same legal rights as Japanese citizens aside from the right to vote, had to admit that the case was much more complicated when it comes to those with "*chōsen*" status. Like Yun Konja, he recognized that the figure of *Zainichi* evaporates in the wake of becoming South Korean but remains in dogged pursuit of those who find themselves at odds with the current geo-political framework of ethno-national subjectivity.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Jameson (69)

<sup>113</sup> Chong, Tae-gyun, *Zainichi kankokujin no shūen*. Tokyo, Bungei Shunjū, 2001.

In order to account for the inescapability of the figure of *Zainichi* without totalizing it and rendering it yet more inescapable we need to credit “Zainichi Literature” with being part of the main show, and not merely a supporting act. What this means in practice is that we acknowledge *Zainichi* as a paradigmatic figure which Koreans in Japan are both *subject to* and *subjects of*. In fact, this is the very split between the private and the social – the irresolvable battle of “Freud vs. Marx” – that Jameson identifies as the defining quality of the “western realist and modern novel”.<sup>114</sup> Unlike Jameson, however, who despite his warnings to the contrary never seems to be able to move beyond the assumption that the split subject is a uniquely European phenomenon, we must acknowledge that this definition of literature is just as applicable to those on the far side of the colonial line. Indeed if, as Jameson claims, the novel and the corresponding work of literary criticism are the result of a subjective split which is itself “one of the determinants of capitalist culture”, then this definition of literature must stand wherever and whenever capitalism is the dominant force of social relations. In fact it is rather telling that Jameson only can only refute this possibility of common ground by relying on Marx’s notion of the “Asiatic mode of production” in order to distinguish “Western” capitalism from “Asian” capitalism.

By acknowledging that “Zainichi Literature” may also be prompted by the same tension between the libidinal and the social, we can credit Zainichi authors – and indeed any individual who falls under that sign – with having the same ability to simultaneously write *about* and *from* a given subject position. In short, we will finally recognize the third-person perspective and, along with it, the irony, sarcasm, ventriloquism and hypothetical experiments that are all properly “literary” and which are all currently illegible within the particular structuration of “Zainichi Literature”. Furthermore, by emphasizing a reading strategy that insists on the primacy of

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<sup>114</sup> Jameson (69)

“literature” as opposed to “Zainichi”, we begin to approach a grounds for comparison that does not assume the line of colonial difference as its departure point. If we understand literature and literary criticism as pursuits oriented towards exploring the dark territory between the libidinal and the social, between living for oneself and living for others, then the auxiliary subjectivities of “Japan” and “Zainichi” can be discussed, in common, as figures which similarly haunt and define us, which can at times empower us and at other times imprison us.

It is for this reason that I have devoted the first chapter of this thesis on “Zainichi Literature” to a reading of the figure of “Zainichi” and how its signification has continued to shift over time. Rather than hold to the assumption that “Zainichi” subjectivity can only be defined in opposition to either “Japan” or “Korea” and even then only in terms of lack (of ethnicity, nationality, cultural and historical agency), I have attempted to demonstrate that in fact all three identities have been commonly defined by a hegemonic discourse of ethnic-nationalism. Within this regime, the lack which “Zainichi” are required to suffer serves as a means of diverting the fallout from ethnic-nationalism’s bankruptcy away from the respective nation states of Japan and Korea. Rather than acknowledging that the experience of colonialism has, for better or worse, bound both countries to a subjectivity which necessitates the interpellation of the other, a belief in discrete ethnic-national identities has been sustained by foregrounding “Zainichi” and their ethnic indeterminacy as the problem in need of resolution. “Zainichi” has effectively become the child who is blamed for their parents’ divorce. By acknowledging that this highly charged figure of “Zainichi” does not necessarily always coincide with each individual who occupies it - that the relationship between the figure and the person is, as with any social identity, always split – we render “Zainichi Literature” legible as a *response* to this figure, its construction, and its function. This is not to say that all writers who are Zainichi approach their

fiction as a means to critique ethnic-nationalism. Indeed, as I touched on above, there have been a number of writers and commentators for whom ethnic difference (from Japan) has remained the cornerstone of their claim to agency. But for the writers who I will be reading in the following chapters, a reading strategy that emphasizes the “literature” in “Zainichi Literature” primes us for the moments in their texts which question this kind of investment in ethnic-national subjectivity. Most importantly, these criticisms of ethnic-nationalism are not only directed at the monolithic national identities of “Japan” and “Korea” but also at articulations of Zainichi identity that have been complicit in the reproduction of ethnically defined communities.

In the next chapter, I examine two short stories written by Ri Kaisei (Yi Hōesōng), *Warera no seishun no tojō ni te* (“In the Midst of our Youth”) and *Shōnin no inai kōkei* (“Scene Without a Witness”) published early in his career in 1969 and 1970 respectively. Like much of Ri’s work, both texts are heavily autobiographical and portray the author’s coming-of-age as a young Korean man in the ashes of the Japanese empire. As per a convention of the “I-novel”, which Ri’s texts have often been typified as (cf. Takeda Seiji 1983), *Warera no seishun no tojō ni te* portrays a young man’s transition between the native place of his family home and the public arena of society. However, whereas the distinction between home and society in classic Bildungsroman narratives often serves as a metaphor for a host of other analogous binaries such as self and other, private and public, and perhaps even pre-political and political, the added valence of nationality over these pairings problematizes the putative coherency of the subject they serve to triangulate. With “home” in Ri’s text being synonymous with Korea and “society” with Japan, the novella subverts the usual assumptions regarding the division of the private and the political and prompts a consideration of how “public” the public square can really be within the limits of the nation form. From this perspective, Ri begins to approach an awareness of what

I call the *grammar of nationalism*; a recognition that the rhetorical and affective scaffolding of claims to national exceptionalism are common to all such claims. Recognizing the grammar of nationalism allows Ri to break free of the zero-sum game of Japanese versus Korean identity, and to subsequently probe a conceptualization of political community which might account for, rather than abnegate, the border-blurring consequences of Japan's wartime imperialization policies (*kōminka seisaku*). In my analysis of *Shōnin no inai kōkei*, I then demonstrate how Ri's transnational purview leads him to examine the politics of colonial memory. As justification for the postwar order of ethnic sovereignty in East Asia, the horror of empire has been an important object-to-be-abjected. But for those living under the sign of Zainichi, their very interpellation as social beings cannot be made sense of without tracing lines of continuity between the colonial and post-colonial periods. Told from the perspective of two estranged friends, one Korean and one Japanese, who were classmates in colonial Karafuto (Sakhalin), Ri's novella attempts to tackle the tricky question of how empire might be remembered, yet not mourned, as the history of a present that we are yet to come to terms with.

Continuing with the problem of how to reckon with abject histories, I move to an analysis of Yi Yang Ji and her experimentation with narration from what I have called the *abject position* (in contrast to the normative subject position). Drawing on the lessons learned by the Black radical feminists of the Combahee River Collective as they found themselves coming in to conflict with both whitewashing by second-wave feminism and the latent misogyny within the Black Panther leadership, I demonstrate how Yi's fiction demonstrates a similar sensitivity to the unique status of the "ethnic-woman" as a figure whose abjection is necessitated by both Japanese and (Zainichi) Korean men in their attempts to establish a homosocial order that transcends the parochial limits of ethnicity. Occupying an othered body that has the potential to produce yet

more othered bodies, I second Christina Yi's recent assertion that the conflation of ethnic parochialism with the mother in mid-century discourse meant that unlike Korean men, Korean women were rhetorically forbidden from the symbolic transcendence that imperial institutions offered Korean men. I argue that this mode of interpellation is just one of the ways in which the rhetorical and affective investment in the structure of empire has carried over into the postcolonial era. In her attempts to capture this experience of remaining trapped within this socially and historically interpellated figure, I argue that Yi Yang-Ji abandons the trap of the subject position (which will be discerned as the ethnic-woman in any case), and instead presents tentatively "Korean" women who struggle to be present to themselves, beyond the noise of persistent geopolitical rhetoric, let alone to the reader. To use the parlance of our time, Yi ultimately "trolls" the readers attempts to locate the Korean woman at the center of her texts, instead taking us down circuitous and solipsistic paths of subject-formation that ultimately reveal more about the limits of the reader's own identitarian boundaries than of her own.

Finally, in chapter four I turn my attention to a comparison of two texts; Kaiko Takeshi's *Nihon sanmon opera* (1959) and Yang Sok Il's *Yoru wo kakete* (1994). Despite being written thirty-five years apart, both texts portray the so-called "Apache tribe" of postwar Osaka; a moniker coined by the press in reference to a group of predominantly Korean black marketeers who briefly made a living by stealing scrap metal from the ruins of the former Osaka arsenal (in what is now the environs of Osaka Castle Park and Osaka Business Park) under cover of night. Pak Yuha has argued that the portrayal of Koreans in Kaiko's novel is steeped in imperialist affect, framing the presence of Koreans in postwar Osaka as a "sickness" which continues to infect Japan with the savagery of premodernity beyond the collapse of the material structures of Japanese empire. This framing, however, posits Kaiko as an imperialist ideologue; an accusation



which not only stands at odds with his later role as a prominent voice in the Beiheiren movement protesting the U.S.'s (and by association Japan's) imperialist ventures in Vietnam, but also fails to account for the sympathetic tone that Kaiko affords the "Apache tribe" throughout his novel. While Pak is not entirely wrong to suggest that there is something problematic about Kaiko's representation of Koreans in his text, in failing to identify his peculiarly *sympathetic* mode of othering Koreans, Pak stops short of a more nuanced critique that might recognize the cooptation of imperialist affect by a discourse that, in the postwar era, hastened to equate liberal democracy with ethnic sovereignty. By focusing on Kaiko's choice to double-down on the use of the "Apache" simile, I argue that the representation of the Korean ethnic other in *Nihon sanmon opera* was deeply influenced by a new genre of whitewashed colonial narratives coming out of the U.S. (settler) movie industry. Drawing on work by scholars of indigenous representation in North America, who argue that the immediate postwar years saw a tendency among film producers to repurpose narratives of indigenous struggle in such a way that they became incorporated into a national teleology of a struggle against tyranny, broadly defined, I argue that Kaiko similarly draws on a rather shallow interpretation of Korean ethnicity as a shorthand for social liminality. As per the criticism levelled at North American film makers, however, in doing so Kaiko creates a palimpsest which not only disavows the ongoing parsing and exclusion of Koreans from the Japanese political community, but indeed actively contributes to the achievement of that extroversion. Reading Yang's later novel as response to precisely this rhetorical sleight of hand, I demonstrate how Yang seizes on scrap-metal collecting as a metaphor for an emerging history of the present; one which is, in this case, quite literally unearthed as a result of activity, rather than given as a completed (~~hi~~)story in the pre-packaged,

immutable form of ethnic subjectivity. In doing so, I argue, Yang provides us with nothing short of a historiographical exit route from the zero-sum game of (post)colonial *ressentiment*.

## Chapter Two

### Ri Kaisei and the tyranny of the household

#### **Introduction**

Ri Kaisei, also referred to by the Korean pronunciation of his name, Lee Hoesŏng, made his debut in the Japanese literary establishment in 1969 with the publication of his first novel, *Mata futatabi no michi* (“The Same Road Once More”) which also won the prestigious Gunzō Newcomers Award for that year. Within three short years he was also awarded the Akutagawa Prize for his short novel, *Kinuta wo utsu onna* (“The Woman who Filled Clothes”), an accolade which turned him into something of a poster boy for the emerging genre of *Zainichi* literature. As the first ethnically Korean writer to win the Akutagawa Prize, Ri’s fiction sparked a debate about the relationship between language and literature, and particularly about what it meant to write in Japanese as a former colonial subject of Japan. Much of the interest surrounding Ri stemmed from him being one of the first second-generation *zainichi* Korean voices to make their mark on the discourse of the “*zainichi* problem” in Japan. Unlike his older peers, such as Kim Sŏkbŏm and Kim Talsu, who firmly identified as Korean citizens temporarily residing in Japan, it was clear to critics that Ri’s texts exhibited a far more ambiguous comprehension of what constitutes home and belonging. Indeed, it was this emergence of a generationally distinct “Korean” voice, of which Ri was considered to be the vanguard, that prompted conversations about “*Zainichi* literature” being a genre unto itself, and the notion that it might constitute a positionality of address distinct from Korean and Japanese national voices

The generational gap between Ri and his forebears lent itself quite nicely to the head-to-head “*zadankai*” format that is so popular in Japan’s literature journals and coterie magazines,

and it is often in these intimate dialogues that Ri's thinking regarding literature, language, and the political significance of *Zainichi* literature can be pieced together. One such *zadankai*, a dialogue between Ri. Kim Sokbom, and Ōe Kenzaburō published in *Bungaku* in 1970, is particularly illustrative, not only of Ri's own musings regarding the relationship between language, literature, and politics, but also in terms of how he locates these ideas within a trajectory of generational change. In the dialogue, Ri and Kim concur that the historical relationship between Korean residents and the Japanese language is such that the decision to write in Japanese is always one fraught with contradictions and semantic traps. Despite their reliance on a taxonomy that draws clear correlations between ethnicity and language – such as in the formulation “mother tongue” (*bokokugo*) – both authors admit that Japanese is now, for all intents and purposes, the first language for most Koreans living in Japan. Yet they also acknowledge that the historical antipathy of the ethno-national subjects that these languages are assumed to embody has been irrevocably incorporated within the languages themselves, such that a politically innocent usage of either language is – at least from the positionality of being *between* them as opposed to merely *traversing* them – simply impossible. Under such conditions, the decision of whether to speak in Korean or Japanese inevitably entails a commitment to either the defense of Korean culture in Japan or an acquiescence to assimilation. Both writers agree that in their experience, the Japanese language has a tendency of speaking for the writer rather than the other way around.<sup>115</sup> For Kim Sokbom, an inevitable consequence of this political valence for Koreans in Japan is the “erosion” (*fūka*) of Korean subjectivity, in which the particularity of Korean voices become subsumed within a language that claims all it can articulate as its own. Understandably, this “erosion” process is understood by both authors to be an unavoidable

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<sup>115</sup> Kim, Sŏk-bŏm, Ri Kaisei & Ōe Kenzaburō, “*Nihongo de kaku koto ni tsuite*” in *Bungaku*, 38(11), Nov 1970. (pp. 1,2)

consequence, but also a continuation, of Japanese imperial assimilation policies which sought to create Japanese-Asian subjects through the peripheralization of other national subjectivities in the region.<sup>116</sup>

Both Kim and Ri agree that this inexorable slide toward assimilation presents something of a crisis for the future of Koreans in Japan. But it is in their proposed responses to this crisis that they demonstrate their vastly different and ultimately opposed visions. For Kim, the only guard against this “erosion” is to insist on one’s ethnic particularity (*minzokusei*), which he claims can be achieved by imbuing one’s writing with a distinct “Korean smell” (*chōsentekina nioi*) so as to produce texts that could only have been written by a Korean.<sup>117</sup> He adds, even more cryptically, that this particularity need not be mere “localism” (*rōkarizumu*) or “narrow nationalism” but could be something which “has a universal quality”, thus suggesting that this “Korean smell” should not seek to convey meaning – or at least, not a meaning which drastically departs from the Japanese – but rather lend an air (or a “smell”) of otherness, in this case “Koreanness”, to words and concepts that have ostensibly the same meaning.<sup>118</sup> He states, for example, that “as a general principle. . . objects and the words that represent objects are completely different things. *This is why* words can constitute various ethnic languages (*minzokugo*)” (emphasis is my own).<sup>119</sup> He goes on to explain that ethnic languages are like clothes which, if one could remove them, would expose similarities between them. This is particularly true for Korean and Japanese, he argues, in which one can find “common concepts to

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. (9)

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Kim, Sŏk-bŏm et al. (1970) (p.10)

a certain degree”.<sup>120</sup> This, Kim argues, is the condition of translatability, and it is “what allows the expression of Korean things even when using Japanese”.<sup>121</sup>

Kim thus conceives this “Korean smell” as something that might contest, or at least disrupt the assumption of homolinguality among Japanese speakers by introducing a degree of ambivalence to the assumed parity between signifier and the signified. And yet, by positing Korea as an alternative sign system that can defamiliarize the Japanese speaker from the Japanese they are reading, Kim exposes his investment in the idea that Korea and Japan constitute two distinct epistemological spheres which can only ever be defined in opposition to each other. Not only does this preemptively foreclose the possibility of acknowledging epistemological frameworks held in common as an inevitable consequence of the linguistic colonization of Korean by Japanese (still evident in the number of *kango* (Chinese character) neologisms – including fundamental socio-political concepts such as “ethnicity” (*minzoku/minjok*), “nation” (*kokumin/kukmin*) and of course “literature” (*bungaku/munhak*)) but also, by positing Korean and Korea as a means of critiquing the essentialism of “Japan” as it is assumed to be communicated through Japanese, Kim ends up essentializing Korea and Korean in precisely the same way. In short, Kim sees Japanese as a national language in need of being exposed to an outside, but he stops short of the next logical step which would concede that his criticism is one of national language *as such*, rather than of any particular instance of national language.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

It is precisely this blind spot that Ri identifies in his response to Kim. For while he agrees in principle that the Japanese language needs to be exposed to the possibility of indeterminacy, he questions what the “Korean smell”, proffered as such an “outside”, might consist of.

[You] have this strong conviction that we must inscribe the Korean smell [...] into each page. I too am constantly telling myself that if I don't do so my fiction won't constitute *Zainichi* Literature. But at the same time, from where I stand, there is something about that which I find hard to accept. [...] Because in all of us, in our fathers, in whatever it is that is commonly accepted to be a Korean smell, isn't there something incredibly old, something Confucian, that lurks in the depths and remains incubated even now? I can't help feeling that unless we reject that kind of thing then, from a literary perspective, we'll never be able to achieve anything new”.<sup>122</sup>

Ri thus identifies that while it should be the role of *zainichi* authors to contest the essentialized language community evoked by Japanese as a national language, conducting this critique by simply turning to Korea risks reifying a Korean national language community in the same way. By placing the Korean national language beyond the dialectical framework that he insists Japanese is beholden to, Kim ends up invoking a “Korea” which has somehow resisted this exposure to the other. Implicitly, then, Kim stages a figure of Korea, and an analysis of its language, that must disavow the experience of colonialism as being formative of contemporary Korean subjectivity in any way. What else could such a Korea be then, asks Ri, if not “old”, “Confucian”, and dominated by “our fathers”?

Ri's concern that an affect of postcolonial *ressentiment* has thus far served to reify a chimerical pre-colonial Korean national culture leads him to speculate whether such an approach might not constitute a trap in which “Korea” remains tethered to epistemological structures that are not necessarily responsive to current, or even recent lived experiences. This is of course

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<sup>122</sup> Kim, Sŏk-bŏm et al. (1970) (p.20)

particularly important from the perspective of *zainichi* Koreans, for whom the dialectical formation of national subjectivity is *itself* precisely what constitutes the *zainichi* Korean “ethnic” experience. In this formulation, the critique that the concept of national language cannot possibly hope to account for the dialogical contingency of its being is acknowledged as one which must be directed at all such claims which attempt to link a singular national subjectivity to a univocal national language. Implicitly, then, Ri’s intervention critiques Korean nationalism as much as it acknowledges Japanese exceptionalism. Later in the dialogue he makes this criticism explicit, adding that it is our relationship to language-as-such that needs to be interrogated, rather than the limitations of particular national subjectivities.

As for putting the brakes [on the continued erosion of Korean subjectivity], this is important for me too... This issue raises its head in everything I write. And yet. . . I don’t want to keep committing myself to the kind of fiction which gives off a [Korean] smell For me, there are other challenges that I feel drawn to. For example, when I read Ōe [Kenzaburo]’s work, I get the sense from the text that the Japanese language is in the midst of a hugely transitional period. There is a particularly strong sense that language is being liberated. There is a feeling of depth therein, as though this is a contemplation on words themselves. It feels utterly different from the normative, classical notion of Japanese. So for me, when I see that Japanese itself is being challenged by writers like Ōe, [...] I start thinking that maybe the problems harbored by Koreans can be exposed that much more, and that a rediscovery of [what it means to be] Korean can be achieved, paradoxically, by using Japanese. [...] The generation above ours, which I would say includes the likes of Kim Sa-ryang, Kim Tal-su, Kim Sōk-bōm and Kim Tae-saeng, while all differing respectively, have all been committed to the work of preserving something very territorially Korean and, in continuing to preserve a Korean subject that can be pretty hard to swallow at times, (*nomare gachina chōsenjin no shutai*), they’ve assumed the role of preserving Koreanness for future generations [...] I can’t quite be definitive in what I’m trying to say here but there is something that I want to reject. I think that perhaps there is a need for us to try and deconstruct (*kaitai suru*) this Korean smell.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Kim, Sōk-bōm et al. (1970) (p.24)



Like Ōe, Ri's commitment to literature draws on an idea of *shutaisei* (subjectivity) which encompasses far more than the narrower concerns of national subjectivity. In comparison to national literature and national language, which ultimately only constitutes an encounter with the self (wrought large), his notion of "literature" is one that explores subjectivity in terms of an ever-unfolding encounter between the known and the unknown.

What is particularly interesting in Ri's articulation of this contrast, however, is the way in which he associates the closed circle of national language and literature with the dictat of a father figure. In the second extract I cite, in contrast to the "liberating" language used by Ōe (who is very much his peer in terms of age) Ri criticizes the tendency of the founding fathers of *zainichi* fiction – Kim Saryang, Kim Talsu, Kim Sokbom and Kim Taesaeng – as having taken upon themselves "the role of preserving Koreanness for future generations" despite that articulation of Koreanness being "very territorial". This was a criticism that would be echoed in Kim Tong-Myong's watershed essay, "The Zainichi Korean Third Way" (*Zainichi chosenshin no daisanmichi*), discussed in the previous chapter, which was published around a decade later and argued that the patriarchs of *Sōren* and *Mindan* had monopolized discourse on *zainichi* politics well beyond the point at which a generational transition should have occurred. But what is even more pronounced in Ri's critique of national literature and cultural defense is a concomitant criticism of paternal autocracy more generally. This is particularly evident in the first extract, where he states that "whatever it is that is commonly accepted to be Korean" is also "something Confucian" which is found "in our fathers". If we understand Confucianism to be a mode of social relations that is premised on closed, predetermined relations as opposed to open-ended ones, and in which fidelity to the bonds of kinship work to prevent the emergence of contingent modes of relations, it is easy to understand how Confucianism, most succinctly evoked by the

command to obey one's father, could be a useful metaphor to illustrate the claustrophobic confines of national literature.

Indeed, it is precisely this metaphor of the tyranny of the father – not of the tyranny of fathers individually but of the tyrannical command to obey the father figure – that constitutes the principle vehicle of critique in Ri's fiction regarding the limited and limiting ontological claims of ethno-nationalism. It is important to note, however, that this critique of the father figure is by no means a feminist critique of patriarchy. As we will see, while Ri portrays the father as a figure through whom encounters with the world are always already mediated, and thus as a figure which prevents a properly poietic mode of relation between the self and the other, the post-Oedipal society that Ri envisions by contrast is nothing more than a homosocial order of orphaned men. Ri's dream of a post-Oedipal liberation from the father thus remains unable to account for sexual difference. Even with this caveat, however, Ri's use of the household as a protracted metaphor for the nation form should still be acknowledged as an important intervention during a time in which ethno-nationalism constituted a hegemonic claim. By encouraging us to think of nations and national societies as households, Ri asks us to associate a mode of social formation that we can easily recognize as both particular and universal – in the sense that emerging from some form of household is a universal experience of socialization, even as we acknowledge that the particularity of those experiences are part of what constitutes us as individuals – with the nation form; a mode of social formation which, precisely because it is assumed to constitute the extra-domestic realm of *society-at-large*, is often thought of as an unbound, unmediated site of encounter with the other. By encouraging us to think of the nation form as something which is more comparable to hearth and home than to the ancient ideal of the *polis*, Ri's fiction asks us to consider where, if at all, the *polis* exists. And if national society

prevents an encounter with the other, then in what other modes of relation might this encounter be possible?

I am by no means the first to identify that the tyranny of the household and its bearings on ideations of society are substantial themes in Ri's early fiction. Takeda Seiji, for example, has argued that the household in Ri's work is always associated with Korea and Koreanness, and that this notion of "Korea" as a private, domestic concern is established in contrast to Japanese society, which is framed as the site of interaction with the other. "If we accept that [the author's] understanding of his identity as a 'Korean' (*chōsenjin*) is the foundation on which he has come to understand forms of social relation," he argues, "then it suggests the memories Ri recalls from his youth, taken together, constitute the landscape of his 'household' (*ie*). . . . Whenever the 'household' makes an appearance in discussions regarding the discovery of the self, it usually appears in the form of a tension between a modern articulation of the self and the feudal environment of the home."<sup>124</sup> Takeda thus recognizes that the juxtaposition in Ri's fiction between the domestic world of Korea and the public world of Japan does not simply set a stage for the protagonist's innocent transition from private life to public life, and from childhood to adulthood. The valence of modernity – and of the modern idea of self-transcendence in particular – complicates the task of telling a coming-of-age story for Koreans in Japan. Unlike Korean authors writing in Korea, *zainichi* authors in Japan must work within a linguistic milieu in which "Korea" has itself become a euphemism for *pre-modernity* (not in the sense of "tradition" but of being prior to modernity). By positing "Korea" as the domestic world from which one emerges and "Japan" as the society in which he will emerge, Ri illustrates that the crucial moment of self-transcendence and of *emergence* will never arrive for his protagonists unless they shed

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<sup>124</sup> Takeda (1983) pp.11-12

completely all vestiges of being Korean. For as long as they remain Korean they will never be permitted to transcend the pre-modernity – the being *prior* - of the Korean in Japan. Takeda thus argues that in Ri's fiction the "household" cannot be so easily shaken off as a prior stage of development. I would add that it cannot be so easily shaken off *without retroactively acquiescing to the imperial imperative of assimilation*. It is precisely this relation to the affect of postcolonial *ressentiment* that constitutes the main point of contention in the inter-generational debate on the futurity of Koreans in Japan.

What Takeda's analysis reveals is that despite the distinction between the domestic sphere and the public sphere that is implicit in the Bildungsroman/confessional mode of literature, this distinction is in fact far from clear in the nation form; something which is exemplified when the protagonist's personal growth is contingent on them crossing the divide separating colonized from colonizer. Far from constituting a *polis*, which in Greek antiquity, Hannah Arendt reminds us, was not in the least bit concerned with "protect[ing] society" but rather with the "sphere of freedom" that came as a result of having conquered the needs of the self, the nation form is in fact the consequence of a blurring of the distinction between the *polis* and domestic life (*domus*). Arendt names the product of this confusion *society*, adding that in its modern, national form, "politics is nothing more than a function of society, that is, the rise of the 'household'", such that, "all matters pertaining formerly to the private sphere of the family have become a 'collective' concern".<sup>125</sup> Given that Arendt's example of the *polis* proper does not extend beyond Athenian democracy, it is clear that it no longer constitutes an acknowledged 'space' in the same way that the concepts of the "household" and "society" are manifest in existing institutions. And yet, as Takeda's analysis of Ri's fiction demonstrates, the possibility of

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<sup>125</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, [Chicago]: University of Chicago Press, 1958 (p.31)

recovering a notion of the *polis* as a locus of open *political* encounter is far more than a mere academic exercise for Ri. As a means of deconstructing the received notion of (national) society by exposing its conflation of the domestic and public spheres, the idea of the *polis* allows for the possibility of apprehending, however hypothetically, a vision of collectivity which can look beyond the narrow housekeeping of the national “political economy”.

In what follows, I provide a reading of two of Ri’s earlier texts, published in 1969 and 1970 respectively, in which Ri explores this ambivalent relationship between the notions of “household” and “society”. In “In the Midst of our Youth” (*Warera no seishun no tojo ni te*, 1969), Ri references the Bildungsroman both in the form and content of the novella to set up a coming-of-age story for a nineteen-year-old *zainichi* protagonist who has fled his home to make a life for himself in Tokyo. The narrative is thus reminiscent of a typical “*jōkyō*” (literally, “coming up to the capital”) story, and evokes a similar distinction between the parochialism of the “*furusato*”, or native place, and the cosmopolitan worldliness of the metropole. I use this text to further illustrate Takeda’s claim that the horizons of expectation associated with the coming-of-age story – namely the transcendence of the self – is confounded when the originary ‘native place’ also corresponds to Korea, a persistent figure of Asian premodernity in Japan. Using Takeda’s analytical framework as a departure point, I consider the consequences of this formal breakdown for Ri’s understanding of the historical predicament of *zainichi* Koreans in Japan from the perspective of political theory.

With the second text, “A Scene Without a Witness” (*Shōnin no inai kōkei*, 1970), I show how the association that Ri establishes in “In the Midst of our Youth” between a self-preservatory national politics and the tyranny of the father enables him to articulate commonalities between nationalisms (in this case, between Japanese exceptionalism and a

Korean cultural protectionism) and, subsequently, to tentatively reach out for a barely articulable vision of an alternative mode of encounter with the other. Structured around a back-and-forth correspondence between two old school friends, one Korean and the other Japanese, the timeline of the novella also oscillates back-and-forth between the recollections of their school days during the final weeks of the Pacific War and their lived experiences in the present. The divergence in their lives since the war is a consequence of their “return” to discrete nationalities following their “withdrawal” (*hikiage*) from empire. But as the friends try to piece together the memories of their childhood, they soon discover that they are unable to affirm each other’s accounts of the past. In terms of being a singular, historical event, the collapse of empire is thus implicitly recognized as “A Scene Without a Witness”, for while its memory continues to serve the interests of competing national narratives, its historicization remains perpetually deferred.

In having recognized that both Japanese and Korean nationalisms are structured around the tyranny of the household, Ri is able to provide a much more nuanced critique of empire which, rather than pointing the finger at “Japan” the ethno-state subject, points it instead at the emperor system. Ri not only critiques the emperor system as a symbol of Japanese exceptionalism, however, but as a more general disciplinary structure which invokes the father, and household, and the concomitant imperative of filial piety to the point of self-abnegation and self-destruction. By decoupling this disciplinary structure from the ethnic differentiations that are, in fact, its product, Ri recognizes that its coercive power is experienced by both Korean and Japanese alike. Moreover, he suggests that it is precisely this coercive power which persists beyond empire; a phenomenon which not only forecloses the possibility of acknowledging colonialism as a common condition of modern national experience, but which consequently

conceals the ideological affiliation between imperialism and the coercive power of ethnic sovereignty.

### **“In the Midst of Our Youth”: A still-born Bildungsroman**

“In the Midst of Our Youth” (abbreviated from here on as IMOY) is a good example of the semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story that Takeda argues is a common motif in much of Ri’s earlier fiction. The novella opens as it’s protagonist, a nineteen-year-old *zainichi* Korean lad called Namsu, arrives in Tokyo and is met at the station by his older brother. Arriving with two small suitcases and fifteen-hundred yen in his pocket, it is clear that Namsu’s move to Tokyo was hastily planned, and indeed we later learn that he has run away from home. Information on the sort of situation he has fled from is sparse at first and the reader is initially led to believe that it is the dream of individual autonomy promised by the capital to which Namsu has been drawn. In correspondence to their father, Namsu’s elder brother had informed him that he was working as a “photographic technician” in Tokyo and “living single life in a neat little four-and-a-half mat room”.<sup>126</sup> On his arrival however, Namsu is shocked to discover that, while the apartment is certainly four-and-a-half mats in size, his brother has been sharing this space with four other people; Namsu’s cousins Ichiro and Jiro, a recent immigrant from Korea called Jeong, and a mysterious and mostly mute Japanese man known only as Fū-san. With Namsu’s arrival, six men must now share an apartment measuring little more than five square meters.

Moreover, the men with whom Namsu shares the apartment are in a sorry state. His cousins, Ichiro and Jiro, together with Jeong, make ends meet by day-laboring (*nikoyon*); a day-

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<sup>126</sup> Ri, Kaisei, *Warera seishun no tojo ni te*, Tokyo, Kodansha, 1970 (p.22)

to-day work lottery primarily intended to provide a means of subsistence to the unemployed elderly. Ichiro is also an alcoholic, and when not at work spends most of his time in drunken oblivion. What Namsu's elder brother does for a living remains unclear at first, and Namsu initially believes that his brother's expensive looking suits, rigorous grooming regime and perpetually fat wallet are indicative of a lucrative job. It is later revealed that he has in fact been working as a con man, wooing women at bars before extorting them for money. Very quickly, the idea that Tokyo will provide the stage for the protagonist's coming-of-age fantasy dissipates. The experiences of his roommates have demonstrated that the transcendence of the past promised by his movement "up" to the capital (*jōkyō suru*) may well remain entirely out of reach.

Over the course of the novella it becomes apparent that this promise of transcendence has also been interpreted by Namsu as an opportunity to flee the "Korea" represented by his home, and to arrive at his own understanding of what it means to be Korean in Japan. Towards the end of the text, Namsu reflects on what prompted him to come to Tokyo in the first place and admits that it was an attempt to locate "Korea" as an identity disassociated from the "Korea" of his household, which he remembers as being claustrophobic, impoverished, and under the constant shadow of his violent father.

His father, who shouted and screamed at his family and raised his hand against them, filled Namsu with shame. This soon became a shame directed at Korea, a resentment toward his father, and even led to a disgust for himself. He too was Korean after all. The longer Namsu remained at home, the more he found himself hating Koreans and he felt himself slipping toward self-denial. He couldn't help but feel that there must be something more to being Korean than this. He convinced himself that he would have to flee under the cover of night. He would have to reject his father's house if he were to ever become Korean. (*IMOY*, p.94)

Here Namsu acknowledges that "Korea" is a social identity which extends beyond the limits of his own household, even as that household has informed his understanding of what it means to



be Korean up to this point. In doing so, he recognizes it as an identity that he must ultimately come to terms with on his own, and that to do so requires not just leaving his house but “reject[ing] his father’s house” in its entirety. To this extent, however, it is also clear that he assumes society to be a space in which he can shed his past, or at least hold it in suspense, before re-establishing what this connection to Korea might mean for him in his own life. In a psychoanalytical register we might refer to this as the archetypical oedipal drive, by which the son must first kill the father in order to surpass and, ultimately, replace him. Here this oedipal relation also has a national-political veil, such that in order to become the Korean he wishes to become, Namsu must first kill the Korean he has been told to be. What Namsu does not acknowledge within this structure of feeling, however, is the fact that the society which he assumes will liberate him from the tyranny of the household constitutes, in fact, a separate household in its own right; that of Japan. Within *Japanese* society, Namsu soon realizes that socialization is not quite the open-ended experiment he assumed it to be.

His first inkling of this occurs as he attempts to apply for jobs. Having already given his resumé to a handful of prospective employers, Namsu is dismayed to find that the initial enthusiasm and goodwill with which he is at first received quickly and inexplicably turns sour. Filling out yet another resumé in the apartment one day, his older brother asks if he can have a look at what information Namsu has been including, before berating Namsu for his naivety.

“What the hell is this?”, asked his older brother. Struck by the tone of his voice, Namsu lifted his head from his hands. “Is this the crap you’ve been handing out?” he asked incredulously, rising from the floor. Namsu couldn’t fathom why his brother was so angry. “Who the hell puts their real nationality on their resumé? You might as well be asking them *not* to give you a job!’ At that moment, Namsu felt like two things had collided inside of him. (IMOY, pp.26)

This is the moment in which Namsu first realizes that the society in which he felt he could finally become his own man and, more to the point, his own *Korean* man, is one that does not permit him to be socially Korean, but rather demands that his Koreanness remain a *closeted*, domestic mode of being. Namsu experiences this thwarted horizon of expectation viscerally as a *collision*, in which an ideated social imperative to leave the (Korean) household encounters the actual social imperative that his Korean self stay at home. In contrast to the classic Bildungsroman fantasy in which encounters with the other in society afford a re-encounter with home in a new way, facilitating an *aufhebung* of interior and exterior, self and other, Namsu realizes that the imperative to keep his Koreanness ‘at home’ is also a denial of this very same encounter with the self. Namsu’s attempts to “reject his father’s house” are thus doomed from the start, because there is no alternative space in Japan in which Koreanness might be otherwise defined.

While Namsu initially experiences this barrier to socialization as a collision, at times it is also expressed as a sensation of being turned around in a disorientating way. Reflecting on the reactions he received from prospective employers after handing them his resumé, Namsu recalls that,

It seemed like everything was going so well until it suddenly wasn’t, and the experience unnerved him. The initial expectation and its complete reversal by reality was similar to a funny feeling he used to get riding the train. Whenever he was on the circular line, he always thought it strange that the train arrived back at its original station from the same direction that it set off. On regular lines this wasn’t the case. The train would come in from the opposite direction that it set off. . . The circle line was a new experience for Namsu, having just come up to the capital from the countryside, and it always seemed to leave him confused. It felt like being turned around.

Namsu’s sensation of being “turned around” here, while somewhat different from his prior experience of a collision, nevertheless conveys an experience of thwarted expectations. Indeed, a

train journey is an excellent metaphor for the horizon of expectations implied by the Bildungsroman form; it is usually a linear (if meandering) journey that takes its passengers from one point of departure to another point of arrival. In Namsu's case however, his encounter with a *circular* line is not only unexpected but prompts a cognitive dissonance that pushes him to reassess his understanding of train journeys as linear. Moreover, even as the protagonist's rationalization of his own naivety – he has only “just come up to the capital from the countryside” - implies that he should not be surprised by this turn of events, it also evokes a trope which is very much in keeping with the Bildungsroman's narrative structure, particularly within the context of postwar Japan. Narrative arcs which portrayed a naïve country bumpkin's one-way journey to the big city were popular across various types of media in Japan throughout the postwar recovery period and early years of economic boom, from popular *enka* ballads to television comedies and dramas. It is hardly surprising then that it also informs Namsu's expectations for his own “coming up to the capital” story. What he discovers instead, however, is the absence of the very conditions by which this narrative of self-transcendence might be possible

IMOY thus sets up what we might call a *still-born Bildungsroman*. By setting up a Bildungsroman framework to allude to a certain structure of desire only to have the narrative then thwart these expectations, the text effectively captures Namsu's sense of being locked out of, or at least perpetually “turned around” from the catharsis of self-discovery that the form otherwise promises. In addition to this formal intervention however, the text also provides a historical explanation as to why Namsu's coming-of-age expectations were always already still-born. This is first hinted at when Namsu recalls the letters he used to receive from his cousin, Jiro, before Namsu decided to run away from home.

He recalled one particularly vehement complaint in the letter along the lines of, “Without the realization of revolution in Japan there can be no hope of revolution in Korea. The Molotov conflict is a heroic attempt to stand up to the military conflict which...” Namsu didn’t know much about politics, but what he could see was that Jiro was giving his all to a path he believed in. It must have been this sense of youthful passion that he was drawn to. (IMOY, p.20. Ellipsis is from original text)

The “Molotov conflict” that Jiro mentions here likely refers to a period roughly coinciding with the Korean War (1950-1953) in which the Japanese Communist Party, following a devastating critique by the Cominform in 1950 of Nosaka Sanzo’s strategy of “peaceful revolution”, the JCP quickly changed tack and committed itself to an armed struggle against the conflated interests of the U.S. occupation and reactionary elements within the Japanese bureaucracy. Two years previously, *Chōren* (Zainippon chosenjin renmei, or “The Alliance of Koreans residing in Japan”), an organization representing the interests of Koreans in Japan, had been forcibly disbanded by SCAP precisely because of its communist sympathies. The late 1940s and early 1950s was, however, an incredibly brutal time for Koreans living in Japan, and out of a desperate need for some form of united front many Koreans found that their political goals coincided with that of the JCP. As Jiro’s letter reveals, there was doctrinal precedence for this united front, as both Japanese and Korean communists understood the conflict which was emerging on the peninsula to be one and the same as their civil struggles in Japan, in that both were opposed to occupation by U.S. imperialist elements.

This historical undercurrent, in combination with the formal gestures indicating a coming-of-age narrative, serves to flesh out the vision of society that Namsu expected to encounter on his arrival in Tokyo. Even though he doesn’t “know much about politics”, and thus presumably doesn’t fully grasp the dimensions and significance of the “Molotov conflict” which his cousin speaks of, Namsu is still drawn to a “passion” which, in contrast to tyranny of the father

which characterizes his household, he recognizes as suitably “youthful”. In other words, it is precisely this type of social engagement that Namsu hoped would allow him to establish his own relationship to Korea and to being Korean, beyond his father’s narrow demands for filial piety. But the link between the historical moment he expects to join and the literary structure which implicitly links that desire to the affective structures of modernity at large is most explicitly spelled by the fact that Jiro includes a copy of Nikolai Ostrofsky’s, *How the Steel was Tempered* (1936). Ostrofsky’s novel tells the story of Pavel Korchagin, a young man who leaves his impoverished village to go and fight for the Bolsheviks during the Russian civil war. By the end of the novel and after much trial and tribulation, Pavel emerges as the archetypal soviet hero; brawny, masculine, and eager to devote his physical labor to nascent Soviet Republic (he also gets the girl, of course). *How the Steel was Tempered*, as the title indeed suggests, thus combines an individual coming of age story, clearly drawn from the Bildungsroman tradition, with the Soviet – but still *modern* - dream of constructing a new world. It thus provides a succinct insight into Namsu’s social expectations as a young man himself, as well as informing us of the intertextual milieu which structures these desires.

By 1953 however, the momentum behind the armed struggle had collapsed under the weight of opposition from both the authorities and public opinion. Not sharing the political convictions of the JCP and *Chōren*, the majority of Japanese citizens simply had no stomach for an armed struggle in the streets. Moreover, from the perspective of industrial oligarchs it was clear that the Korean War, far from representing an infringement on governance by Asians, for Asians, had been a godsend for the redevelopment of Japanese industry and its integration into a

U.S. centered first-world market.<sup>127</sup> In October 1953, Tokuda Kyuichi, second in command to Nosaka and the head of the armed struggle faction, died suddenly during a visit to Beijing, and in the general election of the same year the JCP only managed to secure one seat in the lower house.<sup>128</sup> For many Koreans in Japan at the time, not only did the collapse of the JCP bring an end to the united front, leaving Koreans in Japan to essentially fend for themselves, but the very public involvement of Koreans in the armed struggles served, as Mun Kyongsu puts it, “to isolate both the party and Zainichi Koreans, hopelessly, from Japanese society”.<sup>129</sup>

By the time Namsu arrives in Tokyo, the frenzied political activity which had characterized the postwar experience in Japan as a properly postcolonial experience had dissipated. In contrast to the dream of harnessing one’s youth for the production of a new world, which novels such as *How the Steel was Tempered* seemed to promise, the very conditions which had allowed for a space of converging political interests among Koreans and Japanese alike had been swept away by the reactionary forces of *ressentiment* and anti-Communist hysteria. For Namsu, however, who was too young to experience the traumatic collapse of united front politics himself, that history is revealed to him by the suffocating shadow of its consequences – the sheer hopelessness of his older (male) relatives – and thus it comes to him as a *closed history*, rather than as history *per se*. This is depicted succinctly in a passage in which, having been sent home from the day-laboring center due to heavy rain, Namsu, Ichiro, Jiro and Jong sit in the tiny apartment with empty stomachs and nothing to show for the day but measly, sub-subsistence insurance pay. After an hour of brooding silence, Jōng, the “new-comer” immigrant from the

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. Johnson, Chalmers. *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975*. Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1982.

<sup>128</sup> Mun (2007) (p.145)

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. (p.144)

peninsula, turns to Jirō and says, somewhat cryptically, “Hey, Jirō-chagin” – this nickname, incidentally, is a portmanteau of Jirō’s own name and the name of Ostrofsky’s protagonist, Pavel Korchagin – “We knew what we were about back then, hey? (...) We were content even if we only got one bread roll a day. I’d quite often walk from Shinjuku to Kōenji on an empty stomach because I didn’t have the money for the train fare...”<sup>130</sup> With no response from Jirō, Jōng continues,

We believed. We believed in those principles. Without achieving revolution in Japan there can be no revolution in Korea. We used to say that all the time. In Motherland-Korea our heroic compatriots resisted the incursion of the U.S. empire and defended our land. American planes flew out of Japanese military bases to kill our fellow Koreans. They even dropped napalm. I couldn’t just sit back and watch it all happen right there in front of me. I believed in that vision and I went out and threw a Molotov cocktail. I aimed it at one of those American lapdog police boxes and... well I hid in some public toilet nearby, chucked it and ran away. I was prepared to die. Hey, Jiro-chagin, are you listening? (...) You were young but you were brave too. You persisted though to the end. Because we believed it... We joined the Japanese Communist Party, joined in with throwing Molotov cocktails because we were burning with patriotism. And that’s the truth no matter what anybody says.<sup>131</sup>

This is perhaps the most explicit reflection on the events that constitute the pre-history of Namsu’s arrival in Tokyo, and it captures the rudderless nihilism which his elder relatives have been left with. In their own way, each of the older men has now been forced into a walk of life which is symbolically or actually futureless. Most of them work as day-laborers, working not toward the completion of a larger project but simply for their daily bread. Namsu’s cousin, Ichiro, spends the larger part of the day trying to get to the bottom of a bottle, while in Namsu’s

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<sup>130</sup> Ri (1970) (p.54)

<sup>131</sup> Ibid (54,55)

own words his older brother has taken to “using his sex as a weapon” by extorting Japanese women of money.

Just as his realization that the absence of an extra-domestic mode of being Korean in Japan caused Namsu to feel a sensation of being “turned around”, his encounter with the failed political activism of the early 1950s similarly serves to foreclose the possibility of participating in the production of the world. Once again, with no other recourse to being Korean, Namsu finds himself “turned around”, and right back to the claustrophobic, closed system of the household. As it turns out, however, it is precisely this recognition that Japanese society does not constitute a *polis* in the true sense of the word that, paradoxically, permits Namsu to finally refute the assumed opposition between the *domus* and the *polis* and, in turn, to begin to recognize his own domestic experiences as being political. This is only finally achieved, however, after Namsu meets another *zainichi* Korean lad of a similar age to himself called Haruji.

Namsu meets Haruji on a building site that they have both been sent to by the labor exchange. Because most of the other day-laborers are middle-aged or older, Namsu is surprised to find a young man of a similar age to himself working on the site and he begins to sense that there is something familiar about him. He eventually learns that, sure enough, Haruji is also Korean. But even prior to this revelation, the text pairs Namsu and Haruji in interesting ways. Their first encounter, on a sweltering summer day, is described as follows.

Feeling like the heat might send him crazy, Namsu panted through puckered lips, as though he were a goldfish trapped in a lukewarm fishbowl. He was struck by the uneasy feeling that his youth was evaporating from every pore and capillary. He’d have to reclaim it from the ether somehow. Something in the air was trying to take his youth from him, directing the sun to bake everything beneath it. It was trying to drive him crazy.

It’s so hot, thought Namsu, as he looked at Haruji. Haruji’s chest was also drenched in sweat. (IMOY, p.66)



Before the text tethers Namsu and Haruji to each other *as Koreans*, we see here that it first pairs them as young men who are in the process of having their youth taken away too soon. Rather than falling under the same national ‘roof’, in which their relation to each other is mediated by the central figure of the father, here the boys are interpellated by the sun, which in turn is being “directed”, or at least in some way manipulated (*ayatsuru*), by an invisible hand trying to rob them of their youth. Just what this force might be has perhaps already been intimated by the revelation of the political collapse which has pre-empted Namsu’s arrival in Tokyo, but it becomes more explicit when Namsu visits Haruji’s home and finds that there are remarkable similarities to his own.

Walking home from work one evening, Namsu and his older cousins run into Haruji as he staggers out of a bar. Despite being only seventeen, Haruji is stone drunk and clearly struggling to stand, let alone walk home. With great difficulty, Namsu and his cousins carry Haruji home where they meet his older sister. As she tries to explain Haruji’s behavior, Namsu is saddened to find that Haruji’s experience of life at home has been tragically similar to his own. Like Namsu’s “*aboji*”, we are told that Haruji’s father “tends to resort to his fists before words”, and it becomes apparent that in an attempt to protect his mother and sister, Haruji himself often becomes the target of this violence. The older sister admits that he “just gets beaten up. He gets kicked around like a dog”.<sup>132</sup> Like Namsu, it is also clear that Haruji’s hatred of his father has been internalized as self-hatred because he himself is also Korean. Without the possibility of negotiating his own relationship to the signifier “Korea” outside of the household, Namsu

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<sup>132</sup> Ri (1970) (p.89)

recognizes that Haruji must similarly feel trapped within his futureless household. Seeing Haruji's struggle with the father *and* the father figure, it dawns on Namsu that "he [Namsu] wasn't running away from his father's beatings. Namsu had tried to wriggle free of the household itself. The Korean household – or at least the Korean household that his father had instilled in him – felt to Namsu like a festering, bottomless swamp".<sup>133</sup> By recognizing that Haruji's struggles with his own father stem from a conflation of *his* father and *the* father figure – a conflation which arises from their abjection from the national-social sphere of "Japan" – Namsu is able to reflect on his own conflation of the same and, as a consequence of this new *critical* perspective, is able to parse his father-the-individual from the figure of the all-father.

What Namsu begins to approach here is thus the very thing that he had hoped to achieve by leaving his (Korean) house; a *new* encounter with himself as a Korean. By recognizing that both he and Haruji feel trapped by the tyranny of the household, Namsu is able to reevaluate his personal, domestic experiences as a *sociological* phenomenon. Within this new critical framework, Haruji recognizes that if he is to have agency over the future signification of being Korean in Japan, it is not enough to simply discard his household (his father's Korea) with the aim of finding his own way in society. Not only is this movement not permitted for Koreans in Japanese society, but his experience of being subsequently "turned around" has been enough to suggest that the assumed distinction between the household and society which gives rise to this fantasy is itself illusory. Namsu's thinking thus appears to approximate Arendt's analysis of the "society" in *The Human Condition*, in which she argues that "the emergence of society – the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices – from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere, has not only blurred the old border line

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. (p.94)

between private and political, *it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms*" (emphasis is my own).<sup>134</sup> In other words, Namsu's encounter, via Haruji, with the Korean household as a sociological phenomenon prompts him to reassess his understanding of society-as-such. No longer defined by the absence of the household, "society" now comes into view as the projection of household concerns onto the public square. In other words, Haruji realizes that "society" is in fact limited by the qualifying adjective, "national", even as the common elision of that adjective serves to efface such a limitation.

Having arrived at a critical framework that understands society and social relations as, ultimately, pertaining to the (national) household and intra-domestic, filial relations, Namsu comes to understand that a properly political and historical evaluation of his own Koreanness must entail a sociological critique of his own household. As this critique necessitates an acknowledgement of the household as both a privately and socially determined collectivity, it naturally also leads Namsu to a much more nuanced perspective on historical and political responsibility. This is particularly apparent when Namsu learns that despite Haruji's attempts to protect his mother and sister from his father, he himself has begun to internalize the very same misogynistic violence. According to his sister, Haruji often remarks that "women should just shut the hell up", and that with his constant complaints of "women this, women that, [he] sounds just like father (*aboji*)".<sup>135</sup> Rather than decry Haruji's violence as yet another example of the type of Korea, exemplified by his own father, that he has been attempting to flee from, Namsu immediately recognizes that this is a "trap" to which *he himself* could just as easily have fallen prey.

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<sup>134</sup> Arendt (1958). p.35

<sup>135</sup> Ri (1970) p.88

I guess, thought Namsu, that Haruji's mother must have been just as confused by her son's contempt for Koreans and his resentment for having been born Korean as my own. But however much parents are disappointed by their sons, those sons will never feel completely at home, let alone become Korean, as long as they have nothing to be proud of when it comes to being Korean. Namsu fell silent and picked up his chopsticks. He felt like he understood why Haruji felt so lost. But as he looked at Haruji's mother he felt that Haruji had chosen the wrong path to go down. He had been snared by the same trap that threatened them both. (IMOY, p.90)

What is this "trap" if not the oedipal allure, so crucial to the affective structure of the Bildungsroman, of one day assuming the father's seat at the head of the table? Having both been "turned around" from Japanese "society" and seemingly confined to their father's house(s), Namsu is keenly aware of the psycho-social complexity with which a learned hatred of one's domestic confinement is directed at the household itself. Why it is the *women* in their respective households who are so often made the targets of this venting of self-hatred is a question that will have to remain beyond the scope of this chapter – I address this more fully in my reading of Yi Yang-Ji's work in chapter three – but, putting this question to one side for the moment, it is clear that the empathy which Namsu demonstrates toward Haruji here is not rooted in any sense of ethnic solidarity, but rather in an acknowledgment that the domestication of "Korea" within Japanese national society has served to atomize their experiences in such a way as to depoliticize and dehistoricize them. By contrast, in being able to empathize – but not justify – Haruji's internalization of patriarchal violence in this way, Namsu actually enacts a politicization and historicization of the figure of *zainichi*, including the necessity with which Koreans in Japan must first negotiate their relationship to this figure before becoming political actors in the true sense of the word. In doing so, of course, Namsu implicitly historicizes his own father's violence, and thus facilitates the symbolic "return" to his household – this time as a socially

interpellated phenomenon rather than as a closed system defined in contrast to society – that his beloved coming-of-age stories had promised all along.

As I move to an analysis of another of Ri's early novellas, "A Scene without a Witness" (1970), I want to assert that this recognition of the conflation of the opposed concepts of the *domus* and the *polis* in our contemporary understanding of "society", and particularly of how the term "society" seems to disavow this very conflation, constitutes Ri's commentary on a common *grammar of nationalisms*. In contrast to Kim Sokbom who, as we have seen, could only critique Japanese exceptionalism by demanding its penetration by an alternative, Korean subject, IMOY demonstrates that Ri wants to "wriggle free of the household itself", which is to say that he wishes to transcend a structure which is constitutive of nationalisms in general, rather than any one in particular. In thus identifying the syntagmatic continuity of both Korean and Japanese nationalisms, not despite their antagonism in geopolitical discourse but precisely because of it, Ri goes on to historicize this common structure as a common inheritance of the colonial experience. He does this, as we will see, by identifying the emperor as the exemplary all-father, and the emperor system as a prototype of the biopolitical disciplinary regime which would later come to inform both Japanese and Korean postwar nationalisms.<sup>136</sup> By thus identifying the grammar of such a disciplinary mechanism apart from its manifestations in particular national identities, Ri gestures toward an ideal of the *polis* that lies, however hypothetically, beyond any

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<sup>136</sup> As a grammar of nationalism that emerges from the disavowal of empire and colonialism as an ontologically constitutive experience, it is worth noting that this conflation of the household and the public sphere under the auspices of the father figure is a disciplinary regime common to many postcolonial societies, not only Korea and Japan. Indeed Naoki Sakai has argued that the stretching, to the point of absurdity, of the assumed relationship between the benevolent paternalism of the state and its care-receiving subjects thanks to imperial expansion – a form of governmentality which Foucault articulated as "pastoral power" – is likely an inevitable inheritance of all postcolonial societies (cf, Sakai, Naoki. "From Relational Identity to Specific Identity: On Equality and Nationality" in Ketelaar, Kojima & Nosco eds. *Values, Identity, and Equality in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan*. Brill's Japanese Studies Library, vol; 52, 2015)

one instance of national community. As we will see, in lieu of being able to seize on the *polis* as a space – a space which Namsu had hoped, but ultimately failed, to encounter in society – Ri instead locates it in modes of address that *fail* precisely because of the hegemonic claim by national societies to be the normative site of political discourse. In this sense, Ri’s vision of a properly political mode of relations approximates what Sakai has referred to as “heterolingual address”.<sup>137</sup>

### **“A Scene Without a Witness”**

“A Scene Without a Witness” (hereafter abbreviated to SWW) opens as two old friends, estranged since 1945, rekindle correspondence with each other. One of the men, Kim Munho, is Korean while the other, Yada Osamu, is Japanese. During the final months and weeks of the Pacific War both men lived in a town referred to in the text only as “M” on the southern half of Sakhalin, then a colonial periphery of the Japanese empire known as Southern Karafuto, where they went to elementary school together. Despite not having spoken to each other since their respective “withdrawals” (*hikiage*) from Southern Sakhalin following its occupation by Soviet forces in 1945, Yada was inspired to write to his friend after coming across a short article in a newspaper entitled “Encounter with a fascist youth”. Although Yada did not recognize the name of the article’s author, one Kim Munho, its content led him to believe that it must be his old school friend, a boy he knew by the name of Kaneyama. From the outset, the relationship between the two is characterized by a gaping chasm both in terms of space (Yada lives in Sapporo whereas Kim is based in Tokyo) as well as time (they have not seen each other in

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<sup>137</sup> Sakai, Naoki. *Translation and Subjectivity: on Japan and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

twenty years), a distance which, as we will see, is emphasized by the apparent intimacy of the childhood friendship. But the slippage in Kim/Kaneyama's name further emphasizes their current alienation by adding a *semiotic* distance to the mix, for it suggests that Yada's former friend is now a different person entirely; he is now *Korean*.

As we will see, Yada's assumption that this name change constitutes a substantive transformation from being Japanese to being Korean constitutes just one of the many "scenes without a witness" that run, convolutedly intertwined, throughout the text. But the purpose of Yada's first letter is to document his own such scene; one that, precisely because he has found no one to verify it, has been haunting him ever since. The letter reads as follows.

I think it must have happened in the middle of September. I'd just happened to run into you that day and we went to climb up Mt. Jingu. We went to check on the harvest of pumpkins we'd planted as part of our voluntary service. Why we were inspired to do this when our defeat (*haisen*) was imminent, I have no idea. But for whatever reason, we both felt that it was essential to go and inspect the pumpkin field.

It was there that I saw the corpse of an imperial soldier for the first time. He was just a foot soldier. I could tell because he was wearing standard issue boots wrapped in red gaiters rather than the gold leather boots worn by graduates of the officers' school. The soldier had turned a putrid ochre color, and his guts were strewn on the ground in front of him. (SWW p.180)

The September of which Yada speaks is September 1945, a mere month after the end of the war, and in this context the corpse, not just of a soldier but specifically an "imperial soldier" (*teikoku heishi*) appears to be a clear metonymic representation of the death of empire, which was of course the ultimate outcome of Japan's unconditional surrender a month previously. But there are a number of seemingly incidental observations in the letter which strongly suggest that, for Yada, this encounter with the corpse was also an instance in which the imperialist rhetoric that he had bought into as a youth collides with the grim materiality of its consequences. The corpse

appears in the place of a harvest of pumpkins which the boys had expected to find after planting the seeds as part of the war effort. In sharp contrast to their efforts to quite literally sow the seeds of a bright future, the only fruit of this labor is death. And not a good death either. Indeed, once the remainder of the letter is revealed to us in a later chapter, we find Yada confessing the following.

Up until then I'd believed that imperial soldiers didn't die in such an undignified way. If you remember how I was back then I'm sure you can imagine. In fact, I believed that it was the way an imperial soldier died in battle that distinguished us from the Anglo-American devils, as though our deaths were like a noble scattering of flowers. But that soldier's face had collapsed *like a rotten pumpkin*, with bugs the size of horseflies swarming noisily around him. . . . At that point I remember feeling sad and bursting into tears. But that sadness was not due to the fear of a child seeing his first dead body; it was the despair of having something I believed in so horrifically betrayed. Was this the beautiful death of an imperial soldier that our teachers had spoken about?

(SWW, p.208. Emphasis is my own)

In her analysis of the relationship between trauma, narrative, and history, Cathy Caruth claims that a traumatic experience can be defined as an event which is “experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known”.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, Yada's recollection of the incident, both in terms of his reconstruction of it and of his later analysis, frames the experience as one that seems to reveal a truth which could not be apprehended in the moment of its passing. At a distance of twenty years, Yada seems to have come to a tentative conclusion as to what that truth is – that the “beautiful death of an imperial soldier” was a manipulative lie all along – but his subsequent and repeated pleas to Kim to affirm his account of the incident, first informally; “I wonder if you're now able to remember this *for me*” (“*omoi dashite itadakeru deshō?*”), and then increasingly less

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<sup>138</sup> Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Twentieth Anniversary edition. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. p.7



formally and perhaps desperately; “Can you now remember *for me?*” (“*kore de kimi mo omoi dashite kureru deshōka?*”)) suggest that the truth he believes he has garnered from the experience is one that continues to isolate him. That, to some degree, it stands at odds with the collective, social experience of the collapse of empire.

In many ways, the traumatic structure of Yada’s encounter with the dead soldier - an experience which, precisely because it cannot be known, haunts him with its repeated demands *to be known* – is exemplary of the preoccupation with the question of *shutaisei* among intellectuals in the immediate postwar period. *Shutaisei* is a notoriously difficult concept to translate into English, particularly as even in Japan it drew from multiple intellectual traditions, but Victor Koschmann summarizes it as “an articulate concern for human agency, manifested in a debate on active subjectivity”. Within the context of the postwar era, which many intellectuals at the time apprehended as the advent of a “bourgeois-democratic revolution”, Koschmann argues that the urgency of this question sprang from the belief that only with the appropriate social subject could this new stage in historical development be authentically realized.<sup>139</sup> Implicit in this line of thinking was a programmatic and ostensibly Marxian understanding of history; a historiographical assumption which must have been difficult to square with the abruptness of imperial collapse and the swiftness with which socio-political change was being wrought by the U.S. occupation. In other words, the fact that imperial collapse had happened *too soon* became the traumatic impetus for a drastic re-historicization of the national experience.

If Yada’s obsessive return to the image of the corpse does indeed reflect the historical anxiety evident in postwar debates on *shutaisei* in Japan, then Kim’s response to his friend’s

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<sup>139</sup> Koschmann, J. Victor. *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. p.1

repeated requests to “remember for me” is highly significant. For try as he may, Kim cannot remember seeing the corpse. Indeed, it is his very inability to bear witness to Yada’s memory that structures the text. While all narrated in the third-person, the chapters initially alternate between Kim and Yada’s perspective, and the repeated and mirrored refrains of “I wonder if you can remember”/“I couldn’t remember” have the strange effect of tying these perspectives together by the very fact of their mutual unintelligibility. Kim and Yada’s difference in nationality is established very early on in the text, as has Kaneyama’s aforementioned postwar “transformation” into the Korean, Kim Munho, meaning that most readers are likely to have attributed this mutual unintelligibility to precisely this difference. It was perhaps not surprising to many to consider that the end of empire meant different things to Korean and Japanese people; for Koreans it meant liberation, and for Japanese defeat. But what makes this text so remarkable is that while it acknowledges this mutual unintelligibility as an unavoidable reality of postwar East Asia, it does not explain this away as a *return* to two historically normative “households” of ethno-national experience. Rather, the repetitive refrain of “do you remember/I don’t remember” has the effect of centering this breakdown in communication as, paradoxically, a consequence of empire that continues to bind them to one another. Put in more conceptual terms, it is precisely the impossibility of historicizing empire as an event that transcends national experience which Ri foregrounds as an extra-national and extra-ethnic inheritance of empire and, subsequently, as the grounds on which a properly transnational history of empire might begin to be articulated.

Having read the first letter from Yada, for example, Kim calls out to his son to ask him if he would like to go and play kick ball outside. The “Koreanness” of his son’s name, Myŏng-Il, is emphasized by a katakana gloss giving the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese characters, while the word for soccer is not the usual Japanese, *sakkā* (from the English, *soccer*), which

would have been more commonly in use by the 1960s in Japan, but the pre-war term *shūkyū* (“kickball”) which is then also glossed with its Korean pronunciation, *chukgu*.<sup>140</sup> In short, the text makes it clear that Kim and his family live a Korean life (in Japan) which stands in sharp contrast to Kim’s former “Japanese” life as Kaneyama in colonial Karafuto. And yet despite this testament to his postwar transformation, it is this “kickball” with its distinctly “Korean smell” – to paraphrase Kim Sokbom – that provides a metaphor for the dynamics of Kim and Yada’s correspondence. Having kicked the ball to his son, his son excitedly runs up to the ball, attempts a kick, and promptly falls over. A single sentence paragraph emphasizes the significance of this metaphor – “*ataranakatta*” – a phrase which, while it can be translated as “missed”, has a more specific nuance in Japanese of having “missed the mark”. After a short aside in which Kim remarks on how popular soccer is among Korean school children, it occurs to him that his correspondence with Yada is also like a ball game. Having been written in response to Kim’s article, “Yada’s letter was proof that his own ball had been received and was now being kicked back to him from an even deeper point in the past”.<sup>141</sup> But the fact that Kim cannot remember the incident laid out in Yada’s letter suggests, as per the kickball game with his son, that this pass of dialogue has “missed the mark”. And yet despite the very real possibility that their correspondence will continue to do so, it is this communicative breakdown above all else that engenders a sense of responsibility toward his old friend; “at least that was the feeling that he got from this incident on Mt. Jingu. . . Returning to his room, he focused himself before penning a reply to Yada. . . The fact that Yada’s letter only spent a few lines touching on this incident on Mt. Jingu suggested to him that there was something which nagged Yada about it that he hadn’t quite been able to put his finger on (*kokoro ni hikarenagara kentō ga tsukanakatta*). What’s

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<sup>140</sup> Ri (1970) p.183

<sup>141</sup> Ri (1970) p.184

more, he had the feeling that there was something about the incident which had prevented him from forgetting about Kim, even after all this time”.<sup>142</sup>

Kim’s sense of responsibility toward his old friend is thus rooted in an empathetic understanding of the hold this traumatic realization of betrayal has had over his subsequent life. Empathetic, because it turns out that Kim has a similar memory which is devoid of the company of witnesses. Following the arrival of Soviet forces on Southern Karafuto/Sakhalin, the young Kaneyama learns that his close friend, Ebana, who had been the only other person to join Kaneyama and Yada on their fated expedition up Mt. Jingu, has “committed suicide” along with the rest of his family. Ebana’s father, however, is remembered by both Yada and Kim as being a particularly zealous retired general, and Kim reflects that even as a young boy he was fully aware that Ebana’s agency in this suicide was highly doubtful.

Ebana hadn’t just ‘died’: It would be more accurate to say that he’d been killed by his father’s hand. [...] People spoke about the Ebana household suicide as though they’d been to see it happen. According to them, General Ebana had called his family into the living room as soon as the Soviet invasion began to explain to them calmly what would need to be done. Then, after passing a farewell drink between them, the general attended to his wife and child before finishing himself off by cutting open his belly, as form dictated. As soon as he’d heard what happened his heart had screamed, “liars!” Had Ebana been prepared for death? Had he met his end without trying to run? It was very doubtful. Ebana probably passed out as soon as he saw the blade removed from its sheath. No, he must have begged for his life. Then, finding no quarter from his father, he must have been cut down as he tried to run to his mother. (SWW, pp.211, 212)

In contrast to his father, who was held up by the residents of the town as a model of the stoic, self-sacrificing yet hyper-masculine servant of empire – incorporating the twin ideals of the filial (imperial) son and the firm, unemotional hand of the father – Ebana is portrayed as frail, sickly

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

and even effeminate; a mummy's boy. Even in life, Kim remembers that Ebana himself was the principle victim of this cruel irony, for the apparent perfection of his father's figure served only to emphasize that Ebana was not his father's son in kind, even if he was by blood. Yada also recounts in one of his letters how this dynamic used to unfold at school, where Ebana would be constantly admonished for not exhibiting the same qualities as his father. Remembering their Kendo lessons – which, he explains, were compulsory for boys at the time in the interest of nurturing a martial spirit – Yada recalls how the instructor, Mr. Otani, “would be on the general's son's case the whole time, regardless of the fact that Ebana was weak and nothing like his father. ‘What the hell are you doing? You're supposed to be well on your way to becoming a great soldier like your father and giving your all for your country.’”<sup>143</sup> It was thus obvious to Kim, from the moment he hears of his friend's death, that talk of Ebana's tragic suicide was nothing other than a collective disavowal of filicide.

The reason that this filicide constitutes a “scene without a witness” for Kim, and one which continues to haunt him in the present, is not merely the result of a philosophy of solidarity between two victims of empire. This is not a solidarity of resentment. Rather, the text makes it very clear that Kim's enduring sense of responsibility toward Ebana – and by extension, as we will see, to Yada – is the result of his own complicated complicity in the disciplinary regime by which Ebana was first excoriated in life and then ushered to his death. And it is here that the significance of Kim's newspaper article, “An Encounter with Fascist Youth(s)” becomes clear; for the encounter which Kim describes therein is not only with the Japanese students at his school, but also with himself. Having penned his first letter to Kim in response to this article, Yada recalls how “zealous” (*majime*) Kaneyama was as a student. “Just as he wrote in his article,

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<sup>143</sup> Ri (1970) p.192

he was a real little turncoat (*dōka shōnen*). . . We Japanese kids may have been stalwart fascist youths who never doubted victory for the great Japanese Empire, but that Kaneyama from the peninsula really put the icing on the cake”.<sup>144</sup> He remembers a time when their feared Kendō teacher singled out “Kaneyama” in front of the class to praise his efforts to develop a “Yamato spirit”. To everyone’s surprise, Kim stood up and shouted, “Sir! I am still lacking in the spirit of the empire! I want to work towards the emperor’s vision of human equality under his divine benevolence as his true, devoted son!”<sup>145</sup>

From Kim’s perspective, of course, living as a colonial subject alongside his colonial masters in the idiosyncratic environment of a settler colony, this conspicuously zealous performance of filial loyalty to the emperor is an act of self-defense. As Tessa-Morris Suzuki has observed, as a settler colony whose inhabitants had come from all over Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China and Taiwan, Karafuto’s administrators were particularly “haunted by the problem of drawing dividing lines between the ‘mother country’ and the colonies”.<sup>146</sup> While this was true to a certain extent for every region of the empire, there was an effort by the administrators of Karafuto to have the peninsula officially recognized as “*naichi*” (part of the Japanese interior and thus Japan “proper”) as opposed to “*gaichi*” (a colony).<sup>147</sup> Within this context, biopolitical contestations regarding the ideal Japanese subject must have exacerbated disciplinary regimes to this end tremendously. Faced with the impossible imperative of assimilation (*kōminka*), it is thus unsurprising that the older Kim, reflecting on his younger self, states that “he’d had to

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p.191

<sup>146</sup> Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, “Northern Lights: The Making of Karafuto Identity” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 60:3, Aug 2001. p.646

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. Morris-Suzuki goes on to state that these efforts paid off, as “after a long campaign, [they] eventually succeeded just a few months after the end of the Pacific War in having their territory formally reclassified as Naichi”, albeit nominally at this point.

demonstrate twice the commitment to Japan's holy war than a Japanese student", going on to admit that, to this end, "he'd had to do things that no normal kid ever wanted to do, and with a smile to boot. He'd thrown himself into cleaning the toilets with a hand-cloth in the middle of winter, which everyone had hated, and he'd run to kids that had injured themselves during the war effort activities to walk them back to the school, even if he could barely manage the labor himself".<sup>148</sup>

Nevertheless, regardless of the extent to which Kim's performance as the "zealous" Kaneyama can be considered authentic, the text makes it clear that *the performance alone* is enough to sustain the disciplinary regime to which it responds, however strategically and cynically. Continuing with his recollection of their Kendo classes, Yada remembers how the compliments which Kaneyama received from his Kendo teacher were always followed by an excoriation of his Japanese classmates – and particularly of Ebana – for their comparative *lack* of the 'Yamato spirit'. "Take a good look at Kaneyama", Mr. Otani says, "his attitude can only be called exemplary. He's tried his hardest to attain the Yamato Spirit. You lot on the other hand...' And so began the grandstand lectures on destroying the Anglo-American Devils and finishing the holy way".<sup>149</sup> Yada adds that "whenever Mr. Otani praised Kaneyama he would, without fail, remember Ebana and give him an icy stare from behind his spectacles."<sup>150</sup> The young Kaneyama's complicity in this regime, regardless of its coerced nature, is further emphasized in a later interaction with Ebana. While on voluntary service duties, Kim remembers that Ebana had confided to him and Yada how he "wished he hadn't been born into an army family."<sup>151</sup> In

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<sup>148</sup> Ri (1970) (p.213)

<sup>149</sup> Ri (1970) p.190

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. (p.192)

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. (p.204)

response to this, Kaneyama's defense mechanisms kick in and he gives a stock response. "What the hell are you saying? We're all going to be imperial soldiers when we grow up". To his surprise, Ebana lifts up his shirt and cries,

Come on, look at this body! [...] Father rubs my skin with dry rags every morning. This is before "Early Rising Sun" even begins on the radio you know! Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, every day! He says it's a technique he picked up at officer's school. But it's no good. It's my mother's blood that runs beneath this skin. Look, I even get cuts from scratching myself." (SWW, p.205)

The incident emphasizes that, in his continued attempts to satisfy the demands of socialization as presented to him by figures of male authority (his kendo teacher, Ebana's father and, ultimately, perhaps, the looming specter of Tojo Hideki himself), Kim also alienates himself from his peers. Put in more theoretical terms, Kim's strategic commitment to be recognized and interpellated by these national patriarchs serves to isolate him from his community of peers; a community with which he might otherwise lament the violence of the command to obey the father unto death. However feigned his commitment to this command, its effect is to sweep away the conditions by which a sense of solidarity with his friend Ebana might have been established. This symbolic incident, it turns out, is also the last interaction the two have before Ebana's death.

The atomizing effect of the imperial disciplinary regime that pitted Ebana and Kim against each other as school friends is thus compounded, but perhaps also further defined, by the distance of life from death. Were Ebana to have survived there might have been at least the possibility, however remote, that the two could come to appreciate that it was their alienation from one another, or at least the terms on which that alienation was predicated, that constituted the basis of a shared social and historical experience. The hard border that separates life from



death makes this communion impossible, however. With Yada, though, there remains the possibility of understanding - of bearing witness to the atomizing experience of a history without witness rather than to the site of experience itself – and it is this sense of possibility that binds Kim to his estranged friend, not *despite* their initial correspondence having “missed the mark” but precisely *because* of that fact. Indeed, Cathy Caruth has argued that what appears to contribute to the pain of trauma is not merely the “pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche” experienced in isolation, but rather the enforcement of that isolation that comes as a result of the absence of witness.<sup>152</sup> This is particularly the case in the event of collective trauma, where the collectively ascertained memory of the event (i.e. history) cannot possibly hope to account for the myriad possible significations of the event depending on the positionality of each individual who experienced it. In terms of social experience then, trauma for Caruth “is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in an attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not always available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language”.<sup>153</sup>

Yada and Kim were brought into relation in and by a system of socialization which sought to emphasize their non-relation above all else. They share an experience of subject formation which rendered impossible its experience as being shared. Yada, for example, describes how the memory of the dead soldier on Mt. Jingu has “cursed him” ever since, and of how the weight of the soldier’s imagined tombstone has remained lodged in his head.<sup>154</sup> Significantly, he writes to Kim of how “the steady decline in my relationship to others seems to

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<sup>152</sup> Caruth (4)

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ri (1970) (p.210)

be related to the memory of that soldier”, further suggesting that, like the still-born harvest from the pumpkin field, imperial ideology’s warping of human relations is a casualty of empire that remains unburied. But Kim Moon-Ho, too, remains haunted by his own unburied demons.

Remembering a time that he contracted tuberculosis as a young teenager, he recalls going to the hospital for an x-ray of his lungs,

[W]here they found fourteen or fifteen black spots the size of rice grains. They appeared to be like bruises, left on a young lung which had fought to protect the body from the disease. The black scars from the caustic deposits which dotted the surface of his lung remained there, firmly ensconced, even now. There were times when he thought of those black dots as the shadows of the parts of the ‘little turncoat’ that remained within him. There was no guarantee that the tuberculosis wouldn’t make a comeback and, likewise, there were no assurances that the former ‘little turncoat’ wouldn’t also reappear in his current life (SWW, p.187)

Like Yada, the psychological injuries sustained during his childhood are figuratively inscribed in, if not on, his body. As the moments of cognitive dissonance which underpin these hauntings differ between Kim and Yada, so too do the forms of their imagined incorporation into the body. For Kim Moon-Ho, the traumatic realization that his self-preservation, in the form of an over-zealous performance of the ideal colonial subject, had been appropriated and mobilized by the school in such a way as to render him complicit in the ideological state apparatus is articulated concisely in the image of a body left permanently scarred by the very process of fighting a sickness. For Yada on the other hand, the sight of an imperial soldier’s corpse in a state of decay becomes the organizing motif for his sense of betrayal by a narrative which promised his exceptionalism. Despite signifying qualitatively different experiences, each of these mnemonic loci speaks to the process of social atomization experienced by both men.

Initially brought together by the process of their mutual alienation, the two men are now drawn back to each other by a recognition of the very same. On meeting in Tokyo, Kim reflects that

He'd had another reason to come to S City but it was also because he wanted to meet Yada and clear up this business about Mt. Jingu that continued to hang over them. Ultimately, memories were things that were supposed to disappear. And yet he felt uneasy that he had managed to forget an incident that only the two of them had experienced while Yada alone had been unable to, and he had begun to feel a burgeoning sense of responsibility. He was the only one who could say they'd witnessed that scene. [...] But it was clear that if there was anything he needed to do as a friend then it was to bear witness for him. His own experiences had taught him the very same.<sup>155</sup>

Bound together by the experience of state violence, Kim recognizes that they are the only ones able to validate the others experience and thus vindicate the feelings of victimization that they both feel. The experience in question, however, is also one that has rendered this victim's solidarity an epistemological impossibility. Instead of recognizing each other through a shared narrative, then, the two men are drawn to each other out of the pain of being unable to do so. As in IMOY, in which the symmetry between Namsu and Haruji is established via a recognition of the conditions of their respective social isolation, rather than through any ready-made sense of ethnic and/or national solidarity, it is a similar historicizing turn which provides the impetus for Kim and Yada's sympathy toward each other in SWW. In both cases however, the mode of relation which emerges is one in which the assumption of a historically achieved national subject is abandoned in favor of a perspective which understands the production of the self as an open-ended process. In the context of *zainichi* subjectivity in postwar Japan, these texts thus move us away from a program of cultural defense – of preserving and insisting on a “Korean smell” in Japan as Kim Sokbom put it – by exposing this sentiment as a product of the very system of state coercion which it purports to resist. Much like Ri's response to Kim Sokbom in *Bungaku*, in which he voiced his concerns about the anachronisms inherent in the idea of a “Korean smell”, SWW presents the idea of achieved national subjectivity as something which can only exist in

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<sup>155</sup> Ri (1970) (pp.226, 227)

death, immortalized in the corpse of a dead soldier. For Kim and Yada to make sense of their life beyond the imperial fantasy, however, the dead are singularly incapable witnesses.

The novella closes, tellingly, with a similar image to that with which it started; the two boys, now men, run across town together (to catch the last train) just as they had done the last time they had seen each other on the slopes of Mt. Jingu. That previous encounter had ended with them letting go of each other's hands; an image of alienation that would prove to be tragically enduring. Now, in the present day of the 1960s, the two men prepare once more to go their separate ways. Yada initially declines Kim's offer to run with him to the station. Despondent that his friend was ultimately unable to become his witness, Yada grumbles that he is drunk and that they should go their separate ways. Kim is insistent, however, and runs after him shouting, "No! I'm going to see you on your way!"<sup>156</sup> Running side by side, Yada asks his friend one final time, "So you really can't remember what happened?" "I can't remember a thing", Kim responds before, we are told, "they ran, as though to shake off the black shadows that continued to chase them".<sup>157</sup>

This final image is an enduring one. The two mnemonic figures which the text has taken pains to construct – the tombstone of the dead soldier lodged in Yada's head and the black scars on Kim's left lung – are here conflated into an indiscriminate black shadow. As we have seen, these "shadows" have previously been articulated in the text as objects which fall between the two men, hindering their ability to communicate a shared experience with one another. The fact that the novel ends with the friends fleeing their shadows is thus highly significant, and it calls to my mind two associated images. In the first instance, the image of the two men running from the

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<sup>156</sup> Ri (1970) (p.239)

<sup>157</sup> Ibid (p.240)

past and into the future is a sort of inversion of the image Walter Benjamin constructs around Paul Klee's "Angelus Novus". In Benjamin's formulation, this angel of history is being perpetually cast into the future, its open wings unable to resist the winds of time. But it also faces the past and can only observe the ever-growing pile of rubble at its feet as the past collapses behind it. In Ri Kaisei's novella, Kim and Yada do not face the past but they are more than aware of it; it is their shadow after all. Running forwards, into the future, the two friends know that they can never outrun the collapse of the past, but they run together all the same. Kim's declaration, "No! I'll see you on your way" ("*Okuruzo, ore wa*") thus seems to be a rallying call; it acknowledges the inescapability of their past, now irrevocably internalized and incorporated within them, but voices a commitment to the future of life all the same.

The second image that is brought to mind by this final scene is of the Japanese propaganda poster embedded in the previous chapter (included again here for convenience).



Designed to promote the Japanese imperial government's policy of "Naisen ittai", or "Japan and Korea are One", the poster depicts two boys running across what appears to be the surface of the

world. Each boy as a single character emblazoned on his shirt, one reading “Nai” and the other “Sen”, referring to Japan and Korea respectively. The caption below them reads “World winners in unified cooperation”. This image not only resembles that of Kim and Yada, one “Korean” the other “Japanese”, racing forward into their own futures, but it also encapsulates what it is that the two men are running from. For as we have seen, it was precisely the rhetoric of this unity, symbolized by the figure of the individual soldier filial unto death, that paradoxically pitted Kim and his “Japanese” friends against each other. The paradoxical nature of this aporia in imperialist ideology thus results in a similarly paradoxical form of postwar solidarity. The similarity of these images “bears witness”, in its own way, not to the success of colonial assimilation policies but, instead, to the fact that its victims are now intimately bound to each other by the tragically enduring consequences of its failure. This, however, is a history that cannot be told through the mouthpiece of a single subject, nor encapsulated within a single narrative. As a history which identifies the loss of the common as its organizing idea, it is a narrative which can only be written dialogically, between people rather than by people. This, it seems to me, is the titular “scene without a witness”.

## Chapter 3

### Yi Yang-ji: Turning from the subject position to the object position

#### Introduction

When Yi Yang-ji made her debut in the Japanese literary establishment with the publication of *Nabi Taryon* (“A Butterfly’s Lament”) in 1982, she was immediately touted as the face of a new generation of Zainichi writers. Socially and historically, the conditions that Yi Yang-ji’s fiction responded to were very different from those in which Ri Kaisei – the youngest member of the previous generation of writers and the principle point of comparison for Yi Yang-ji’s readers – had found himself. Unlike Ri, Yi Yang-ji had been born a good ten years after the defeat and collapse of Japan’s Pan-Asian empire, and thus had no first-hand memories of forced assimilation or of the sudden demand to revert to being Korean in the years after the war. Moreover, unlike her literary forbears, most of whom had had some sort of affiliation with *Sōren*, Yi Yang-Ji’s family had naturalized as Japanese citizens during her childhood (something that she would only learn in early adulthood) and as a result she was able to travel freely between South Korea and Japan, something that was almost impossible for those who remain effectively stateless under the *Chōsen-seki* or “Chōsen” status. Finally, she differed from the other big-name Zainichi authors in simply being a woman. Critics thus raved that Yi Yang-ji seemed to promise that most sought-after quality in emerging writers; “freshness” (*shinsensa*).<sup>158</sup>

Yi’s debut also came at a moment when South Korea was on the verge of shedding its own postwar image as an authoritarian “developing state” to join the ranks of the world’s richest countries, while Japan was at its zenith of economic affluence and consumer expenditure. As a

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<sup>158</sup> Sakagami, Hiroshi, Takai Yuichi & Isoda Koichi. "Zosaku gohyo: 'Nabi Taryon'" *Gunzo*, 1982. p.376.

Zainichi Korean, however, Yi Yang-ji and her “Zainichi” fiction were both indelibly marked by the history of colonialism that these respective “miracles” were supposed to have overcome. This tension appeared to offer the professional critic an opportunity to reframe Zainichi Literature (and of what constituted a “Zainichi” experience which, in most cases, remained the principle question directed at Zainichi literature) for a new era. Isoda Koichi for example, in an early appraisal of *Nabi Taryon*, notes that much like in Ri Kaisei’s early texts, the protagonists in Yi’s novella sets out for Seoul in an attempt to find “Korea”. And similarly to Ri’s fiction, Yi’s texts often suggest that the association between “Korea” as a national and ethnic category and home is an ambivalent and often untenable one to maintain. What prompted this evaporation of the idea of the ethnic homeland, Isoda argues, was Yi Yang-ji’s physical interaction with Seoul and South Korea as a living, shifting social landscape. For the previous generation who were unable to freely travel to and from the Korean peninsula, he argued, the idea of the native homeland could all too easily become a receptacle for all kinds of abstractions and projections.

Yi Yang-ji’s fiction thus seemed to announce itself as the new flavor not just in Zainichi fiction but also in Zainichi history, which in any case effectively amounted to the same thing. And yet critics also tended to note that Yi’s fiction refuted, at the same time that it beckoned, this kind of anthropological reading. For Takai Yuji, it wasn’t clear if *Nabi Taryon* could even be classed as Zainichi fiction because it didn’t seem to engage with the social history of Koreans in Japan at all. When reference is made to Zainichi political struggles, he argued, it is only as scenery, as a backdrop for what is otherwise an interior drama. Kuroko Kazuo made a similar criticism, arguing that Yi Yang-ji was symptomatic of a young generation of writers who,



“like... Murakami Haruki... do not direct their attention at the world, society, or revolution, but rather correspond strikingly with a reality conspiring with an inner vacuousness”.<sup>159</sup>

The frustration felt by these readers is, of course, itself symptomatic of the kind of horizons of expectation which tend to be brought to readings of fiction written by Zainichi writers, who are expected to provide a window through which we might glimpse and perhaps capture their souls (cf. the discussion of Rey Chow via Fred Jameson in chapter one). What is interesting, however, is that this frustration stems not from the fact that Yi refuses to speak as a Zainichi Korean – most of her protagonists, after all, are Zainichi Korean women, and more than a few critics have opened essays with the assumption that her work is at least partly autobiographical – but, rather, from the fact that her protagonists refuse to choose a side. What I mean by this is perhaps best illustrated by a moment in *Kazukime*, Yi’s second published work, in which the nameless protagonist is sent into a panic after she feels the tremor of an earthquake. When she recounts the experience later to her lover, a Japanese man named Morimoto, we learn that it was not the risk of natural disaster that scared her, so much as the threat of man-made violence that the panic of the earthquake might precipitate. The reason why she might make this association becomes clear,

It’chan, if a big earthquake like the Great Kanto Earthquake happens again, I wonder if Koreans will be massacred? I wonder if we’ll be made to say *ichien gojussen* (one yen and fifty sen) or *juen gojussen* (ten yen and fifty sen) before being run through by bamboo spears? I don’t think that would happen this time though, the world today is a different place to what it was then. And in any case, most of us pronounce Japanese the same way Japanese people do. But, It’chan, if I was killed all the same, would you be with me, and call me your lover, and hold me close to you? But no, surely there won’t be a massacre this time around. [...] Hey, It’chan, do you think there’ll be a massacre? Do you think I’ll be killed? I

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<sup>159</sup> Cited in Wender, Melissa. *Lamentation as History: Narratives by Koreans in Japan 1965-2000*. Stanford CA: Stanford UP, 2005. p.127.

need to know, if I'm not killed, does that mean I'm Japanese? But what should I do? It must hurt so much, and I would bleed and bleed. (Yi 81, 82)

Here, the memory of the anti-Korean pogrom which followed the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 is once again acknowledged as a formative component in the structure of feeling, to borrow Raymond Williams' concept, around which zainichi Korean self-recognition – or identity, if you will – has taken shape. At the same time, she recognizes that the world has changed since 1923, and that the conditions which led to a massacre then are not necessarily present now. The suggestion seems to be that the fear of oppression, and of the constant sense of danger that comes with being the precariat, are perhaps not entirely founded in this new world in which market relations take precedence over historical relations. But the repetition of this assertion, the way in which she entreats her Japanese lover to assure her that he would stay by her side, suggests that she is far from confident that things would be different this time around. We are left with a sense of interstitiality, of an in-between-ness characterized by indeterminability; an intuition that the past no longer holds answers for the future and yet still has a stranglehold on the present. Conditions for Koreans in Japan are certainly different now than they were during empire, Yi seems to suggest, but the disavowed past remains bubbling under the surface, continuing to inform the affective texture of the contemporary landscape. In 1923, the self-proclaimed “self-defense teams” (*jikeidan*) formed by civilians had attempted to single out Koreans by forcing them to say, “*ichien gojussen* (one yen and fifty sen) or *juen gojussen* (ten yen and fifty sen), two phrases which include phonemes that can be hard for first-language Korean speakers to pronounce. Zainichi Koreans these days, she acknowledges, speak Japanese natively and are largely indistinguishable from ethnic Japanese citizens, but her fear of reprisal persists nonetheless. This oscillation between a commitment to the overcoming of history and a need to

acknowledge its persistent presence is then further complicated by a similar anxiety over what this might mean for her identity. Is the relative physical safety she enjoys in the present the result of a completed process of assimilation? If struggle and violence are touchstone experiences for modern Korean identity, then does not having them qualitatively exclude her? The protagonist is left in an impossible dilemma, should she be a safe traitor, or a dead patriot?

What this passage demonstrates is not so much a refusal to speak as “Zainichi” or as “Korean”, but rather a refusal of the ultimatum by which these identities tend to be configured. This ultimatum, it seems to me, derives from the way in which the figure of Zainichi has been mobilized, firstly to reconcile the discursive aporias of imperial ideology and, secondly, to reconcile the contradictions which that aporia has given rise to in the postwar order of internationality. In chapter one, I argued that the postwar infatuation with the reclamation of ethnic sovereignty in both Korea and Japan was, despite its articulation as a process of decolonization, in fact the logical continuation of an imperialist ideology which equated sociopolitical agency with ethnic participation. By making it a point that one had to be – or at least perform and attempt to pass as – a recognizably Japanese person in order to participate as a subject who may address the polis, imperialist ideology sowed the seeds for a postwar Korean nationalist politics which likewise emphasized that the natural political community is one that is ethnically bound. The figure of Zainichi was the inevitable by-product of an imperialist discourse that demanded the transformation of Korean subjects into Japanese citizens, but this figure of ambiguity was then sustained by a postwar order that required ethnic purity as proof that assimilation policies had failed, that the order of things had reverted to *status quo ante bellum*, and that Korean sovereignty had been restored to its rightful place among nations. To Koreans living in Japan, however, the burden of having to single-handedly negotiate the discursive

skeletons in post-imperial Asia's closet manifested itself in the form of impossible imperatives such as the one we see in the passage above. Why should I make a choice, Yi seems to argue, when that choice is an unreasonable one? Why must I either be a traitor or a pariah? Why must the resolution of history fall to me, its disavowed daughter?

To reiterate then, what critics have identified as Yi Yang-ji's refusal to occupy and speak from a given subject position is in fact, as far as I can see, a refusal to negotiate that choice under its current terms. Yi's resistance to this choice, however, is not simply a retreat to the island of individualism as critics such as Kuroko Kazuo have argued but rather a critique of the current conditions of social and political engagement. She does this, as we have seen in the example above, by laying bear the unreasonable demands that lie at the heart of questions like, "are you more Korean or more Japanese?", "are you *Zainichi Kankokujin* (South Korean) or *Zainichi Chōsenjin* (North Korean)", "are you for us or for them?" This refusal to participate in the politics of others, by others, and for others, is not a refusal of collectivity *per se* but an assertion that a group mentality which requires the absolute suspension of self, of one's experience as a conscious being moving through time and space, cannot be a political one in the true sense of the word. Yi's fiction explores the ways in which those who have been conscripted to mediate the postcolonial extrication of the Korean and Japanese ethnic subjects have been required to suspend the self without reserve; to deny their own experience as the product of a disavowed history in the interest of writing a more convenient one. Insofar as her work understands the figure of *Zainichi* as being both the product and nexus of a whole litany of disavowed *knowledge* – in the Foucaultian sense of that word – born of empire, and to the extent that the figure of *Zainichi* is also a sign which imposes that litany, along with all the dark, forgotten corners of the imperial-colonial imagination, on each individual who falls under its sign, Yi's fiction cannot

maintain a distinction between the personal and the political, the individual and the collective. In short, the experiential position from which Yi seems to write from is that of someone who has been conscripted into mediating the history of a present which is predicated on her erasure.

### **The politics of sexual difference within ethno-national discourse**

What this amounts to is a crisis in representation. After all, who does one speak as when the figure who is heard precedes the one that speaks? And how can one write of one's experience as a mediator of ethnic identities and ethnic histories when the identities and histories in question are not only assumed to not require mediation, but are also considered the *ipso facto* mediators of experience? Of course, this is a dilemma which is far from unique to Korean residents in Japan. Linda Alcoff describes a similar crisis in feminist thought that occurred in the mid-1980s following the influence of poststructuralism. "The dilemma facing feminist theories", she argues, "is that our very self-definition is grounded in a concept that must be deconstructed and de-essentialized in all its aspects. Man has said that woman can be defined, delineated, captured, understood, explained and diagnosed to a level of determination that is never accorded to man himself, who is conceived as a rational animal with free will".<sup>160</sup> The responses to this dilemma, she goes on to explain, resulted in a bifurcation in feminist thinking. On the one hand, "cultural feminists", among whom she numbers Adrienne Rich and Mary Daley, responded by attempting to wrest control of the signification of women from men. These thinkers emphasized that only women have the right to determine how woman is signified, and that the task of feminists was to arrive at an essence of woman that was immanent to the experience of being a woman, not

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<sup>160</sup> Alcoff, Linda. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and Self*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. p.134.

defined in terms of an auxiliary or foil to male experience. The problem with this response, Alcoff argues, is that it ostensibly adhered to a positivist idea which understands the experience of woman as a universal one. As with the nationalist politics of *ressentiment* in postwar Korea, this form of empowerment attempted to wrest control of the mechanics of signification but without really challenging the grammar structuring the sign systems. The poststructuralist response to the crisis of representing woman contended that it is exactly this kind of essentialism which needed to be critiqued. This group, in which Alcoff numbers the likes of Julia Kristeva and Cherrie Moraga, emphasized the need to reject the idea that ‘woman’ can be essentialized at all. “The only way to break out of this (positivist) structure, and in fact to subvert the structure itself” Alcoff writes in reference to the poststructuralist approach, “is to assert total difference, to be that which cannot be pinned down, composed, defined, and thus subjugated within a dichotomous hierarchy”.<sup>161</sup> Citing Kristeva, Alcoff characterizes this approach as one which recognizes that, “[t]he problematic character of subjectivity does not mean (...) that there can be no political struggle, but that the struggle can have only a “negative function”, rejecting, “everything finite, definite, structured, loaded with meaning, in the existing state of society”.<sup>162</sup>

It should not be difficult to identify the parity here between the politics of rejection that typifies the kind of poststructuralist thought that Alcoff presents here, and the acts of refusal in Yi’s work such as that at work in the small excerpt from *Kazukime* above. Indeed, the criticisms that have been directed at Yi’s fiction in this regard – that her refusal to identify with a collective category amounts to a refusal to engage in political struggle - is not dissimilar to the criticisms that have been levelled at poststructuralist feminism. Playing devil’s advocate somewhat, Alcoff

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<sup>161</sup> Alcoff (2006) p.141

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

asks whether the rejection of the idea that ‘woman’ is an essentialist category might not also imply that feminism, as a political praxis, is pointless. If what defines woman is relative then what are the grounds for collective struggle? Likewise, if we are to understand “Zainichi” as a subjectivity which is imposed rather than immanent, then why fight for Zainichi rights in Japan and Korea at all?

In response to this debate over the possibility or impossibility of the representation of woman, in the late 1970s the Combahee River Collective contributed with a radical reworking of the structural conditions of the problem. This collective of Black, queer women, named after the heroic civil war operation overseen by Harriet Tubman in which more than 750 people were rescued from slavery, was formed in response to its members’ frustration at the direction of Black Nationalism, on the one hand, and feminism on the other. Recognizing the implicit paternalism that informed much of Black Nationalist political philosophy (they cite a Black Panther pamphlet from the early 1970s, for example, which asserted in no uncertain terms that “the man is the head of the house. He is the leader of the house/nation because his knowledge of the world is broader, his awareness is greater, his understanding is fuller and his application of this information is wiser” (p. 8), as well as the logic of racial difference which was at work in the assumption of universal womanhood (“Although we are feminists and Lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatist demand. Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors” (p.4)), the Combahee River Collective recognized that in their experience as women of color it was simply impossible to

extricate the social systems and psychological matrices of race, gender, and indeed of class. In the collective statement released by the group in 1977, they state that

We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression, which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g. the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression. (p.4)

In contrast to the 'cultural feminists' introduced by Alcoff, the Combahee River Collective insisted that their experiences not just as women but as Black women specifically had made it apparent to them that the idea of a universal experience of womanhood was simply an illusion. Their insistence that their experience of socialization as women is inseparable from, and indeed could only be understood in tandem with, their racial and class interpellation, has much more in common with the poststructuralist rejection of essentialist categories. At the same time however, the statement exhibits none of the transcendent omniscience for which poststructuralist thinkers were criticized. In fact, when read as a response to the crisis in subjectivity of which Alcoff speaks, what this statement exposes is the false dichotomy between the private and the political which that debate sought to reconcile. The criticism of 'cultural feminism' was that it was in danger of imposing an essentialist and totalizing notion of woman while ignoring the myriad ways in which the experience of womanhood could be signified, while the principal contention held against poststructuralist feminism was that it risked undermining the collective praxis of feminists with its emphasis on atomized, individual experience. In contrast, the Combahee River Collective were deeply committed to political practice - the name of their group was a conscious attempt to situate their work within a historical lineage of Black feminist activism - but the theoretical cues which prompted that practice were located not in an abstracted paradigm of



womanhood but in the lived experience of their bodies, on, in, and through which the social categories which precede them are performed.

Of course, both the socio-political importance of intersectionality and the Combahee River Collective's role in theorizing it is now widely accepted in both theory and praxis, but it is worth reminding ourselves of the ramifications of intersectionality with regards to the concept of subjectivity. Instead of being rooted in the assertion of any discretely singular subjective experience and historical trajectory, the Collective asserted a consciousness of self that was derived from the experience of being perpetually interpellated between the narratives of convenience that sustain majority identities. In other words, in their effort to identify the major issues affecting women of color in the United States, the Collective reached the irrepressible conclusion that the figure of the Black Woman functioned as a kind of abject or negative identity; a subject whose designated social role is as a figured vessel which must accommodate the inconvenient truths threatening the illusion of the sovereignty of the subject. If we take the above two examples of how the collective saw their interpellation in the Black Nationalist movement and the early wave feminist movements respectively, we can see that in either case they were faced with the demand to prioritize either race or gender in the interests of the movement as a whole. Black Nationalism required the complete sacrifice of their public life as women so as to facilitate the illusion of Black (male) sovereignty over the means of its reproduction, while their experience with early wave feminism saw them face demands to ignore the ways in which questions of race complicated questions of gender in the interest of asserting a universal figure of woman that could act as a rallying point. As a result, the clarification of the socio-political conditions lived by women of color in the U.S. actually served to expose the inner workings, the interior mechanics, of hegemonic yet unacknowledged social narratives in the U.S.

The positionality of Black Women thus articulated by the Combahee River Collective is incredibly lonely; after all, from what position can a figure defined by intersubjectivity speak? To the same degree however, and due to the very same condition of intersubjectivity, the figure of the Black Woman finds herself at the center of all things, shaped by and conscripted to define the imagined borders of other identities. In the words of Michele Wallace, cited in the Collective's statement, "[w]e exist as women who are Black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle – because, being on the bottom, we would have to do what no one else has done: we would have to fight the world" (p.7)

***Nabi Taryon: Homosocial complicity across the colonial divide***

As with the Combahee River Collective, it becomes increasingly clear in Yi's fiction that her politics of rejection is not a rejection of politics, not a neo-liberal assertion of the absolute primacy of the individual subject, but rather a rejection of the false dichotomy of the public/private divide. Indeed, what characterizes her fiction, but particularly her first novel, *Nabi Taryon*, is the impossibility of escaping the (public) figure of Zainichi through a retreat to the private and personal. For the novella's protagonist, Aiko, the realization that such an escape is impossible comes from her experience of being ventriloquized as the figure of "Korea" and of "woman" in both (Japanese) public space and (Korean) domestic or private space. As with the Combahee River Collective, however, this experience of being ventriloquized, of being made to disappear behind a discursive assemblage, also places Aiko in the position of bearing witness to the ugly machinery of subject formation. This in turn leads her to a second realization; that the possibility of escape from the messy, unbounded affair of intersubjectivity via subjective

sovereignty is not something which is available to men and foreclosed to women but an impossibility for all. It is precisely because the Combahee River Collective recognized this that they made a point of rejecting “the stance of Lesbian separatism” as a potential political response to both white, middle-class feminism and Black Nationalism because “it leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children. We have a great deal of criticism and loathing for what men have been socialized to be in this society”, they add, “but we do not have the misguided notion that it is their maleness, per se – ie, their biological maleness – that makes them what they are” (Collective). Likewise, what we see in *Nabi Taryon* is a recognition that the illusion of any separatist stance of self-sufficiency must be predicated on a rejection of absolute difference, as opposed to difference in kind, and thus a rejection of politics itself.

The novella opens as Aiko arrives back in Tokyo after two years of living and working at a traditional Japanese inn in Kyoto. She meets her brother, Tetsuo, at a café where their conversation reveals that the reason she ran away from home was to flee the oppressive environment created by her parents’ ongoing divorce. We learn that despite the divorce being an ostensibly domestic dispute (her father was committing adultery) the protracted court case which ensued saw him and his Japanese lawyer rely increasingly on stereotypes of Korean women in an attempt to undermine her mother’s case. Aiko recalls one conversation with her father, for example, in which he tells her that “women from the Isle of Jeju are all uneducated, you know. When it comes down to it, they don’t think of men as men. I didn’t want to say this to you but... you have to understand how your mum and dad ended up like this. Because if you don’t understand then you’ll end up just like her”.<sup>163</sup> In another incident she overhears her father’s

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<sup>163</sup> Yi (1993) p.19

lawyer joking with her father, jibing that “women from your country really have a gift for turning on the waterworks in front of a crowd, don’t they! I don’t know how you guys put up with it!”<sup>164</sup> Her father’s warning, coupled with the homosocial comradery, form an impossible imperative that is not unlike that posed to Zainichi Koreans as a whole: Her father warns her not to “end up just like her” mother, but the criticisms of her mother rest on the assumption that her ‘flaws’ are the result of an immutable ethnic-determinism. As the child of two Korean parents, Aiko herself is a Korean woman and thus, following the same logic, subject to the same gendered ethnic fate as her mother. Like the Korean in imperial Japan, Aiko is thus asked to transcend a category which she is never allowed to escape.

As it turns out, however, Aiko’s father is also attempting an escape of his own. The women (the implication is that there has been more than one) that he has taken as extra-marital lovers have all been Japanese and there are various contrivances in the text which suggest that these affairs have been attempts by her father to escape the conditions of being Korean in Japan. During a car journey to the five lakes region near Mt. Fuji – during which her father warns her not to become a typical “uneducated” emasculator of men like all other women from Jeju - Aiko describes the scenery before them. “I always thought it strange” she says “but whenever father took me to Lake Kawaguchi, Mt. Fuji would always be silhouetted by a clear blue sky as it stood there ahead of us”.<sup>165</sup> In contrast to the bitter memory of “Korea” behind him, the road “ahead” leads to a vision of Japan in which the sky is empty and full of possibility. Indeed, his assertion that it is a flaw of Jeju women to emasculate men is rife with the Japanese colonial imagination and an interesting reference to the intersection of ethnic, colonial, and sexual difference. Mun

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<sup>164</sup> Yi (1993), p.22

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. p.19

Kyong-su writes that between 1920 and 1930, the explosion of small- to mid-scale industry in the Eastern wards of Osaka was fuelled chiefly by migration from Jeju.<sup>166</sup> On arriving in Osaka, the majority of Korean men found themselves employment in construction or factory work. By contrast, however, the pre-industrial economy on Jeju was fuelled predominantly by the labor of women. “The harsh conditions of the environment [on Jeju]” Mun notes, include a chronic shortage of tillable land (Jeju being a volcanic island), as well as being on the flight path of annual typhoons, and this “gave rise to a way of life and relations of production that were particular to the island. Firstly, it was the labor power of women which held the position of primacy in agriculture and fishing, and the women who dived, naked, for fish were, along with livestock owners, a precious source of income for the island”.<sup>167</sup> The contrast between a pre-industrial Korea represented by Jeju and the industrialized space of Japan thus finds a gendered overlay in this instance, and it is not inconceivable that this same gendered coding carries over to other dichotomies associated with the imperial imagination; pre-modern versus modern, parochial versus cosmopolitan, and of subjugation versus sovereignty.

At least part of the reason that Aiko’s father continues to seek solace in the arms of Japanese women thus appears to stem from the assumption – one which is not just his own but affirmed by other men in his life, such as his lawyer – that his wife, by dint of being a woman and Korean, is eternally bound to the conditions associated with being Korean in Japan. In his attempt to escape from “Korea” by escaping his wife, however, it is made apparent that Aiko’s father himself believes that unlike his wife he is able to transcend his ethno-historical fate. This speaks to what Christina Yi has termed the “gendered aporia of empire”; the constitutional

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<sup>166</sup> Mun (2007), p.74

<sup>167</sup> Mun (2007), p.75

inability of the imperial imagination to account for the place of women in its vision of universality. Beginning with an analysis of a 1942 essay titled “National Language Policies in Korea and the Future of National Language Education” (*Chōsen ni okeru kokugo seisaku oyobi kokugo kyōiku*) by linguist Tokieda Motoki, followed by a reading of Kim Saryang’s 1940 novel, “Into the Light” (*Hikari no naka ni*), Yi argues that both texts assign an aporetic role to the Korean woman by which she must facilitate the nurturing of deracinated world citizens while continuing to represent the intransient condition of ethnic difference and its “unnatural and uncanny hybridity” from which her (male) children can then make their escape.<sup>168</sup> This, despite the fact that Tokieda and Kim Saryang positioned themselves politically in direct opposition to each other; the former advocating the Japanese language as a means to “be a historical actor on the imperial stage” and the latter advocating the same “in order to speak back to [his] colonizers”.<sup>169</sup> Tokieda’s treatise on national language education was published at a time when Japan’s “imperialization policies” (*kominka seisaku*) were approaching their zenith, as the demand for both industrial and military manpower for the war effort increased. In light of this demand, Tokieda emphasized the need for a monolingual Japanese empire. By having Korean children use Japanese at home from early childhood, Tokieda asserted, those children would be transformed, via the Japanese language, into loyal retainers of the empire. For Tokieda, however, to wait until the beginning of the child’s formal education to teach him Japanese was to wait too long. “Grasping the Japanese spirit through kokugo, promoting kominka through kokugo – these all come afterwards” he argued, “what must come first, more than anything, is the nativization [bōgoka] of kokugo” (emphasis is as original).<sup>170</sup> In short, it was not enough for Tokieda that

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<sup>168</sup> Yi, Christina. "National Language, Imperialization, and the Gendered Aporia of Empire", in *positions* 24:4, 2016.

<sup>169</sup> Yi (2016) p.814

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p.829

Koreans learn to use the Japanese language as a tool. They must inhabit the language as though it were their place of birth; they must be “native” to it. The perfect tool for the facilitation of this language acquisition – which was also required to disavow the processes by which that acquisition occurred – was the Korean mother. As Christina Yi identifies, the privileged role accorded to the Korean mother by Tokieda requires her to be always self-divided; a figure who can at once give birth to imperial citizens *and* stand as the transhistorical figure of the untamable fecundity of the colonial subject.

Kim Saryang’s novel, *Hikari no naka ni*, while published around the same time as Tokieda’s treatise, takes a very different stance. Unlike Tokieda, who called for the ethnic (via linguistic) homigenization of the empire, Christina Yi argues that Kim Saryang’s novel is characterized by an insistence on ethnic plurality and indeterminacy. Even the narrator’s name, “Minami” much like Aiko’s in *Nabi Taryon*, stands testament to this indeterminacy, in that the character can be read in both Korean (Nam) and Japanese (Minami) with no discernible whiff of the foreign in either case.<sup>171</sup> The story centers around Minami/Nam and his relationship with a young boy named Yamada Haruo who, it turns out, is the child of a Japanese man and a Korean woman and thus himself marked by ethnic ambiguity. As Christina Yi explains, both men are able to “pass” as Japanese and thus hide the ‘tells’ of their ethnic difference when needed. At the same time, however, they are able sustain a shared space of mutually acknowledged diversity by asserting that their Korean ethnicity remains “in their veins” and this “stubbornly and secretly unalterable”. Significantly, this notion of a privately shared *biological* affinity to “Korea” is articulated as being “*haha no mono*” or “the mother’s things”.<sup>172</sup> But as Yi notes, “Haruo’s

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p.824

<sup>172</sup> Yi (2016) p.825

acceptance of his ethnicity, associated with the maternal (*haha no mono*)... is not the same things as his acceptance of his mother (*haha sono mono*)”.<sup>173</sup> Indeed, the community of ethnic indeterminacy that the Minai/Nam and Haruo create for themselves by the end of the novel is an entirely homosocial one. In contrast to the two men, who can “pass” and thus pick up and put down their ethnicity at pleasure, who have acquired for themselves the privilege of being able to both claim the pride of ethnic sovereignty and the wherewithal to transcend it, the mother remains a victim, not the master, of the conditions of her own ethnic ambiguity. Yi provides the example of Haruo’s mother, who is the only character in the story whose speech is marked as foreign. Likewise, her name, Yamada Teijun, is marked by an ethnic ambiguity which, unlike the two men, cannot “pass” in both the Korean and Japanese contexts; her surname is almost archetypically Japanese but her first name, Teijun, is comprised of characters which are very common in Korean names for women. In the novel’s final passage, in which Minami/Nam and Haruo walk side by side through Ueno park, it is the *memory* of the mother as the tragic figure of inescapable ethnic otherness that facilitates the shared illusion of ethnic transcendence for the two men. In other words, it is her presence as a conspicuous absence – as something that has already been lost – which is necessitated.

Despite the seemingly divergent commentaries being made by Tokieda Motoki and Kim Saryang respectively, Christina Yi asserts that “for both authors it is the abject maternal figure who stands silently – sometimes visibly – at the nexus of motherhood, mother tongue, and motherland”<sup>174</sup> so as to allow “her male child to emerge whole, untouched and pure”.<sup>175</sup> In both instances, the escape from the ethnic predeterminism asserted by the logic of colonialism is

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p.827

<sup>174</sup> Yi (2016) p.814

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p.827



conceived of in terms of an Oedipal break, and of an escape from the household as it remains bound to the biological reproduction of Korean ethnicity. In Ri Kaisei's early fiction we have seen how this escape from the Korean home/genetically mandated provincialism was construed as a flight from the Korean father's violence. Ri quite rightly interprets this violence as being rooted in self-hatred, which in turn stems from a perceived inability to transcend one's ethnic marking as a colonial and former colonial subject. But while Ri laments the violence that was mostly directed at his mother, he falls short of a psycho-social analysis of why a hatred of one's own otherness should be directed at the mother of his children. Both Cristina Yi's interventions and Yi Yang-Ji's texts remind us, however, that as a figure whose sexuality is always already construed as the incubation chamber of either ethno-cultural defense or imperialization (kominka), it is in fact women's bodies which has become the principle battleground on, in, and through which the politics of ethnic subjectivity have and continue to be fought. We might remember, for example, that the protagonist from Ri's *In the Midst of Our Youth* describes his older brother's sexual exploitation of Japanese women in terms of using his "sex as a weapon", thus enacting fantasies of colonial revenge on and through the bodies of Japanese women.

In *Nabi Taryon*, it is clear that this aspect of the imperial imagination is at work in Aiko's father's characterization of her mother, as well as in his habitual infidelity with Japanese women. This is not to suggest that Aiko's father should be read as some kind of imperialist ideologue but rather, as Christina Yi does with Kim Saryang, to acknowledge that the "structures of feeling" inaugurated by the imperial imagination and its discourse have left a legacy which is common to both its victims and perpetrators. Moreover, not only does this "structure of feeling" mark a point of continuity between the colonizer and the colonized, it also reveals a discursive continuity between the colonial and the postcolonial, and between the logic of the imperial-universal and

the national-particular. Whether the envisioned community is one rooted in the achievement of a supra-national monoculture or in the defense of ethnic-particularity, in either case the illusion of social reproduction requires the absolute control of biological reproduction, which is to say, of women and their bodies.

Thanks to the homosocial foundations which connect the imperial imagination to the postcolonial nationalist one, Aiko's father is able to locate a line of flight by deferring the aporia of empire – the imperative to both exist and not exist as the perpetually disappearing horizon of ethnic difference – to the figure of the Korean woman. But Yi Yang-ji is careful to point out that this itself never exceeds an *illusion* of flight. By the end of *Nabi Taryon*, the father's attempts to become part of a deracinated, homosocial world have resulted in little more than self-imposed isolation. Finding out that her father had had their entire family naturalized as Japanese citizens when she was a young child – another attempt to escape “Korea” – Aiko visits her father's apartment to confront him. “Do you really like Japanese women so much that you went ahead and naturalized?” she asks. Her fury is quickly dissipated by a wave of sadness however, as she realizes that “there was no smell of a women in this room”. Leaving his apartment in tears she repeats the observation again; “there was no smell of a woman. There was no woman there”. In each case the word “woman” (*onna*) is written in katakana, drawing attention to the separate lives of the signifier as a discursive figure and the nameless, faceless human beings it speaks for. The suggestion here is that it is not just the loss of one or even many individual women that have left Aiko's father alone in the world but the loss of “woman”. There is a tragic irony here; for the figure which Aiko's father runs from – “woman” as the bearer of unbridled, uncontrollable “Korean” life and thus the reproducer, the sustainer, of the “Korean” condition – is also the only figure which might gesture to a future beyond the confines of his own mortality. But of course

this is nothing more than the aporia of empire, only ever temporarily deferred to the “woman”, making its reappearance as a ghostly revenant. In this final image of her lonely father, the presence of the ‘woman from Jeju’ no longer haunts his vision of a deracinated community to come, for his attempts at extricating himself from her have been successful. Now it is the absence of “woman” which haunts his achieved, homosocial utopia with a vision of its own self-imposed finitude.

Aiko’s reaction to her father’s self-imposed isolation suggests that she is, despite the implicit criticism of his racist misogyny, somewhat sympathetic to his internal struggle. In the midst of the personal dispute between her father and mother she recognizes that her parents are also forced to contend with the discursive figure of “Korea” and the particular interpretative lens which it imposes on their situation. Following the conversation with her father regarding “women from Jeju”, Aiko stares out of the car window at the lights flickering on the surface of the lake. Her mind then wanders to a fun fact she once heard that two of the five lakes near Mt. Fuji, Lake Shoji and Lake Sai, are actually connected somewhere deep below the surface. Contemplating this image she reflects that, “My father’s hatred for my mother. My mother’s hatred for my father. Perhaps their never-ending hatred is connected somewhere that remains unknown to me, and to something that might reveal a very different surface of water”. It is unclear as to what this “somewhere” or “something” refer to but, to my mind at least, the structural imagery provided here concisely visualizes the kind of relation that is instantiated by abjection. Like the tunnel “under the surface”, the perverse desire by the subject for the object is a relation which cannot be articulated – it cannot be *surfaced* – as a relation at all. As Kristeva argues, the process of abjection is one in which the ‘deject’ (the one who abjects but, like Aiko’s father, only ends up imposing the regime of abjection on himself) is in a constant and tireless

battle to “constitute his own territory”.<sup>176</sup> Kristeva herself asserts that it is the corpse, “seen without God and outside of science [that] is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life”.<sup>177</sup> In *Nabi Taryon* it is not biological death that Aiko’s father is confronted with when he faces the figure of the Korean superimposed on his wife, but rather the prospect of social death. And as Kristeva notes that it is the abjection of the corpse that allows “death to infect life”, so too do we see her father’s abjection of her mother as a process which contaminates his new lease of (social) life with a vision of its inevitable (social) death.

Aiko’s father is thus caught in a feedback loop of abjection; in his attempt to extricate himself from his wife and the fate of abjection that she represents, he acquaints himself, paradoxically, with the perverse *necessity* of the abject figure. Indeed, the protracted nature of the divorce appears to indicate a perverse desire to perpetuate indefinitely the very process of extrication itself. This process of extrication without end is, of course, nothing more than the process of abjection itself. On the same car journey with her father, Aiko loses her patience and asks him, “Why don’t you stop with this separate living arrangement and just hurry up and divorce?” Her father’s response speaks volumes: “Suddenly my whole body was thrown back against my seat. Dad slammed his foot down on the accelerator and the car lifted off the ground momentarily. From the side I see my father biting his lip. His hands gripping the steering wheel are red and puffy. The car races towards Mt. Fuji at a terrifying speed”.<sup>178</sup> Her father’s escape toward Japan is also, it seems, a death drive. Insofar as his admission into the (homo)social order of Japan (society) requires the the social death of the Korean within him, this “Japan” does not

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<sup>176</sup> Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. p.8

<sup>177</sup> Kristeva (1982) p.4

<sup>178</sup> Yi (1993) p.19

really provide an escape from the colonial condition as much as it requires the killing and burying of it. To assimilate under these conditions must therefore be understood as a kind of self-abnegation in the form of a death. Understanding this, perhaps, Aiko's father seems to be unable to fully let go of his former life, even as the thought of its claustrophobia propels him toward assimilation all the faster.

It is here that we see a parallel, not just between Aiko and her father, but between her father and a number of Yi Yang-ji's other protagonists. Because in Aiko's father's hysterical oscillation, between being drawn to the prospect of freedom promised by assimilation to "Japan" and being repelled by the concomittant imperative to kill oneself discursively and socially, we can glimpse the same structure of indecision that we see in the excerpt from *Kazukime* cited above. In the same way that the unnamed protagonist of that novella prevaricates indefinitely between the two positions of living traitor or dead patriot, so too do we see Aiko's father struggling with the same "Catch 22" situation. As with the former example, Aiko's father's successful extrication from "Korea" does not require his literal, physical death, as it did during empire. But insofar as the postwar narratives of the colonial period in both the Koreas and Japan demanded an absolute extrication of the colonial "intimacies" of empire (to borrow NayoungAimee Kwon's terminology<sup>179</sup>), they both necessitated the discursive death of its memory. As it is precisely the acknowledgment of this intimacy (for better or worse) that constitutes the "Zainichi" experience of the postwar period, its disavowal constitutes an imperative of self-abnegation when it comes to those who fall under its sign.

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<sup>179</sup> Cf. Kwon, Nayoung Aimee, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan*. Durham NC, Duke University Press, 2015.

It should be clear by now that in articulating an escape from “Korea” to “Japan”, Yi Yang-ji is not referring to the geopolitical locations of Korea and Japan respectively but to a “social and psychological wage”, to harken back to our discussion of Du Bois in chapter one, which, depending on whether those words are used in Japan or Korea, can be encoded either way. At the beginning of *Nabi Taryon*, for example, when Aiko meets her brother, Tetsuo, and tells him of how “she ran away from home to go to Kyoto”, her brother warns her that “wherever you go it’s the same. It’s the same old thing, you can run and run but there’s nowhere to hide”.<sup>180</sup> Later however, when she confesses to her Japanese lover, Matsumoto, that “if I don’t go to Korea I think I might just die. I’m escaping Japan. Everything is just such a mess here, I hate it”, the image of Tetsuo’s face appears before her, once again warning her that, “wherever you go it’s the same. You can run and run but there’s nowhere to hide”.<sup>181</sup> If her escape to Kyoto in the first instance was an attempt, like her father with his extra-marital affairs, to escape the condition of being Korean in Japan, then the revenance of her brother’s warning when she dreams of escaping “Japan” is a reminder that pinning her flag to “Korea” will still require the abnegation of her lived experiences at the border of those two ethnic categories. It is precisely these experiences which give her the sense that “‘Japanese’ and ‘Korean’ were words that felt distant and empty”, despite the fact that “they were words which, without fail, would be a source of fear and consternation whenever she took one step out of the house”.<sup>182</sup> Having thus identified that neither “Japan” nor “Korea” present a stable platform from which her own experiences of interstitiality might be articulated, both words become little more than shifting signifiers for Aiko. But because both words continue to constitute the notion of a static, shared subjectivity in

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<sup>180</sup> Yi (1993) p.16

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p.49

<sup>182</sup> Yi (1993) p.28

the respective national communities of Korea (specifically South Korea in this case) and Japan, the “shifting” or incessant oscillation of meaning that is occurring at the level of the word is deferred to Aiko and her family instead. Just as it was the “slavish” nature of slaves that was invoked to explain away the constitutional aporias in early U.S. notions of “freedom” (cf. the discussion of Roedigger and Du Bois in chapter one), so here we see those whose lived conditions are a direct result of a disavowed discursive aporia - the inconvenient reality of the unbounded and porous nature of a national subjectivity that is supposed to be contained and containable – being themselves identified as its root cause.

Having thus identified that the incessant inbetween-ness that the figure of “Zainichi” is both required to occupy and to resolve is, in fact, a result of language, and more specifically of an attempt to render a discursive or linguistic ideal – that of a contained “I” who knows where he speaks from, where he begins and where he ends – into a social reality, Yi Yang-ji, like the women of the Combahee River Collective, appears to make the decision to abandon the subject position altogether. Instead, her protagonists narrate their experience, if narration is indeed the appropriate word in this case, from what I would term the *abject position*. What this means in practice is that she tasks her protagonists with narrating from a position of intersubjectivity, from ‘the middle’, so to speak. Kristeva, considering the practice of accounting for the abject in writing considers that “writing of this sort is necessarily implicated in the interspace that characterizes perversion”.<sup>183</sup> Indeed, as the subject positions of “Japan” and “Korea” evaporate from their grasp, there is nothing left for Yi’s protagonists but to oscillate perversely in the “interspace”. This perversion, however, is not intrinsic to the condition of her own ethnic indeterminacy but rather, as we have seen with the parable of her father, intrinsic to the illusion

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<sup>183</sup> Kristeva, p.16

of sovereign subjectivity itself. This is, in short, deferred perversion; the demand that “Zainichi” resolve their own irresolvable condition. As Kristeva also mentions however, the attempt to imagine, occupy, and speak from the abject position has considerable consequences for the role of language. “Writing [the abject]”, she asserts, “implies the ability to imagine the abject, that is, to see oneself in its place and to thrust it aside by means of the displacements of verbal play”.<sup>184</sup> As can be glimpsed from the way “Japan” and “Korea” function as signifiers which can readily switch places depending on the context of their use, any attempt to speak from and of the “interspace” that is formed between them must gesture to a realm beyond the limits of the respective language systems which sustain them. In short, insofar as the guidelines of abjection remain codified within the sign systems of (national) languages, a narration of and from the abject position must do battle with language and its professed ability to transparently convey meaning.

This abject position is more immediately identifiable in Yi’s later works, to which we will turn momentarily, but the necessity of “verbal play” in the “displacement”, in Kristeva’s words, of the abject relations instantiated by discourse is also made apparent in *Nabi Taryon*. Following Aiko’s return to Kyoto, she is asked to take the witness stand in court in support of her mother. Having already recognized that her mother and father are perversely bound to each other and that there is “no escape” from the history which permeates their private relationship, Aiko can only see futility in any attempt to facilitate their final extrication. “Father and child, mother and child, blood ties, my own flesh and bone; what do these even mean”, she asks herself, acknowledging the way in which the encoding of her parents’ divorce as a private matter has served to disavow the socio-historical discourse it has inevitably become bound to. In

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.



addition, Aiko's 'testimony' to this futile situation has been intensely scripted and choreographed by her mother's lawyer, its purpose being to "benefit" her mother's case and the expediting of the divorce rather than to provide a transparent account of Aiko's experience. "I was just performing the role bequeathed to me by the witness stand", Aiko reflects, before adding, "the courtroom, the courthouse, even "Japan" itself, everything could just be smashed to smithereens, even my own body might as well just disappear...".<sup>185</sup> Indeed, in contrast to the testimony that Yi is required to make, her own body, that ineffaceable proof of her own existence, may as well disappear, for it is not Aiko's existence that is of interest here but only her parents' successful extrication from each other. Indeed, even as Aiko agrees to play the part assigned to her and responds to the cross-examination as instructed, it becomes apparent that it is not the words that she speaks which stand testimony but the words which speak for her. The following excerpt is lengthy but crucial.

"Why did you run away from home?"

At that moment I thought, this is strange. If I give the reason it will hinder Dad's case. Why would Dad's lawyer have me make a statement that's to his detriment?

"Because it was becoming too hard to stay at home [...] There didn't seem to be any hope of progress being made with the court case and that, along with other things, meant that I lost confidence in being able to keep up with school. And then there was the fact that my father..."

Dad's lawyer interjected.

"And I've heard that you had changed somewhat after coming back from Kyoto. From what I've heard from your father, you started to show an interest in political issues following your return from Kyoto"

[...] "Erm, how exactly is this connected to my parents' divorce?"

"Will the witness please stick to just answering the questions. It seems as though you often argue with your father over the issue of naturalization"

"Well, yes, that's..."

"You weren't particularly happy with your father's decision to naturalize as Japanese.... Is that correct?"

I bit my lip hard and looked down. Oh, I just want to smash everything to smithereens. I gripped my hands tightly beneath the witness stand.

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<sup>185</sup> Yi (1993) p.40

“Your honor, I feel that this has absolutely nothing to do with my parents’ divorce”

As soon as I said this Dad’s lawyer quickly turned to the judge.

“Your honor, I would like to continue with the questioning, if I may”

“Carry on”

“You appear to have commented a number of times on how you cannot forgive your father for naturalizing [...] You have argued with your father incessantly about this issue, correct?”

“Could you please stop recording this? The issue of naturalization and the issue of my parents’ divorce bear no relation whatsoever”

“Your honor, I would like to continue”

“Carry on”

“It also seems that you are taken with the idea of independence for Koreans and have been involved with political activities to that end. Rather extreme activities, in fact”

[...] Dad’s lawyer was just repeating what Dad had said to him.

Independence for Koreans? Tying her political activism to those words had all the markings of a first generation Zainichi behind it. I looked at Mum’s lawyer. He was shocked. But I wonder, was he shocked at the fact that his strategy had failed or the fact that I’d been involved with political activism? This is “Japan” at the end of the day. At the end of the day, this is “Japan”...

“The witness will please answer the question”

“Erm, yes, that’s correct”

“In which case, you admit that you and your father argue on a day to day basis about naturalization and political issues, and that you are at odds with each other as such. Your honor, I must conclude that the statement the witness has provided today is woefully lacking in impartiality due to these issues of current affairs. I have no further questions” [Y.-J. Yi 41, 42]

I have included such a lengthy citation here because it concisely articulates many of the dilemmas faced by those who attempt to speak from the position of “Zainichi” and thus, concomitantly, by those such as Yi Yang-Ji who attempt to write from behind the veil of this figure. Firstly, what she is permitted to say is regulated by the degree to which it facilitates her father’s escape from her mother and from “Korea”. Of course these rules of engagement apply to the cross-examination of any witness, not just one marked by ethnic difference. But by this point in the novella we have already seen how even the relationships in Aiko’s family have, thanks to the protracted divorce, been structured around their respective roles as plaintiffs and defendants. At a meeting with her mother’s lawyer, for example, where he suggests that she should appear in

court in her uniform because it would “benefit” her mother’s case, Aiko reflects that “those words, ‘beneficial’ and ‘detrimental’ are terribly nostalgic for me. When I was little I memorized them as adult-words and then used them at school to show off”.<sup>186</sup> Her role as a witness, to exist to account for the lives of others, is one that has been a constant both in and out of the courthouse, and to such an extent that it has come to define her upbringing and passage into adulthood.

Secondly, the method by which her father’s lawyer silences her is to politicize her. At the moment Aiko is about to reveal a personal experience of her father, his lawyer begins concerted to cast doubt on her ability to account for herself as a private individual, and thus of her ability to account for private experience, by implying that she is only capable of speaking on behalf of her demographic as a whole. At this moment, Aiko, like her mother the “Jeju woman”, is rendered nothing more than a figure. And as with her mother, in order that her father may transcend the constraints of the mere figure, and become a subject unto himself, she is forbidden from ever doing so. Despite protesting to the judge that her parents divorce and her political activism bear no relation, despite her request that the court stenographer omit this strategic conflation of the private and the political, it is the voice of the subversive figure of “Zainichi” which is documented and catalogued. Significantly, it is her father that instigates this cynically strategic gagging method, effectively throwing her under the bus from which he himself is trying to alight. Indeed, the “tell” that gives him away – his assumption that the political activism his daughter is involved in somehow pertains to “Korean independence”, smacks of the same archaic imperial imagination that is evident in his thoughts toward his wife.

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<sup>186</sup> Yi (1993), p.18

In effect, Aiko becomes ensnared by a discourse, the ownership of which has been thrust upon her. Despite her attempts, and the advice of her mother's lawyer to answer simply and calmly, she is rendered silent behind a cacophonous wall of overwrought, over-determined catch-phrases; "naturalization", "Korean independence", and "political activism". These words form a barrier through which her own voice cannot pass. The sheer volume of this discourse is so great that Aiko cannot even be sure if her mother's lawyer can hear anything beyond it; "was he shocked that his strategy had failed" she wonders, "or by the fact that I'd been involved in political activism? This is 'Japan' at the end of the day".<sup>187</sup>

### ***Yuhi*: From the subject position to the abject position**

Aiko's response to being silenced behind this wall of discourse is, as we have seen, to conclude that her "own body might as well disappear". This juxtaposition between the figurative body of "Zainichi", flanked on both sides by national language systems which require its abjection in order to demarcate their own boundaries, and Aiko's physical body, is one that becomes increasingly marked in Yi Yang-Ji's later fiction. Indeed, by the time we get to Yi's last complete work, *Yuhi* (1988), the physical body of its eponymous protagonist has receded beyond the horizon entirely, leaving only an assortment of traces to account for her presence. *Yuhi* herself is a young Zainichi Korean woman who has come from Japan to study Korean language, culture, and history at a prestigious university in Seoul, but the novel is narrated not by the protagonist herself but by a woman we only know as "Onni", a term meaning "older sister" in Korean but used as a term of affectionate respect by women when addressing their older female peers. *Yuhi* had been renting a room in the house that Onni and her mother live in together, and

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<sup>187</sup> Yi (1993), p.42

the narrative follows Onni's recollections of the time that they spent together while she was living there. The first marker of Yuhi's absence, then, is that she is only accessible to the reader through the mediation of a second-person narration. In addition, however, Yuhi is also absent from the temporal framework of the text; in the first sentence of the novel Onni reflects that "From the moment I hung up the phone on Yuhi, I lost all sense of composure".<sup>188</sup> That phone call, we later learn, was made by Yuhi to inform Onni that she would be returning to Japan and not coming back. Everything that follows in the narrative is thus a recollection, with Yuhi's physical presence tantalizingly cordoned off behind the first sentence of the novel, and the click of a receiver indicating a dialogue that has already been brought to a close.

As Atsuko Ueda argues however, the loss of "composure" that Onni experiences at the moment her final conversation with Yuhi ends is crucial, because it marks the beginning of a new type of relationship between them, one which "suggests, rather, a direction which allows for a continuation of their relationship based on a *lack of comprehension*"<sup>189</sup> [emphasis is my own]. This unsettling experience that Onni feels at the prospect of being unable to understand Yuhi contrasts, Ueda argues, with the paternalism which underscored the older woman's attempts to support the younger exchange student while she lived with them. Through her recollections it becomes apparent, Ueda states, That Onni could only understand Yuhi's emotional turmoil in terms of her struggle to become Korean. As such, Onni's attempts to support Yuhi involved encouraging her efforts to "become Korean" while gently (and sometimes not so gently) chastising her when she retreated to "Japan" and the Japanese language.<sup>190</sup> In one example cited by Ueda, Onni reminds Yuhi that when she writes in Korean she must remember to insert the

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<sup>188</sup> Yi (1993) p.393

<sup>189</sup> Ueda, Atsuko. "'Moji' to iu 'kotoba': Y Yang-ji 'Yuhi' wo megutte." in *Nihon kindai bungaku* (2000) p.137

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 129

correct spacing between words and not to “string everything together endlessly like it’s Japanese”.<sup>191</sup> Similarly, Onni realizes that “other than the times she had an exam coming up or a report to write, she would hardly read or write in Korean at all. And except for the textbooks and documents she used for school, the bookcase in Yuhi’s room was filled entirely with Japanese books”.<sup>192</sup> Ueda quite rightly concludes that the frustration Onni feels toward Yuhi in both examples stems from her assumption that Yuhi is choosing Japan(ese) over Korea(n), and that in this cognitive framework “Japanese and Korean are configured as an oppositional relation, and she identifies one of them as being a good use of her time and the other a waste of it”.<sup>193</sup>

Ueda’s reading makes it clear that while we are forced to rely on Onni’s mediation in order to reconstruct Yuhi the individual, that mediation inevitably reveals more about Onni than it does of Yuhi. As was gestured to with Aiko in *Nabi Taryon*, here Yuhi remains locked away behind a wall of discourse which pertains to speak of her and for her, but which actually obscures our ability to *hear* her. But Ueda’s essay is also helpful in allowing us to perceive the way in which Yi’s protagonists make themselves heard beyond the walls of nationalist discourse, and beyond the carapace of the figure of “Zainichi”. To this end, Ueda draws our attention to the distinction between “reading” and “looking” and, concomitantly, between the “word” and the “character”. As we have seen, the frustration that Onni directs at Yuhi for forgetting to correctly space her Korean words stems from the fact she sees this as a uniquely “Japanese” mistake to make; hence the criticism that she “string[s] everything together endlessly like it’s Japanese”. Ueda argues that this intervention is, in fact, correct: In Japanese, words in the written sentence are distinguished by character type, with nouns and the non-conjugated parts of verbs and

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<sup>191</sup> Yi (1993) p.418

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. p.417

<sup>193</sup> Ueda (2000), p.131

adjectives generally written in kanji, foreign loan words and onomatopoeia/mimetic words in katakana, and everything else in hiragana. As each constituent word is distinguished by a difference in character type, there is no need to mark the distinction any further by spacing the words apart. In Korean however, which, like the Roman alphabet, relies on one character system which represents phonemes, the spacing of words is crucial to marking the distinction between the constituent words of a sentence and rendering it intelligible. Ueda keenly observes that Yuhi's eschewal of this spacing system when she writes Korean strongly suggests that can "see" the Chinese characters that the Korean phonemes reference, even if they are not *physically present* on the page.<sup>194</sup>

After Yuhi leaves Korea – in fact, during the very phone call which opens the novel – she tells Onni that she has left behind a stack of notes in her room. These notes, she explains, were written during her time at Onni and her aunt's house, and are a collection of her thoughts and reflections of her time in Korea. Perhaps because her time in Korea was a painful one for her, Yuhi explains to Onni that she was unable to take them with her, but also unable to throw them away. She asks Onni to "take care of them" and to "dispose of them as she sees fit".<sup>195</sup> The notes, however, are written in Japanese, meaning that Onni will be unable to read them. Thanks to the fact that she has some knowledge of Chinese characters, however, Onni is able to pick out the odd word from this collection of notes and tries and piece together, albeit it tentatively and with uncertainty, their content. In this way, Ueda identifies, "the gaze of both Yuhi and Onni, which share the Chinese character as a form of Sinocentric cultural capital, cross paths here at the point of reading, mediated by the symbols of those same characters".<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Ueda (2000) p.130

<sup>195</sup> Yi (1993) p.399, 400

<sup>196</sup> Ueda (2000) p.130, 131

The significance of this shared cultural heritage for Ueda is the particular effect that the written ideogram has on the notion of national language in this instance. “With words that it is not possible to convert into kanji (and this is feasible in both Japanese and Korean)”, she argues, “there is a process which follows from the [non-Chinese] character, through vocalization, before arriving at meaning”, but “in the case of the Chinese character the character is linked directly to meaning without having to pass through vocalization”.<sup>197</sup> It is for this reason that Ueda emphasizes that it is Onni and Yuhi’s “gaze” that converges on the Chinese character, for in foregoing the necessity of vocalizing the written word in order to arrive at meaning, neither woman “reads” the words that the characters represent. But in uncoupling the written character from its vocalization in this way, this emphasis on “seeing” over “reading” deeply unsettles the assumed fixity of national language, exposing the written character as bearing little faith to the spirit of its assumed sign system. Put simply, Chinese characters not only render translation an unnecessary pursuit when it comes to communicating between Japanese and Korean, but the very reason it becomes unnecessary – because it bypasses vocalization – gestures to an experience of language which exists in a realm of absolute silence, one that does not require communication at all. Moreover, the very attempt to vocalize the character – in other words, to render it distinctly “Japanese” or “Korean”, drowns out this silent, intimately personal, experience with a cacophony of noise.

### **Concluding remarks**

Gender is by no means a question that is only apparent in work by women writers, but in criticism of Zainichi literature it has often been foregrounded as being supplementary to the

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. p.131



question of “Zainichi identity”, rather than integral to it (examples). Much like the way in which Zainichi literature itself has been mobilized by some critics to reinvigorate and reify the national literary canon in Japan by standing in as evidence of its assumed diversification, so too have “Zainichi women writers” often been packaged as simply another flavor of “Zainichi Literature”. But as this “also-ran” positioning of Zainichi Literature vis-a-vis the national canon blinded itself to the way in which writers, such as Ri Kaisei, challenged the very notion of a discrete national experience, so too has the circumscribing of “Zainichi women writers” ignored similar challenges to assumptions regarding “Zainichi Literature”.

In fact as we have seen, the question of gender and its relationship to notions of ethnicity figure prominently in Ri Kaisei’s work. On the one hand, the generally critical depiction of authoritarian father figures, either as the abusive head of a (Korean) household or as the abusive figurehead of a (Japanese) state, is a means by which Ri challenges the kind of blind filial loyalty to the ethnic community that is expected by ethno-nationalists on both sides of the colonial and postcolonial divide. On the other hand, the way in which Ri mobilizes female characters to provide a foil to this patriarchal order is often problematic. While I disagree with Melissa Wender’s argument that the mother in Ri’s texts functions as an allegory of an ethnically Korean native place (*bokoku*), it is clear to me that one of the ways in which Ri eulogizes this idea of community, emphasizing its irrevocability, is by eulogizing the mother who represents a politics that might have been. The extent to which Ri necessitates the death of the mother in his fiction is further emphasized by the conspicuous lack of mother figures in the diegetic present of the narration. It seems that now the ethnic community has been rendered impossible, Ri no longer has any need for its vessels of reproduction. All that is left is a melancholic homosocial order of orphaned men. Ri may not be leaving the mother so as to join a national community under the

name of the father, but we should not be lured into thinking that this rejection of patriarchy is followed by an emancipation of women from the domestic realm, or of a critical reassessment of the private/public divide that continues to inform conceptions of the household and society as distinctly structured communities. Yi Yang Ji's fiction, much like Kristeva's critical interventions, remind us that while political ideologies of national belonging insist on an ostensibly tribal mode of relation - evident in the second character of the translation of *minzoku/minjok*; concepts that our themselves genealogically linked as neologisms born of an epistemic complicity between Japanese and European imperialism – those ideologies will continue to necessitate the social control and discursive abjection of female sexuality. Ultimately, we are reminded that ethnically defined collective subjectivity and women's liberation are mutually incompatible political agendas.

## Chapter 4

### “Apache” Koreans in Postwar Osaka: Transpacific exchanges of post-imperial metaphors and the production of “Zainichi”

In July 1955 at the Sixth National Congress of the Japanese Communist Party, party leaders issued a directive stating that all Korean members of the JCP would henceforth become members of the Korean Worker’s Party, where they would continue the struggle against hegemonic imperialism from their own country (Mun 144, 145). Given that neither the Republic of Korea nor the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea<sup>198</sup> were recognized as sovereign states in Japan in 1955, and with the Korean Workers’ Party of Korea being one in the same as the North Korean state apparatus, the JCP’s decision not only mandated a transferal of party membership but also, effectively, a change in citizenship. A decade previously, Japanese and Korean JCP members had emerged jubilantly from prison together, eager to carry the momentum of years of collaborative, underground anti-imperialist activism into a new historical phase of political reconstruction. And yet by 1955, despite internationalism having been the party’s avowed *modus operandi* since its establishment in 1922, official party documents lamented that “it was clearly a mistake to continue to purposefully place the burden of Japan’s revolution on the shoulders of Zainichi Koreans”.<sup>199</sup> Only four years previously, as civil war in Korea was quickly developing into the first “hot” theatre of the Cold War, JCP members had reiterated their commitment to an internationalist purview by stating that “we will defend the People’s Republic of Korea unto death”<sup>200</sup> In March 1955, the same party stated that “our new directives have been agreed upon

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<sup>198</sup> Henceforth referred to as the ROK and DPRK respectively.

<sup>199</sup> Mun (2007) p.145

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p.143

for the purposes of a revolution in Japan. Our activities should be aimed at the preservation of our homeland (J: *sokoku*) and membership will be rescinded from anyone who's motivations differ from this".<sup>201</sup> In a little under five years, the JCP had shifted from a position which saw transnationalism<sup>202</sup> as being essential to its political project, to one which understood the very same as an ethically reprehensible historical error.

The banishment of Koreans from the JCP stands as a particularly interesting example of the way in which Koreans in Japan were transformed, over a dizzyingly brief period of time, from imperial subjects into foreign nationals. Not least because the episode illustrates the remarkable complicity between otherwise ideologically opposed factions in doing so. From the perspective of the virulently anti-Communist bureaucrats who dominated parliamentary politics after 1952, an anti-Korean position was hardly surprising. Oguma Eiji and others have extensively documented the ascendancy of reactionary nationalist politics among conservative political theorists, politicians and bureaucrats following the collapse of empire and Pan-Asianism, while historians such as Mun Kyong-Su and Yun Kwon-Ja have established how this reactionary turn in post-imperial politics was catastrophic for the Korean community in Japan. But the examination of a similar nationalist turn among avowed anti-imperialists within Japan during the same period (and the JCP was, from its inception and throughout the war, an avowedly anti-imperialist party) reveals that the expulsion of Koreans from the limits of the Japanese political community sustained a wide and divergent spectrum of projected political horizons. For both communists and conservatives, anti-imperialists and imperial apologists alike,

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p.145

<sup>202</sup> Here and throughout this paper, I use the terms "international" and "transnational" as distinct, rather than interchangeable terms. While both refer to the idea of political community beyond the borders of any one nation, I use "international" in reference to the notion that such a political community is constituted as an aggregate of sovereign national polities, and "transnational" to refer to the contrasting idea that such a community exists between and beyond discrete polities.

the experience of empire had, for one reason or other, made the parsing of Japan and Korea on all registers an ethical imperative.

The shift from transnationalism to internationalism that was taking place within the JCP was mirrored by a similar sea-change in the world of letters. As Victor Koschmann has observed, interlocutors in the so-called “culture movement” (*bunka undō*), which took place on and between the pages of coterie magazines in the late 1940s and early 1950s, were acutely concerned with the question of subjectivity/agency (*shutaisei*) in literature. Emerging from an interwar scholarly tradition rooted in Marxist historical materialism, writers and scholars were preoccupied with the question of how the subject-producing power of literature might be analyzed to account for the failure of artists, writers and intellectuals to curtail the rise of militaristic discourse during the 1930s. Koschmann informs us that for Communists, literature’s role in producing subjects was also seen as crucial in bringing the as yet un-politicized to political consciousness; a motive which had been central to the interwar Proletarian Literature movement. What was often implicit in this line of questioning, however, particularly from the perspective of historical responsibility, was the assumption that the subject of Japanese literature was essentially the Japanese *minzoku*, or ethno-national group. As it had been Japan that had invaded and brutalized Asia and the South Pacific, surely the onus was on the Japanese subject to reflect on how it had been constituted as such?

As we can see from the literary output of Koreans in Japan before and after 1945, however, a good number of Korean writers were equally invested in a critical analysis of subjectivity as it pertained to responsibility and complicity. Kim Sa-Ryang’s novel *Hikari no naka ni* (“Into the Light”) for example, published in 1940 when imperial assimilation policies (*kōminka seisaku*) were at their most intrusive, explores the anxiety caused by the split loyalties

of a man with a Korean mother and a Japanese father. Far from dividing historical and moral responsibility along ethno-national lines, the novel emphasizes the intersectional dimensions of mixed heritage subjectivity, drawing complicated conclusions regarding the relationship between ethnicity and responsibility. Likewise Kim Sok-bom's fiction from the late 1950s, despite being set on the island of Jeju and thus not obviously centered on the predicament of being Korean in Japan, are almost uniformly written from the perspective of a spy; a persona which clearly brings questions of split loyalties and complicated complicity to the foreground.

The extent to which Korean fiction written in Japanese was legible to Japanese readers as anything other than an outsider's perspective on Japanese life or, at the very least, as a bridge straddling discrete national experiences, is debatable. But whatever conditions had existed which might have allowed for a space of shared discourse with shared stakes, and which might have allowed for the memory – and mourning - of the previous half-century to be a collectively Asian undertaking, they had been obliterated by 1955. The totality and finality of this shift to ethno-national politics is testified (and, as it must have appeared at the time, eminently justified) by the fact that by 1960 three-quarters of the Koreans who had been living in Japan had moved their lives to the Korean peninsula. But for the many Koreans who remained in Japan, whether out of choice or necessity of circumstance, the foreclosure of the possibility of transnational discourse had far-reaching consequences. For the second-generation *Zainichi* Korean writers who emerged in the late 1960s (including Ri Kaisei, Kim Shi Jong, Kim Ha Kyong. and Yang Sok Il (who debuted slightly later, in the 1980s, but was of the same generation), this absence of transnational discourse would arguably become the principle 'problem space' of their fiction. How could the social and political consequences of "*zainichi*" – of being Korean in Japan after empire - be made legible over and above its conflation with the Korean national subject?

In this chapter I examine two novels which, taken as a call and response, help to elucidate the way in which Korean ethnicity was *rhetorically* excised from the Japanese domestic political landscape in addition to the overt, legal excision which had been an ongoing priority for the Japanese government since 1945, as well as the consequences of this rhetoric for *Zainichi* Koreans of the following generation. The first text I analyze is Kaikō Takeshi's *Nihon sanmon opera* (1959; "Japan's Threepenny Opera"), an semi-fictional account of a real group of disparate and destitute individuals residing in a makeshift settlement (*shūra*) next to what is now Osaka Castle Park. The occupants of this settlement, who are all explicitly coded as Korean via the deployment of various Korea-related stereotypes, make ends meet by sneaking in to the ruins of the former imperial arsenal next to Osaka Castle and digging up scrap metal to then sell on the black market. Despite the settlement being clearly signposted as a Korean cultural space however, they are collectively referred to as the "Apache tribe" (*apacchi zoku*) of Japan throughout. I want to argue that it is via this borrowed metaphor – most likely inspired by the 1954 Japanese release of the Hollywood Western, *Apache*, starring Burt Lancaster in the lead role as Maasai the "last Apache warrior" – that Kaiko makes sense of the continued presence of former colonial subjects within a former imperial metropole. Referring to work by scholars of indigenous representation in North America, I demonstrate that U.S. settler narratives after 1945, such as *Apache*, which attempted to re-cast the historically antagonistic relationship between settlers and indigenous Americans into an allegory of contemporary solidarity were also instrumental in establishing "zainichi" as a figure that can similarly be placed both 'inside' and 'outside' of the Japanese political community as a matter of rhetorical convenience.

Unlike conservative ideologues, such as those in the anti-Communist coalition governments before and after 1955, there is no anti-Korean or anti-Communist sentiment in

*Nihon sanmon opera*. Indeed, Kaiko would become one of the most committed and outspoken members of the *Beheiren* movement opposing American imperialism in Vietnam in the 1960s, thereby professing his commitment to internationalist solidarity<sup>203</sup>. Nevertheless, in borrowing the Hollywood representation of indigenous Americans as a figure through which to make sense of the continued presence of Koreans in Japan, I argue that Kaiko ends up enacting a *sympathetic alienation* instead, effectively warehousing the out-of-place and out-of-time former colonial subjects inside a figure whose liminal status has become permanently frozen in time. In *Nihon sanmon opera*, the ‘Apache’ Koreans are presented as a group worthy of sympathy but also as an object of voyeuristic fascination for the assumed Japanese reader; a sentiment which is achieved thanks to the Japanese protagonist who ‘goes native’, so to speak, becoming the reader’s proxy on a social safari through the Korean underbelly of postwar Osaka. Despite physically occupying the same space, therefore, there is the palpable sense of an insurmountable cultural and ethnic gap between the anthropological eye of the protagonist and his subject matter that prevents that space from ever being acknowledged as shared.

The second text I present is Yang Sok-II’s *Yoru wo kakete*, or “Into the Night” as it is sometimes referred to in English, published thirty-five years later in 1994. The novel also centers on the ‘Apache’ Korean settlement and its activities over 1957-1958, but this time from the perspective of a Korean resident and not a Japanese observer. In fact, Yang’s sister and brother-in-law were residents of the settlement at the time, and Yang himself worked as an ‘Apache’ while he was between formal employment. While it is thus tempting to read Yang’s response as a factual correction of the events first described by Kaiko in 1959, this is not the reading strategy

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<sup>203</sup> Whether or not the praxis and debates prompted by *Beheiren* activists constituted an authentic transnationalism, or whether they remained firmly ensconced within an internationalist framework of separate but equal national subjectivities is an important question, but one which would require an extensive analysis in its own right. I therefore put this question to one side in this paper.



I wish to adopt here. Rather, I wish to emphasize that the significance of Yang's novel is in its recognition of and response to the *rhetorical* process by which, in lieu of a discourse that might have recognized and understood the fundamental questions posed by the emerging category of 'zainichi' with regards to postcoloniality in Japan and Korea, instead siloed Koreans in Japan within a rhetorical figure characterized by interminable liminality. In this sense, postwar Hollywood fantasies of the noble savage and its relation to what we might call a 'post-frontier' United States were crucial, at least for Kaiko and the journalists who popularized the moniker in the pages of local and national newspapers, in helping to articulate the relationship between post-imperial Japan and an emerging demographic which, in 1959, had not quite yet settled into the discrete category of *zainichi chosen-kankokujin* (Zainichi Koreans) or the more recently popular *zainichi korian*.

Through a reading of Kaiko's novel on the one hand, and of Yang's response to it on the other, it is possible to see how a rhetorical complicity with nation-statism (born as a reaction against the perceived conflation of transnationalism and imperialism) coupled with the increasing globalization of mainstream American articulations of its own 'post-colonial' order, was formative in the production of *zainichi* as a subject that is at once part of and not part of 'Japan'. As scholars of indigenous American representation such as Jodi Byrd and Mark Rifkin have noted, the consequences of typifying ethnic others as perpetually liminal subjects goes far beyond the ethics of representation. Byrd and Rifkin contend that the tendency to equate American indigeneity with liminality *per se* effectively amounts to a palimpsest of the colonial violence which, despite redemptive postwar narratives starring Burt Lancaster to the contrary, remains very much a feature of the relationship between settler 'modernity' and indigenous 'premodernity'. Following the U.S's emergence as the self-proclaimed global policeman,

protecting the newfound national independence of former colonial subjects, its continued infractions against sovereign peoples within its own borders was something of a contradiction. By having a hero of the silver-screen such as Burt Lancaster step in to represent the noble savage, the history of injustices faced by Native Americans at the hands of settlers is reincorporated into the settler imagination as a metaphor for the more recent struggle against ‘tyranny’, broadly perceived. By ventriloquizing settler history via the avatar of the indigenous historical victim, films such as *Apache* assert an epochal break between a settler American past which was shamefully complicit in colonial violence and a contemporary U.S.A which evinces the overcoming of that history by re-positioning itself as its own historical victim.

Given that so much intellectual energy in postwar Japan was directed at understanding the country’s new role vis-a-vis Asia and the world, and given that the dynamics of Japan’s postwar relationships with its former Asian colonies were predicated on the interests of U.S. Cold War ‘containment’ policies, the use of *Apache* as a metaphor for making sense of the continued presence of former colonial subjects in Japan strikes me as an incredibly important and potentially instructive phenomenon. As with the figure of the Indian in the U.S. settler imagination, I am interested in how the figure of *zainichi*, as a seemingly ever-present and hyper-visible trace of empire, has been deployed as an object through and against which the relationship between the diverging space-times of pre- and postwar have been made sense of, and how they have been mapped on to the post-colonial world. As a persistent and increasingly isolated representative of the historically abandoned, aborted, and disavowed, the figure of *zainichi* has been variously purposed as a vessel which can both contain and evince various perceptions of historical progress, and particularly of “*senzo*” (postwar) in both Japan and Korea. And as Byrd and Rifkin recognize with regards to settler representations of indigeneity in North

America, I am also interested in how the rhetorical deferral of coloniality to colonialism's historical victims ends up interminably delaying an authentic, or at the very least *honest*, encounter with lingering colonial affect and its socio-political ramifications within the "post"-colonial societies of former imperial metropolises. In the case of Japan, it seems that what is locked within the term "*Zainichi*" is a definition-come-deferral of an aporia – perhaps *the* aporia – that had been at the heart of the Pan-Asian project: Could Koreans ever become Japanese? At its heart, this question lays bare the central conundrum of the post-colonial world. Just as W. E. B. Du Bois' famously prophetic declaration that "the color line" would be the enduring "problem of the twentieth century", the question of how a multitude of Asian peoples might constitute a community was, ultimately a question of what the Asian world might look like after the fact of European imperialism. With the defeat of the Japanese empire in 1945, however, this question became moot. Indeed, one of the few social phenomena which continued to "visibly" demand an enduring answer to this question were Koreans who remained in Japan. And yet, as Kaiko's novel demonstrates, the figure of "zainichi" came to be deployed in such a way that its innate political and historical challenges to popular conceptions of postwar Japanese society were siloed.

### **Kaiko Takeshi's *Nihon sanmon opera***

In one of the few critical comparisons of Kaiko and Yang's novels, Pak Yuha suggests that the reason Korean black marketeers in the ruins of postwar Osaka provided such tantalizing material to novelists is that its spatio-temporal coordinates seem to straddle an uncomfortable no-man's land between the pre- and postwar periods. In both novels, this epochal no-man's land is allegorized by the physical ruins of the former imperial arsenal destroyed by Allied bombing one

day before Japan's unconditional surrender. The setting thus provides an opportune stage on which to examine the spectral remains of empire within a space which is both recognizably Japan but also comfortably contained within an almost mythic space-time. In addition to the semiotics of the physical space, however, she argues that it is the presence of Korean-coded bodies within this space which further serves to qualify it as a sort of contact zone between the colonial/postcolonial divide. After all, she argues, if there has been one entity that has continued to challenge the assertion that Japan's postwar period constituted a clean "break" (*danzetsu*) from what preceded it, "that entity is none other than 'Zainichi Koreans'".<sup>204</sup> Regardless of this, she continues, "the [postwar] gaze persistently desired this *break*, becoming an internally contradictory phenomenon that would continually amass the frustrations of its inability to actualize this as a reality". The "Apache" novels, she argues, as texts which tackle an episode in the Japanese postwar experience in which the continued presence of Koreans was made patently apparent to a national audience, are thus representative examples of this anxiety in action and reveal much about the messy political realities of post-imperial Japan, as well as the ways in which its contradictions were reconciled within postwar imaginative frameworks.

In her analysis, Pak argues that Kaiko maintains an illusion of temporal incommensurability between the pre- and post-war worlds by insisting on a *spatial* incommensurability between the "Apache slum" and the city of Osaka surrounding it. Calling our attention to the way in which Kaiko mobilizes the entire gamut of sensory associations with Koreanness – the sight and smell of filth and squalor, the consumption of raw offal, the sound of faltering pidgin Japanese and, of course, the ever-present whiff of garlic – Pak argues that Kaiko presents the space-time of the slum as "undeveloped" or "uncivilized" land (*mikaichi*). By

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<sup>204</sup> Pak, Yuha. "Kyobai suru hyogen: Kaiko Takeshi, Komatsu Sakyo, Yang Sok Il no "Apacchi shosetsu" wo megutte." *Nihon bungaku* 55:11 (2006), p.35

contrast, the surrounding city of Osaka is inversely affirmed as “civilized” space (*bunmeiken*).<sup>205</sup> During empire, she reminds us, this association of “Koreanness” with premodernity was used as a pretext for what would be justified as the stewardship of the peninsula and the tutelage of its people in the ways of (Japanese) modernity. However, in *Nihon sanmon opera*, she contends, we see the same distinction being used to suggest that, in lieu of the completed imperial project, Koreans cannot possibly hope to escape the prison of premodernity. Within this scheme, ‘postwar’ seems to represent not so much a period which acknowledges the moral collapse of empire – which would necessitate the abandonment not only of the physical operations of empire but its cognitive ones also - but a coming-after which has merely abandoned the *expansionist* vision of empire. Far from necessitating a recalibration of the Japanese self-image vis-à-vis Asia, this understanding of ‘postwar’ maintains an imperialist understanding of historical agency and sovereignty which persists in its division of the world into those who are subjects of history and those who are subject to it. ‘Postwar’ in this sense refers only to the reduced territorial limits of the imperial project, not to its abandonment. In Kaiko’s novel, she argues, as a locus of premodernity lingering obtusely into the postwar era, the Korean *shūroku* is depicted as a space “infecting” postwar Japanese modernity.<sup>206</sup>

While I agree with Pak’s suggestion that the value of Kaiko’s novel as a cultural and historical artefact is in the way it elucidates the anxiety produced by the cognitive dissonance of the postwar era – that official assertions of a clean ‘break’ from the prewar era were not quite evinced by either the material or immaterial postwar landscape – her argument that Kaiko clarifies this break by employing imperialist stereotypes of Koreans in order to fashion a pre-modern colonial frontier at the heart of postwar Osaka somewhat ignores the clear ideological

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<sup>205</sup> Pak (2006), p.38, 39

<sup>206</sup> Pak (2006) p.38

motivations that the novel's title, and indeed the author's subsequent career, otherwise imply. If we acknowledge that both the title and principle themes of the novel are consciously cribbed from its namesake, Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* (1934), it is somewhat difficult to accept that Kaiko's strategic deployment of Korean signifiers is intended to mark the *shūra* and its inhabitants as nothing more than colonial hangovers that cling parasitically to Japanese modernity. Instead, I would suggest that Kaiko deploys Korean signifiers as a kind of shorthand for colonial victimization in order to frame his characters – in true Brechtian fashion – as being pitiable yet innocent victims of structural injustices which lie, tragically, beyond their ability to fathom. In doing so, however, Kaiko ends up being complicit in the ethnicization of both colonial and post-war experience, drawing a firm line in the sand between Japanese guilt and Korean victimization. This, combined with various other expressions of spatial incommensurability between the “Japanese” city and the “Korean” *shūra*, serves to create the illusion of two sovereign spheres which, while they exist coevally (contrary to Pak's assertion) are assumed to be, *a priori*, territorially incommensurate. And I use the term “territory” here to refer not just to bordered land, but to the whole gamut of biopolitical claims which constitute our understanding of territoriality within modernity.

As with Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, the novel's social critique is rooted in the observation that despite any cultural distinctions that mark the *shūra* and surrounding Osaka as potentially distinct spheres, the imperative that the former engage with the same market forces as the latter is what asserts their temporal contiguity. For example, Pak's criticism that the novel demonstrates Kaiko's lingering imperialist sentiment hinges on her argument that the Koreans therein are “clearly described as thieves” who are “illegally occupying Japanese land”.<sup>207</sup> She

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<sup>207</sup> Pak (2006), p.39, 40

cites a passage from the novel in which the myth of the *shūroku*'s founding is recounted. ““An old insect of a woman started living here by herself”, who, ‘having taken the principle of ‘finders keepers’ to heart, built a house and then, quite of her own accord, started leasing the surrounding land to anyone and everyone who had nowhere else to go, refusing to budge even after the land-owner made his appearance”.<sup>208</sup> This origin story, Pak argues, illustrates that “while [the novel] demonstrates a general comprehension of the problems posed by poverty, *Nihon sanmon opera* clearly understands the ‘Apache tribe’ as a group that is illegally occupying ‘Japan’”.

While it is true that the Korean-coded “Apache tribe” are clearly depicted as thieves on more than one occasion, Pak’s critique ignores the ways in which this depiction of criminality functions as a critique of capitalism. In Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera*, Macheath, London’s greatest thief and the protagonist of the play, leads a band of beggar-thieves before he is eventually captured and sentenced to be hanged. References to criminality throughout the play are, however, repeatedly likened to the actions of capitalist oligarchs, thus prompting the audience to reconsider the assumed parity between legality and morality within a socio-economic system that keeps many starving. In the final scene, after Macheath is saved from execution following an intentionally gratuitous *deus ex machina* from “the queen”, he takes center stage to sing the final musical number. The final couplet of this song leaves no uncertainty as to the moral behind the story, “These moral absolutes are hard to follow/Just give us something tangible to swallow!”<sup>209</sup>

Considering Kaiko’s decision to crib so explicitly from Brecht’s play, it is difficult to accept that the depictions of criminality in *Nihon sanmon opera* are intended to create villains of his characters. Such criminal activities are, in fact, depicted as a necessary means of survival.

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid. p.40

<sup>209</sup> Weill, Kurt, and Bertolt Brecht. *The Threepenny Opera*. New York: Grove Press, 1964.

When Fukusuke, the Japanese protagonist who provides the reader with a second-person perspective of the *shūroku* and its inhabitants, is first introduced to the type of work he will be assisting with, a few rounds of translation reveal that the ultimate motivation for the work – whatever that may be – is subsistence.

“What’s the work?”, he asked. “Apache” was the response. “What the hell’s ‘Apache’?” he asked again. “Just a bit of a laugh” was the answer. Mekkachi fell silent. He looked like he didn’t want to say more. Plucking up the courage, Fukusuke asked again tentatively. “A laugh...?” “We’re trying to eat!” he snapped, with the short temper of someone prone to snacking on red chili peppers.

Thus, before the nature of the work is revealed to either Fukusuke or the reader, it is preemptively justified as being motivated by sheer survival; a justification that consequently problematizes a simplistic critique of the group’s illegal activity on moral grounds.

A reader convinced by Pak’s analysis would undoubtedly draw our attention to the final line in this passage, in which Kaiko illustrates Mekkachi’s short-tempered nature via the imagery of spicy red chili peppers. In Japanese these are called *tōgarashi*, or “Tang peppers”; a term which is metonymically associated with China and Sinocentric continental Asia (including the Korean peninsula). Here again however, while it is true that this reference, coupled with the “short tempered” character trait which is commonly attached to Koreans, serves to depict the Apache tribe as the Asian other, this doesn’t necessarily imply that its function within the text as a whole is to question the legitimacy of Korean presence in Japan. Instead, this reference simply makes it apparent that the figure of the Korean and of the Asian other in general had long been established as a euphemism for liminality and poverty. Not only had Koreanness been a touchstone for the “wretched of the earth” – to use Fanon’s expression – in Japan for at least the first half of the twentieth century but during the ten years between the end of the Pacific War and the end of the Korean War, the image of Koreans as illegal stowaways (*mikkōsha*) entering Japan



illegally had become popularized by the press and even by cabinet ministers. As early as 1949, Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru had penned a telegram to General Douglas MacArthur in which he erroneously informed him that at least half of all Koreans currently residing in Japan were recent illegal stowaways (*fuhō mikkosha*) from the peninsula, most of whom had since turned to crime and were thus not contributing to Japan's postwar economic development.<sup>210</sup> Yoshida's statement demonstrates the extent to which Korean otherness was associated with liminality more generally, encompassing not only those who had fallen out of the labor market but also – as most of the stowaways were assumed to be Communist sympathizers fleeing the Syngman Rhee regime – those who were politically subversive as well.

With this in mind it seems that, rather than a mere dismissal of Koreans as an undesirable colonial remnant, Kaiko's use of ethnic signposting is part of an attempt to frame the "Apache tribe" as a liminal group more generally. This would explain why, despite clearly coding the majority of the *shuraku* inhabitants as Korean, Kaiko himself stated that his depiction of the "Apache tribe" was intended to represent all those living in a similarly impoverished condition, not merely those who were Korean.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, the text's use of Korean signifiers as a shorthand to depict liminality also carries with it a demonstrable comprehension of the role played by imperialist ventures in the production of such liminal subjects. In one instance, Kaiko describes the Apache *buraku* as "*ōsaka no kasupa*" (the "Osaka Kasbah"); a clear reference to the Kasbah of Algiers which played a pivotal role during the Algerian War for Independence as the besieged headquarters of the Algerian National Liberation Front. The intention behind such a reference must surely have been to encourage a favorable comparison between the petty crimes

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<sup>210</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki. *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows From Japan's Cold War*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

<sup>211</sup> Pak (2006) p.36

committed by the black marketeers in Osaka and the grander ‘crime’ of anti-imperialist revolution that was occurring not only in Algeria but, particularly in the late 1950s, across the world.

Kaiko’s novel thus recognizes Koreans as a historical victim of colonialism. Furthermore, in framing the Apache tribe’s actions as a mode of resistance comparable to other, more recognizably anti-imperialist resistance movements happening elsewhere in the world, Kaiko positions the “Apache tribe” in a shared, postcolonial contemporaneity. As with Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera*, the criminals in Kaiko’s novel are portrayed sympathetically, and the illegality of their actions is held up to an ethical scrutiny which encourages the reader to point their finger at injustices that are structurally produced as a consequence of capitalism (with explicit reference to its colonial phase). *Nevertheless*, by falling back on recognizably Korean stereotypes to signpost a post-colonial liminality, the text conveys a political worldview in which societal injustices are the consequence of universal structures, but where the mode of resistance is resolutely (ethno)*national*. This perspective ends up producing some strange instances of what can only be called *sympathetic alienation*. For regardless of how affectionately the novel depicts Korean savagery, these depictions always seem to affirm rather than challenge the basic premise of insurmountable Korean difference. This is evident from Fukusuke’s very first encounter with a member of the “Apache tribe”. Roaming aimlessly through the Osaka’s *Shinsekai* district, the homeless and jobless Fukusuke encounters a Korean woman who offers him work. Describing the woman he has just encountered, the text informs us that,

The space between her eyes was wide and flat like a flounder, and she had sharply thin eyelids and prominent cheekbones. One look was all he needed to tell she was Korean. A cluster of wrinkles at the corners of her eyes demonstrated the hardship she’d experienced, but her flat nose, broad shoulders, strong-looking neck and the sly eyes of someone descended from poor farmers left the impression that she could bear even the most trying of

times, while her long torso and sturdy frame looked like it could birth any number of children. Fukusuke thought to himself that she looked like the kind of woman who would get pregnant as soon as she hitched a leg over you. The sharp smell of garlic emanated from her body but, if anything, Fukusuke liked it. (Kaiko 11)

Here, the text clearly subscribes to the notion that the phenotypical traits of the Korean ethnos are so obvious that “one look” is all that is needed for Fukusuke to recognize this woman as Korean. Interestingly, however, the physical traits described – “her flat nose, broad shoulders, strong-looking neck and the sly eyes” – are immediately assumed to be indicators of a biography that, at this stage, Fukusuke has no way of knowing. Moreover, the biographical assumptions that Fukusuke makes – that she is “descended from poor farmers”, could “bear even the most trying of times”, and “could birth any number of children” – could just as easily be associated with the rural poor in Japan. Here however, the text insists on ethnicizing these traits as distinctly Korean, and thus asserts an assumed parity between poverty and Koreanness, while also tempering this association with a further semiotic valence that implies an aptitude for hard work and bearing the unbearable. While we can imagine very similar descriptions being made by the most avid of imperialists – indeed, we have already seen that a very similar profiling of Koreans was being penned by the Yoshida cabinet in the late 1940s – in this passage, these normally negative traits are portrayed as paradoxically endearing. In the final sentence, for example, the litany of stereotypes is capped with the ultimate signifier of Koreanness; the “sharp smell of garlic”. And yet Fukusuke, we are told, “if anything... liked it”.

The fact that these observations are communicated to us via Fukusuke’s second-person perspective is significant, as it is largely through this narrative device that an oxymoronic sympathetic alienation is achieved. The novel opens as Fukusuke (who has one of the few recognizably Japanese names in the novel) encounters the Korean woman described above and is

led to the “Apache *buraku*” where he is eventually introduced to the work of scrap metal collecting. As the principle mediatory vehicle through which the reader is introduced to the *shuraku* and its inhabitants, we too enter the environment with Fukusuke as outsiders and, along with our avatar, witness the novel spectacles therein with morbid fascination. This lends to the narrative style the unmistakable thrill of voyeurism which, arguably, is already evident from Fukusuke’s first encounter with the Korean woman. But it is in the passage that immediately precedes this encounter that Fukusuke’s role as the voyeur – and indeed, the novel’s preoccupation with voyeurism as a whole – is established. Entering a dark back alley, Fukusuke notices “two or three men crouched low and sniggering”. One of these men, it turns out, is paying for “one match”, a sexual service in which, for ten yen, they get to peek at a woman’s naked crotch for the time it takes for one match – the sole source of light in the alley – to burn out. Enticed by this act of voyeurism, Fukusuke finds himself unable to resist becoming the voyeur himself and “crept closer for a peek”. As with the description of the Korean woman which follows, however, the object of Fukusuke’s voyeurism elicits a morbid fascination rather than sexual desire. “In the foul-smelling dark of the alley, a middle-aged woman lay on her back with her knees in the air. As the drunk customer lit a match and approached, they could just make out the crab claws at the end of two sagging yellow thighs. It was discolored and misshapen, with a dark hole that hung open and led to God knows where”.<sup>212</sup>

The purpose of this passage seems to be twofold. On the one hand, the careful description of the “one match” service provided by the woman, along with the observation that both she and her pimp were clearly “close to starvation”, seems to speak to how such forms of labor are born of desperation. This also pre-emptively frames the illicit activities that we are later introduced to

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<sup>212</sup> Kaiko, Takeshi, *Nihon sanmon opera*, Tokyo, Kadokawa shoten, 1964. p.11

in the *shuraku*. On the other hand, the clear emphasis of voyeurism as a fetishistic act – “the dark hole that... led to God knows where” – and its portrayal of Fukusuke as being complicit in this act, seems to foreshadow Fukusuke’s later observations in and of the *shuraku* and its inhabitants as a comparable act of fetishization. Yet at no point in the remainder of the novel is Fukusuke’s role as a voyeur critiqued or the theoretical ramifications of voyeurism within a capitalist mode of exchange examined. The only conclusion that appears to be left to the reader is that this episode is nothing more, nor less, than a taste of the morbid delights that will follow.

Fukusuke’s role as the voyeur-witness in this alien world is further asserted via the depiction of his passage through the streets of Osaka and into the *shuraku*; a movement which is signified in no uncertain terms as a process of abjection – and bodily abjection at that. We first encounter Fukusuke in Osaka’s *Shinsekai* district, described in no uncertain terms as “a choleric locale (*shisshinbu*), like an engorged stomach flopped to one side, out of which led *Jan Jan Yokocho* street like a string of intestine. Fukusuke had floated down the blue evening mist which passed through that intestine”. Passing through this guttural route, via a glimpse of an abject sexual organ, Fukusuke meets the Korean woman who is pure, if not quite unmediated, fecundity. This woman then leads Fukusuke to the *shuraku*, described as a locale in which, “mud, food waste, and vomit spewed from drains in every direction, staining the street a putrid green”. Far from a simple lateral move through a cityscape, Fukusuke’s passage into the *shuraku* is achieved only through a process of excretion; an *abject birth*. In keeping with the sympathetic alienation that pervades the novel, however, we are told that “[e]ven so, the *shuraku* which Fukusuke had unwittingly stumbled into was, with all its swamp-like feel, crushing poverty and damp shade, the very epitome of purity”.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Kaiko (1964) p.15

It is clear, then, that Kaiko's portrayal of Koreanness, while employing stereotypes that evince a marked continuity between pre- and post-defeat attitudes toward the former colonial other, does not mark Korean presence as an unwanted anachronism, but rather as a group whose liminality is shared with other socially, politically and economically dispossessed groups, whether as a result of anti-imperialist violence, communist activism within a vehemently anti-red political environment, or by committing acts of petty theft in order to eat. In *Nihon sanmon opera*, Kaiko is explicit when it comes to defining the Apache tribe as a broad church of the "wretched of the earth". The *shuraku*, we are told in one passage,

Is a family of misfits. Know what I mean? The folks living here are Korean, Japanese, Okinawan. We don't do borders here. There's no tax, no family registry, no North or South Korea. We got picklocks and we got bicycle thieves. We got people wanted by the police and we got illegal stowaways, we've even got a poor bastard fired from his job at the mine because he flew a red flag. Got it? [Kaiko 57]

By collecting these variously abject figures into one "family of misfits", the text clearly tries to establish a sense of common cause which binds them together; a solidarity forged by the necessity of eking out a living outside of the parameters of acceptable social institutions. And yet by collecting this disparate group under the umbrella of Korean otherness, and by mobilizing the imperial-era figure of the Korean to metonymically gesture to all forms of social, political, economic and historical liminality, *Nihon sanmon opera* ends up working against the picture of solidarity that it purports to depict. Far from depicting a group of disparate cultures, languages and traditions that come to recognize the intersectional coordinates of their various modes of dispossession, Kaiko portrays this group as already existing in and identifying with an established (Korean) cultural sphere. As Kagaya Masumi has observed in her analysis of the novel, "it's clear that it is *zainichi* Koreans that Kaiko depicts, but because he wants to depict the

lives of those on the lowest rung of the social ladder, rather than *zainichi* Koreans in particular, using the phrase “Apache tribe” must have appeared to him an effective means to do so”.<sup>214</sup> In other words, “Apache” becomes a convenient euphemism by which to gesture to the plight of Koreans within recent history, while allowing the author to sidestep the need to consider the political and historical specificity of that history.

### **Apache savages in downtown Osaka: borrowed metaphors and shared euphemisms**

This use of the term “Apache” is, however, surprisingly instructive when it comes to theorizing what kind of negotiation of the pre-/postwar break is being conducted in the novel. Although it was not Kaiko himself who first used this phrase in reference to the inhabitants of the *buraku* – newspaper reports from 1958 mention that the phrase was already being used by the police and local residents<sup>215</sup> – not only does Kaiko deploy this phrase extensively throughout the novel but, as Kagaya observes, he describes the black marketeers as having eagerly adopted this moniker as their own.<sup>216</sup> The novel surmises that the reason journalists and locals started to refer to the residents of the *buraku* as the “Apache tribe” is because,

When [the Apache] were attacked by police squads they would often split off into groups by signaling quickly to each other in Korean and Okinawan. From a distance though, all one could make out from these calls were “wohwohwoh, wahwahwah!” This style of calling, along with the small, tightknit nature of the groups and the expansive backdrop of the wasteland, were probably what led the police, as well as the reporters who came to investigate, to start calling them the ‘Apache Tribe’. (67)

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<sup>214</sup> Kagaya, Masumi. “Chiiki to geso minhyozo: ‘nihon sanmon opera’ no naka no apacchi zoku tachi.” *Ilbon yongu*, Issue 10 (2008) p.329

<sup>215</sup> Between May and August 1958, at the height of the scrap metal collecting fever, the Osaka edition of the Mainichi Shinbun newspaper released five separate reports in which they referred to the scrap metal thieves as the “so-called Apache tribe”.

<sup>216</sup> Kagaya (2008), p.323

Kagaya argues that this explanation for the nickname's origin, with its reference not only to the battle between savage outlaws and 'the law' but also to the "expansive backdrop" of the ruins that comprise its setting, strongly suggests that it was inspired by the Hollywood westerns that were being exported to Japan at the time. In particular, she notes that the film *Apache*, starring Burt Lancaster in the lead role as the Apache warrior, Maasai, was released in Japan in October of 1954, only four years before the illicit activities of the *shuraku* were reported in the press. Indeed, Kaiko's attempt to portray the events of 1958 from the perspective of the outlaws rather than the authorities is, she suggests, remarkably similar to the narratological perspective of *Apache*, which is also told from the (albeit white-washed) Apache perspective.<sup>217</sup> While this comparison remains little more than a side comment in Kagaya's article, I feel that the role of this Apache metaphor, particularly within the context of an emerging transpacific intertextuality, is worthy of a much more extensive analysis.

At first glance, this observation appears to subscribe to Pak's thesis that the depiction of Koreans as savage serves to contain them within a pre-modern and colonial temporality (which then, by contrast, affirms Japan's *post*-colonial modernity). As Angela Aleiss identifies, however, 1954's *Apache* is a good example of a shift in the function of the Native American figure in Hollywood that began around the time of the U.S.'s entry into the Second World War. Prior to the late 1930s, she argues, the U.S. film industry tended to depict Native Americans as an existential threat to the American (settler) way of life. As late as 1937, films such as *The Plainsman*, starring Gary Cooper and James Ellison, continued to depict white settler plainsmen clearing the frontiers of indigenous savagery. Just two years later, however, in *Stagecoach* (1939) we see the roles of protagonist and antagonist reversed with a sympathetic portrayal of

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<sup>217</sup> Kagaya, p.323



Native Americans struggling to oust white settlers from the frontier. By 1942, the sympathetic portrayal of indigenous plight had become so established in Hollywood that, in response to MGM's return to the typical cowboys vs. Indians formula with *Apache Trail*, *Variety* magazine observed that "the uprising of the Apaches against the whites is something that's long since seen its best picture days".<sup>218</sup> This shift in emphasis, Aleiss argues, was largely the product of the U.S.'s newfound role as the protector of liberal democracy in world affairs. In contrast to the period of non-intervention, when narratives of protecting the American (settler) way of life chimed well with public opinion, in films made during and after U.S. participation in the war we see that "white paternalism replaced Manifest Destiny as hostile interracial relations became politically unwise for a nation in the throes of fighting a genocide in Europe".<sup>219</sup> Indeed, after the establishment of the U.S. Office for War Information (OWI) in 1942, a sympathetic portrayal of indigenous Americans was officially mandated, with the OWI declaring that "any form of racial discrimination or religious intolerance, special privileges of any citizen are manifestations of Fascism and should be exposed as such".<sup>220</sup>

Despite this admirable attempt to purge Hollywood of racism, Aleiss's description of the new, sympathetic mode of representation as "paternalist" speaks to an affective continuity that persisted regardless. In fact, Jodi Byrd has argued that even prior to this epistemic shift toward white paternalism, the existential threat posed by native "savagery" was construed not only in territorial terms (i.e. frontier homesteads being raided by belligerent natives who are then seen of by the U.S. Marshalls) but as a touchstone which "oppositionally defined" (Byrd's phrasing) the psycho-social boundaries that comfortably corresponded to the cartographic limits of the nation.

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<sup>218</sup> Aleiss, Angela. *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005. p.70

<sup>219</sup> Aleiss (2005) p.71

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

Citing the Declaration of Independence, Byrd notes that the founding fathers conceived of North American settler culture as having, “endeavored to bring in the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions”.<sup>221</sup> The anxiety demonstrated here, she argues, is not only aimed at the outbursts of violence that erupted on the territorial frontier but also at the socio-cultural deviance that was assumed to characterize First Nation peoples. For the founding fathers, the borders that indigenous savagery threatened was thus not only the exterior, territorial boundaries separating civilization from savagery, but also the interior, affective boundaries separating man from woman, childhood from adulthood and “all... conditions”.

In contrast to the pre-Second World War isolationist national discourse, in which the defense of (Anglo-European) civilization could be articulated in terms of a territorial resistance to the unbounded world of indigenous savagery, U.S. participation in the fight against fascism prompted an anxiety over the U.S.’s own history of institutionalized racism which necessitated the uncoupling of these registers. As Aleiss’ reading of postwar Hollywood Westerns illustrates, however, while the depiction of Native Americans as being both territorially and morally beyond the pale was no longer considered ethically sound following the Second World War, the portrayal of Native American resistance to colonial oppression as being allegorically interchangeable with the United States’; resistance to fascism served not only to suggest that the U.S. had conquered its own racist history thanks to its victory over fascism, but that First Nation peoples themselves had been seamlessly and amicably incorporated into this new, post-racist and post-fascist history. Crucially, however, this depiction of the universal victory of anti-fascism hinges on the *absolute separation* (one is tempted to say “segregation”) of the indigenous and

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<sup>221</sup> Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. p.xxi

settler subjects, in which the fight against oppression is seen as a universal moral imperative precisely because it occurs within demonstrably distinct spheres of sovereignty.

As scholars of postwar political discourse across the U.S. and East Asia have noted (cf. Oguma Eiji, John Lie whose interventions I cover in chapter one), it was precisely this form of internationalism – one which recognized political subjectivity in terms of national sovereignty rather than historical materialism – which emerged as the Cold War consensus among the nations of the “First World” between the end of the war and the middle of the 1950s. In his reading of Ruth Benedict’s foundational text, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), for example, Michael Bourdaghs demonstrates that Japan’s rehabilitation into the comity of (first world) nations was permitted via a cultural containment which attempted to explain recent history as a result of cultural traits that were unique to Japan as a nation and which could be grasped and excised via anthropological analysis. Bourdaghs notes that as with her contemporary, Pearl Buck, Benedict’s motivation in delineating and defining the Japanese subject in this manner was to challenge racist American assumptions that the Japanese lacked a sense of interiority by delineating possible psycho-social determinants of Japanese behavior. Bourdaghs also identifies, however, that in attempting to flesh out “the Japanese” via a structural analysis of social behavior, Benedict ends up insisting on an absolute and, ultimately, insurmountable difference between “America” and “Japan”. As an example of this Bourdaghs refers to Benedict’s analysis of concepts such as “*on*”, which she cursorily translates as “obligation” but which, she insists, has “no literal translation into English because the ideas they express are alien to us”.<sup>222</sup> Benedict thus not only insists that the parameters of Japanese - and, by inverse implication, American - ontology are predetermined by national language (which in turn is assumed to be a receptacle of

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<sup>222</sup> Bourdaghs, Michael K. et al., eds. *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017. p.26, 27.

discretely contained national experiences) but that, because of this, they constitute two ontological fields which are mutually unintelligible (unless, presumably, one is an anthropologist). Bourdaghs argues that such an analysis reveals much about Benedict's understanding of "culture", which she defines not as a universal field of expression but that which is "learned in daily living". As with the new modality in the representation of Native Americans outlined by Aleiss, Bourdaghs identifies that one of the consequences of Benedict's structuralist interpretation which privileges culture as a ready-made and insurmountable framework of subjectivity is that it also *depoliticizes* any and all forms of cultural activity. Culture, here, is assumed to represent received knowledge rather than a potential contestation of the knowledge received and the mode of reception.

Whether we consider the postwar transformation of the figure of the Indian from savage pariah to surrogate for historical redemption, or of Japan from a militaristic feudal state to an enticingly unfathomable yet safely neutered addition to the comity of allied nations, it is clear that neither reframing has overturned the "oppositional" logic that they are all tasked with performing. In each instance, the figure exists solely to evince the historical processes (including the perceived historical achievements) of the dominant social order. Crucially however, despite perfunctory claims that the former savage corners of the earth have been recuperated amicably into the polite society of civilization/the West/the 'First World', this act of ventriloquism actually both necessitates and performs the erasure of ongoing indigenous struggles for self-determination, and buries dissenting indigenous voices beneath an established narrative that continues to insist on the historical and moral victory of European liberal democracy. In effect, then, the figure of the savage has not been incorporated *in* to, but rather extroverted or abjected from the perceived contemporary political landscape. Thus, while no longer represented as an

existential threat to the U.S. way of life, what unifies the pre- and postwar figuration of the indigenous is its importance as an ostensibly *static* figure which, by contrast, facilitates an understanding of U.S. history as an ongoing *process*. Jodi Byrd makes precisely this point when she states that “Indianness can be felt and intuited as a presence, and yet apprehending it as a process is difficult, if not impossible, precisely because Indianness has served as the field through which structures have always already been produced”.<sup>223</sup>

The allure of the Apache in both the pre- and postwar popular American imagination is, regardless of whether it is used to oppositionally define civilization or to evince the victory of liberty of tyranny, due to the fact that the figure constitutes a “field through which structures” of understanding the world, whether that be isolationist protectionism or paternalist internationalism, appear to be already and self-evidently achieved. This makes the figure of the indigenous – or the Korean, in the case of Japan – a powerful tool in articulating what has and hasn’t changed across the divide of an epochal break, as the established structures of feeling which have been organized around such figures over time can then be corralled to give meaning to emergent socio-historical structures which are yet to be named.

In the same way that the ventriloquized narration of postwar U.S. internationalism via the figure of the indigenous served to elide, via extroversion/abjection, the political disputations over territorial and political sovereignty that continued to define the relationship between the U.S. government and the First Nations in practice, so too does the use of the Korean figure as a marker of a culturally distinct but politically contiguous underbelly of exploitative capitalist society serve to erase the historicity of Korean presence in Japan. Kaiko’s portrayal of the *shuraku* as a culturally and socially autonomous yet *liminal* zone within the heart of Japan

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<sup>223</sup> Byrd (2011) p.xviii

speaks, perhaps, to a postwar democratic sensibility which sympathetically acknowledged the historical role that Koreans were made to play as the rhetorically and materially abject figure of empire. And yet by circumscribing and differentiating the *shuraku* as distinctly Korean, the text evokes a parable-like quality that, in a similar vein to the postwar Westerns from which it took its cue, depicts Koreans-in-Japan as a subject fighting against the same injustices but in a different sphere, rather than as a subject whose formation is not only ongoing but also dialectically bound to the postwar transformation of Japanese political affect.

**Yang Sok-II's, *Yoru wo kakete*: Excavating transnational history and politics from the ruins of empire**

By contrast, the significance of Yang Sok-II's retelling of the story of Japan's "Apache tribe" is not only that he attempts to situate the *shuraku*, the criminal activity of its inhabitants, and the overwhelming Korean presence therein within a postwar Japanese context which he defines as a *process of transition* between imperialism and internationalism (as opposed to a simple affirmation of a clean "break" between the two), but also that the formation of the *shuraku*'s inhabitants as subjects united in and by liminality is itself portrayed as a process, rather than as a given defined *a priori* by Koreanness as a static cultural marker. In so doing, Yang's novel reveals the ongoing political disputations that served to *legally* parse Koreanness from the postwar Japanese body politic, while also providing an implicit critique of *Nihon sanmon opera*'s complicity in the *rhetorical* extroversion of Koreans from the same. Of crucial importance to this extroversion/abjection are three mutually implicated historical phenomena that are absent from Kaiko's text: the schism in Communist doctrine which saw Koreans evicted

from the JCP from 1955, the repatriation movement which saw thousands of Korean residents in Japan volunteer to ‘return’ to North Korea, and the “culture movement” (*bunka undō*) which, largely influenced by a U.S. worldview that understood internationalism principally in terms of exchange defined by subjects rather than as subjects defined by exchange, ended up simply affirming the geopolitical boundaries asserted by Cold War discourse.

The principle means by which Yang emphasizes the process of this subject formation is to frame the scrap metal collecting as an activity which is *constitutive* of political subjectivity rather than as a mode of labor to which the group are simply preternaturally suited. Kagaya, for example, notes that despite its clear assumption that Koreans are naturally – if lamentably – suited for hard labor, Kaiko’s text depicts the inhabitants of the slum as being physically small, weak and, in many cases, disabled. Furthermore, the line of cultural difference that separates Fukusuke, the new-comer, from the “natives” of the *buraku*, emphasizes that for Fukusuke to become proficient in scrap-metal collecting he must first undergo a cultural apprenticeship in which he not only learns how to perform the labor that is expected of him, but also how to conduct himself within the closed system of the “Apache tribe”. By contrast, Yang’s novel depicts a collection of individuals who are brought together by the necessity of survival, but who are gradually brought to an awareness of the historical and political significance of their positionality through the *activity* of labor. In short, while the narrator of *Nihon sanmon opera* sees an action producing subject, Yang’s text sees a subject producing activity. A comparison of the following two excerpts is particularly instructive in this regard.

‘We might be a bit of a rag-tag group but we get along okay. You hear the odd complaint, of course, but people will find injustice just about anywhere. The thing is though, right, the thing is, not one of us here is a Lumpen’. (Kaiko 57)

“I read all about it in the newspaper this morning. Sounds like they caused a real scene. But there isn’t a single person here that would do something so drastic as to cause the police to come knocking. We’re just a bunch of starving scaredy-cats. If we were that resolved do you think we’d still be here living like the Lumpenproletariat? Of course not! We’d be off making the big bucks with our grand ideas” (Yang 99. 100).

Despite the claims in both passages that the inhabitants of the *shuraku* are a disparate bunch of down-and-outs simply trying to make a living, the references to the Lumpenproletariat which follow point to a marked contrast in how each text comprehends this positionality as a political subjectivity. In *Nihon sanmon opera*, the refusal by a member of the Apache tribe to identify the community as Lumpenproletariat effectively isolates the internal political economy of the *shuraku* from the external political economy of postwar Japan. The avowed logic behind this claim – that everyone in the Apache tribe has a role in keeping with their ability and thus feels a sense of reciprocal responsibility as a member – admirably declares that no one is considered surplus to requirement within the socio-economic system of the *shuraku*. Yet this claim also works to retroactively disavow the broader socio-economic structures which led to individuals congregating in the *shuraku* in the first place. This is to say that, while Kaiko’s text implicitly acknowledges, via its littered references to anti-imperialist resistance, the historical conditions of the (Korean) Apache tribe’s poverty, the group’s dynamics are depicted in such a way as to resemble a total and parallel economy in its own right. Moreover, precisely because this poverty constitutes its own *culturally distinct sphere*, membership in the Apache tribe allows its members to psychologically transcend the status of “Lumpen” by transforming the *effects* of poverty – precarity, petty crime, substance abuse, poor diet – into an aesthetics of cultural and ethnic identity.



By contrast, in the excerpt from *Yoru wo kakete* there is no such attempt to cordon off the internal economy of the Apache *shuraku* from the external, postwar economy which surrounds it. The comment is made in response to police questioning, following an incident the previous night in which an inebriated group from the *shūroku* threw projectiles at the local police-station<sup>224</sup>. Assuming that Ko Taegi, one of the more upstanding inhabitants of the *shuraku*, occupies a position of central authority in the community, the police ask him to hand over four of the known culprits so that they might be able to save face. It is thus significant that it is in order to dispel the assumption that the *shuraku* functions as a socially cohesive unit that Ko Taegi invokes a comparison with the Lumpenproletariat. “If we were that resolved (*sonna dokyō ga attara*)”, he jibes, “do you think we’d still be here living like the Lumpenproletariat?” If the “Apache tribe” were truly able to act as uniformly as Kaiko would have us believe, Yang seems to ask, why on earth would it choose to remain on the margins of existence?

By accepting the comparison between the impoverished residents of the *shuraku* and Marx’s concept of the Lumpenproletariat – a social class which, we should remember, Marx defined as the dissipated multitude of the socio-economically dispossessed which had not yet achieved class-consciousness and were thus not yet primed as a revolutionary subject (ref needed) – Yang gestures to a larger political economy from which the *shuraku* and its inhabitants have emerged as the inverse result of an entire host of historical processes. The broader economy that forms the backdrop to the events occurring in and around the *shuraku* is also explicitly

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<sup>224</sup> Unlike Kaiko, who refers to the settlement next to the Imperial Arsenal as a *buraku*, Yang consistently refers to it as a *shūroku*. This is itself arguably significant, as the latter term avoids the former’s association with *burakumin*; a social group which is defined entirely by its social liminality. According to the Kōjiten dictionary definition, the phrase *buraku* also denotes “a collection of domiciles which function as an established community”. By contrast, the term *shūroku* is defined as “a collection of domiciles which work toward a collective existence (*kyōdō seikatsu wo itonamu tame no jūkyō no atsumari*)”, and thus denotes a community in a state of interminable production via the labor of its members, as opposed to a group which is assumed to conduct labor as a ready-formed community.

referred to throughout *Yoru wo kakete*. Unlike its predecessor, which spatializes the *shuraku* in its opening pages by following the itinerary of its protagonist as he is proverbially excreted from the relative opulence of metropolitan Osaka, the opening pages of Yang's novel contextualizes the *shuraku* within a postwar Japanese political and industrial economy that is inextricably embroiled in ongoing colonial violence around the world. It recounts the initial devastation of the immediate postwar years, through the boom years of the Korean War when industry was stimulated by American demand for military supplies, followed by a slump after a cease-fire was brokered, followed by another boom period centered on Japan's shipping industry (precipitated by the Suez crisis of 1956), and then finally to another slump period from 1957 onward.<sup>225</sup>

By pointing to this broader milieu at the very start of the text, not only is Yang able to historicize the formation of the "Apache tribe" within the more specific context of postwar East Asia (as opposed to the ill-defined notion of global capital that is gestured to in Kaiko's text), but in doing so he also reveals, and mobilizes, the dramatic irony that is implicit in a group of former colonial rejects – Koreans, Okinawans, communists – eking out an existence from the traces of prior colonial violence, and in the context of a local (national) economy which is still contingent on ongoing acts of imperialist intervention around the world. In Kaiko's text, it is the fact that the injustice experienced by the inhabitants of the buraku is caused by the general, structural inequalities of the "invisible hand" of the market that allows the Apache tribe to be depicted as *just another iteration* of the perpetual struggle against the dehumanizing effects of capital.

Whereas Kaiko's novel presents an already achieved national culture as a means of transcending the psychological (if not material) injustices of capital, Yang's novel frames national sentiment as an imposition which actually forecloses, rather than facilitates, the

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<sup>225</sup> Yang (1994) p.10, 11

achievement of a political subjectivity able to make sense of the relation between the structure of the *shuraku* and the Cold War superstructure in which it is couched. It is thus particularly apt that, in contrast to the immaterial constellation of signs that constitute the group's identity in *Nihon sanmon opera* (typified by repetitive references to the smell of garlic) the inhabitants of Yang's *shuraku* begin to piece together a picture of their political positionality by unearthing the *material* artefacts of their pre-history. Moreover, the artefacts that they unearth appear as monads whose relation to one another is not immediately apparent and must therefore be pieced together. On one of their first expeditions into the ruins of the arsenal, for example, the group comes across a buried object which is far too large to be the usual girder or piece of railway track. As the group keeps digging, the identity of the object becomes increasingly clear.

“There's something here! Sparks just flew off the end of my pickaxe!” said Kim Myong-yong.

As Ito pointed at it with his flashlight, they could make out a black surface emerging from the soil. Scraping away the dirt with their shovels and pickaxes, they began to pull the lump of metal out from the earth. It was an automobile chassis that must have weighed about four-hundred pounds.

“Take a look at that! My instincts were right after all!” said Ito, bragging smugly to the group.

“Is it a truck chassis?” asked Kim Myong-yong.

“Nah, a truck chassis wouldn't be this big” said Kim Uibu.

“So, what sort of chassis is it?”

It was clearly too big to be a truck chassis. Brushing the dirt from it, Chang Ushin took a closer look at its odd shape.

“I think. . . I think maybe it's a tank chassis” suggested Kim Chongchol, which satisfied everybody.

“A tank chassis, hey? Come to think of it, they used to make a lot of tanks here, so it probably is a tank [...] In any case, let's keep digging” (69, 70)

This is not a particularly noteworthy passage taken on its own, but a few pages later, as the text recounts the events of the following evening, the potential significance of this discovery is elucidated by the unearthing of another unknown object. Returning to the site at which they

discovered the tank chassis the previous night, the group is shocked to discover that the chassis is no longer there, possibly having been stolen by another group operating out of the *shuraku*. Despondent, they nevertheless agree to keep digging, hoping that they might make a similar discovery. As with the previous night, they are not digging for long before someone declares they have made a discovery.

“There’s something here!” cried Kim Myong-yong excitedly.

Everyone turned their attention to the object Kim Myong-yong had uncovered. As he parted the soil, Kim discovered the skeletons of two individuals, doubled over on top of one another. Everyone winced momentarily, but as Kim Jong-chol began to carefully disentangle the skeletons from one another, laying them parallel on the ground and putting his hands together in silent prayer, so the other four found themselves solemnly bringing their palms together.

“They must have been killed in the air raid. They were buried without anyone knowing they were here. Their relatives are probably still looking for them.”

[...] “There must be other bodies buried out there. I can’t believe that the government would just leave them there without even trying to find them. It’s terrible” (80)

While not explicitly expressed by any of the characters, the physical proximity of these two discoveries, both in terms of their location within the ruins as well as their sequential ordering in the narrative, prompts both the characters and the reader to understand each discovery as bearing a syntagmatic relation to each other. Taken by itself, the discovery of the tank is curious but, considering the history of the location, not surprising. Likewise, the discovery of the two bodies is shocking but, for local residents who remember the air raid on the munition factory ten years ago, easily explained. But the syntagmatic relation in which the novel places these two monads encourages a chiasmic understanding of the objects in which one discovery seems lends meaning to the discovery of another. In this instance, the allegorical significance of scrap metal having been left untouched, underground, despite their alleged monetary value to the state, is emphasized via a more immediately recognizable injustice; the abandonment of the factory’s workers – the human capital of the war machine – to an unmarked grave. In the opposite

direction, however, the same chiasmus also works to signify the bodies as, like the tanks, nothing more than the material traces of a production line that has been discontinued.

Perhaps most significantly, however, the syntagmatic relationship that signifies these discoveries also emphasizes their separation within the normative narratives that they respectively represent. If we accept Kato Norihiro's assertion that the aporia - or, as he calls it, the "kink" (*nejire*) – in the postwar relationship between Japan and the rest of Asia is principally a question of how the colonial period might be mourned as a collective experience, then we might understand the unearthed tank and the abandoned corpses as objects that represent the mnemonic division of that period into elements that must be and must not be mourned. As a metonym for Japanese militarism, the tank represents a past that *should not be mourned* (i.e. should be forgotten) while the bodies of those who labored to facilitate that militarism constitute a past which *must be mourned*. As Kato acknowledges, this ability to parse the recent past into that which can be mourned and that which must be forgotten was largely made possible thanks to the U.S. Occupation's decision to vindicate the emperor of any association with Japanese militarism and to shift responsibility to military high command instead. While this vindication of the Japanese people, via the emperor as their symbolic proxy, might have made the business of mourning the contentious past a much more comfortable enterprise, it also gave rise to a situation in which "twenty million non-Japanese victims are given an "outward" (*sotomuki*) yet facile apology, while thirty million Japanese dead are afforded an "inward" (*uchimuki*) mourning".<sup>226</sup> Yasukuni shrine offers perhaps the most concise example of the latter "inward mourning" in action. Within the received Cold War narratives that worked to assert an absolute separation

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<sup>226</sup> Katō, Norihiro. *Haisengoron*. Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1997. p.55

between pre- and post-war Japan, the coherence of the ethnic Japanese body across this ‘break’ remains constant as the subject that can be mourned.

In Kaiko’s text, the hunks of metal unearthed by the Apache tribe never exceed the status of commodity. While the text acknowledges that the ruins in which they are found was formerly a munition’s factory, because it never triangulates the intersecting histories that brought the “Apaches” to the *buraku* in the first place, the allegorical significance of their labor and of the commodity they rely upon is missed. In *Yoru wo kakete*, however, by prompting the reader to identify the object-to-be-forgotten with the subject-to-be-mourned and vice versa, Yang transforms both the tanks and the bodies into two fossils occupying the same historical moment and subject to the same fate. He disrupts the normative separation of these narratives further by refusing to clarify whether the corpses uncovered are Japanese or otherwise. However, Kawamura Naoto’s research into the history of the Imperial Arsenal reveals that, prior to the aerial bombing of August 14<sup>th</sup> 1945, a sizeable number of Korean workers has been employed to dig a network of underground tunnels in anticipation of an airstrike.<sup>227</sup> (Kawamura 225). It is thus eminently feasible that any corpses discovered in the ruins might also be Korean. But Yang’s refusal to signify the bodies one way or the other reminds us that, in death, many of the signs taken as Korean signifiers – a Korean name, the hint of an accent, the whiff of garlic that might follow – are, on the canvas of a corpse, no longer legible.

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<sup>227</sup> Kawamura, Naoya, *Chiju no haikyo kara: “Osaka houhei kosho” ni miru nihonjin no 20 seiki*, Sakuhinsha, 1999.

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