

Post-colonial Narratives of Korean-Japanese Literature

Ethical Issues for the Displaced

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Abstract

Diasporic literature depicts the migratory lives of people that have moved to other countries. Written in either their own mother tongue or in the adopted language, this “genre” of literature portrays the incompatibility between the lives of the newcomers and those of the native residents. Korean-Japanese literature—Zainichi Korean literature—is a genre within Japan that captures the discordance between experiences of migrants and those of residents which was pioneered by Korean immigrants who had crossed over into Japan. Together with their descendants, they have depicted through the Japanese language the issue of identity crisis, a postcolonial problem which began in the modern era in Korean history— a postcolonial problem that had emerged in the early 1930s. Beyond simply being considered a type of literature about foreign immigrants, the genre of Korean-Japanese literature as a literature of diaspora has revealed the extreme fissures that are experienced in everyday life as a result of immigration.

The difficulties represented in this genre which are rooted in post-colonial realities, characterize the modern history of Korea. It involves the internalization and transfer of physical and psychological wounds from one generation to the next which were inflicted by the territorial, cultural, and social disruptions under the Japanese colonial rule.

As such, this study examines the literary works across a few generations of Korean writers in Japan with the aim of understanding how the genre of Korean-Japanese literature embodies the post-colonial traumas inflicted by colonial ravages, and their implications in contemporary society.

Keywords

colonialism, post-colonial narrative, Korean-Japanese literature, Zainichi Korean literature, diaspora literature, ethical issue

Korean-Japanese literature—or “Zainichi Korean” literature which refers to the literature written by Zainichi Koreans who are ethnic Korean residents of Japan—can be traced back to the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula between 1910 and 1945. After their liberation from Japanese colonial rule, Koreans who were unable to leave Japan were faced with the plight of becoming refugees who had lost their homeland. There are various reasons why they could not return to their homeland, but the most notable was that they had become financially dependent on Japan. The decision about whether or not to return to their homeland was further made complicated by the confusion that ensued after the division of the Korean Peninsula and the outbreak of the Korean War. The origins of Korean-Japanese literature can be found in the aftermath of the Japanese imperialist invasion. In order to understand the works produced by Koreans that remained in Japan, it is first necessary to understand the historical terrain that engendered their loss of homeland, and how their status changed from immigrants to refugees in Japan.

In this context, this paper focuses on the problem of “the drifting outsiders” represented in Korean-Japanese literature which was an outcome of the turbulent history of modern Korea and Japan. The phrase refers to people who, like refugees, have lost their homeland and the descendants of such people. Even after they settled in Japan, they still experience a sense of instability about their lives in that they always feel as if they are ‘on the move’ rather than settled.

This aspect would help to clearly show the nature of Korean-Japanese literature as a form of postcolonial literature. Beginning with the first generation of Zainichi Korean writers who wrote in the Japanese language, Korean-Japanese literature has progressed into the current third generation. This paper will be discussing the text and context of the major authors of each generation so that we may have a greater insight into the development of Korean diasporic literature in Japan that was born out of the colonial experiences of Zainichi Koreans.

Immigrant writers of the first generation include Hyuk-joo Jang, Sa-ryang Kim, and Dal-soo Kim. Exhibiting their own unique style, these three writers depicted the confusion and diversity in the experience of living in the Japanese Empire. The Korean-Japanese literature produced by the second generation of immigrants represented the lives of those who continued to live in a post-colonial situation on the boundary between Korea and Japan.¹ While these aging, second-generation immigrant writers are still active, the third-generation writers are now receiving recognition in the Japanese literary world. A salient feature one can find in the third generation is their struggle to break away from the imaginary community that the second-generation writers had fabricated. They are aware of the political ideologies dividing their homeland and the discrimination stemming from Japan's ideology of a single-race nation. Yet, they dream of a utopia in which they are freed from such burdens.

This study examines the literary works across generations of Korean writers in Japan with the aim of understanding how the genre of Korean-Japanese literature carries the wounds of post-colonialism and the suggestive nature of their depictions of the irregularities of life. By and large, Korean-Japanese literature has depicted the realities of the absurd conditions of human life brought about by imperialism and has been dependent on the framework of national and ethnic narratives. It also brings forward the possibility of escaping such boundaries.

II

The literature of diaspora captures the lives of migration of those who have moved to other countries. Written in either their own mother tongue or in the adopted language, such literature portrays the incompatibility between the lives of the newcomers and those of the native residents. What is called "Japanese-Korean literature" consists of those texts that possess such features within Japan. Korean-Japanese literature was originally written in the "Japanese language" in the early 1930s by those who migrated from Korea to Japan in the early twentieth century and their descendants. During

this period, literary works in colonial Korea (called “Joseon” at that time) still appeared in the Korean language, but as the colonial rule became stronger, Japanese became widely adopted as the language of intellectuals. This led to the creation of literary works in the Japanese language. As will be discussed in the next section, Hyuk-joo Jang, Sa-ryang Kim, and Dal-soo Kim planted the roots of Korean-Japanese literature.

In the early twentieth century, the Koreans living in Japan numbered to only a few hundred. However, it increased up to about 10% (estimated 2.4 million people) of the population of Korea by 1945, the year in which Korea gained freedom from the Japanese rule. (The Committee for Writing the History of Korean Residents in Japan, 8) The large-scale movement of Koreans to Japan was mainly driven by Japan’s exploitation of the economy of colonial Korea. The Koreans who lost their land in their own country were seeking jobs in Japan and Japan needed low-wage labor force as its empire expanded. Historically speaking, since the 1930s, Japan has supplied a large number of Korean workers to the mainland of Japan by means of “forced manpower draft” (46), which even today, is a cause of controversy over the human rights of Koreans in the Japanese colonial era.

The curse of the colonial history continued even after Korea gained independence. After the turmoil sweeping the Korean Peninsula, which led to the division of the country into South and North Korea and subsequently the Korean War, some Koreans in foreign lands became stranded there. Many people had returned to their homeland, but many others had to remain overseas because the circumstances were not favorable for their return. By that time, there were about 600,000 Koreans staying in Japan who were still considered as “Japanese nationals” as they had been under the Japanese imperial rule. However, the Treaty of San Francisco, which was signed in 1951, changed the status of ethnic Korean migrants living in Japan to “foreigners” and hence, the Koreans in Japan became “de facto refugees” (11). Zainichi Koreans are defined as “those who migrated to Japan as ‘Japanese’ in the old colonial period and their descendants.” In the “history of their formation,” they are different from the “foreigners” who have simply moved in from other countries (78). In the San Francisco Treaty, there is no consideration

of the fact that unlike “foreigners” who had moved to Japan on their own free will, Zainichi Koreans had come to live in Japan as a result of the Japanese colonial system.

These “refugees” had to choose their nationality in accordance with the foreign regulations of the Japanese government but they were not allowed to become Japanese citizens by naturalization except in very rare cases. Therefore, the choice left for them was to choose between Joseon and Republic of Korea (South Korea). Since North Korea did not have diplomatic relations with Japan, those who chose North Korea wrote down “Joseon” on the government paper, which essentially refers to North Korea. Those who supported neither South nor North politically could not help but also put down “Joseon” on the paper as it was the name of their homeland when they were staying on the Korean Peninsula under the Japanese colonial rule well before the South-North division. If Korean residents in Japan declare their nationality as “Joseon”, they cannot get a passport issued by the South Korean government. In addition to their unstable status as people living in Japan, there were restrictions on their movement overseas. For instance, as they did not have passports, it was very troublesome for them to travel abroad or in some cases, they feared that they might be denied re-entry into Japan.

It is worth noting here that some of the intellectuals who chose “Joseon” as their nationality claimed that “Joseon” was the name of the country in the pre-colonial Korean Peninsula. Most of them were from the southern part of the land, but were reluctant to choose South Korea as their nationality as they thought it would, after all, be an act of approving the territory distorted by colonialism, i.e., the divided homeland. However, the act of choosing “Joseon” meant that he/she took a hostile stance towards the South Korean government, which in turn, would prevent the person from going over to his hometown in South Korea to meet his family and relatives as well as visit and pay respects at his/her ancestors’ graves.

In essence, Korean-Japanese literature tells the story of the immigrants who faced various irregularities caused by post-colonialism including the problem of “Joseon nationality”.²

Korea is currently the only nation in the world divided by ideology and continues to grapple with ideological conflicts despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East-European communist bloc. The roots of the situation go back to the two chapters in Korean history that still define Korean society today. The first is the narrative of liquidating the vestiges of Japanese colonial rule. The second is that of the two Koreas and the anti-communist discourse and reunification discourse that come with it.

The narrative of abolishing all remnants of Japanese colonialism is a critical discourse that claims that the majority of the establishments that took power after independence were dependent upon the intellectual, economic, and human resources that were formed in exchange for their cooperation with Japanese colonial rule. This is the issue as formulated by the progressive forces in Korea which still remains a popular subject in the progressive media. Progressive intellectuals and media point out that South Korea has yet to fully cleanse itself of the vestiges of Japanese colonialism. They claim that the class that served under the regime of Japanese imperialism has taken over the old power after Korea's independence to become the new ruling class of South Korea.³

Anti-communism and the drive for reunification are like the opposite sides of the coin in the narrative of South and North Korea. It was an ideological construct frequently utilized by the conservative governments in South Korea to secure the legitimacy of their rule ever since the independence from Japan.⁴

Recently, however, negotiations for peace and reconciliation are underway in the Korean Peninsula. The inter-Korean summit in the spring of 2018 is only one small step towards a series of agreements on North Korea's denuclearization. However, the détente mood is certainly encouraging enough to make us imagine the unification of the Korean Peninsula. Behind this progress is the decline of anti-communism, which is the remnant of colonialism.

They warned the people in the South of the potential danger of a North Korean invasion, using anti-communism as a strategy for maintaining power, although the countless cases of human rights abuse during this

process speaks for itself. With the suppression of the progressive intellectuals and accusations of espionage,⁵ anti-communist ideology also became a means of prolonging the regime. The two national narratives of liquidation of pro-Japanese remnants and of anti-communism originate from the division brought forth by the occupation of the peninsula by Japan (1910-1945) followed by the Korean War (1950-1953). The loss of sovereignty to the Japanese empire had created a narrative of loss that still resonates within the politics, economy, and culture of Korea.

This is due to the fact that the internalization of the negative perception of the colonial experience continues to be passed on to the next generation through the national narrative of the loss of sovereignty. The liquidation of colonial remnants is still a diplomatic issue and such colonial and neo-colonial legacies continuously affect economic and cultural exchanges.

The two aforementioned narratives are linked to the postcolonial situation of Korea in which there has been a collective movement of the people. Deprived of their nation, the people of Korea migrated to Japan, China, and Russia during the colonial period to avoid political persecution and economic deprivation. With such a large-scale national movement, many people left their homeland, never to return. Such was the tragic product of Japanese colonialism.⁶ Many narratives in Korea-Japanese literature feature characters with disruptive and unstable identities making for a compelling framework for the understanding of the postcolonial movement of people. This literature, which lies in the boundary between Korean and Japanese literature, is characterized by increasingly sharp representations of the severity of post-colonial traumas that the national literatures of both countries fail to register in themselves individually.

III

During its domination of the Korean Peninsula, Japan not only exploited Korea economically and forcibly drafted manpower but also seized the people under a powerful assimilation policy. At the core of this assimilation policy was the education of the Japanese language. When Korea was part



Hyuk-joo Jang

of Japan's territory, Korean writers were also expected to adopt Japanese as their new native language. From the perspective of many of the writers, Japan's iron grasp upon Korea saw no likelihood of disappearing. Hence, writing in Japanese was a logical choice that promised to extend their careers as writers. Three writers may be considered the pioneers of Korean-Japanese literature during the colonial period: Hyuk-joo Jang, Sa-ryang Kim, and Dal-soo Kim.

In April 1932, Hyuk-joo Jang (張赫宙, 1905-1988) won the second-place prize from the Japanese literary magazine *Kaizo* for his novel *Gakido* (餓鬼道) which was written in Japanese.⁷ The reason why Hyuk-joo Jang's *Gakido* appealed to the Japanese readers can probably be found in the fact that the novel vividly represented the poverty-stricken life in the colony. *Gakido* depicts the plight of poor farmers who live from hand to mouth as follows:

For the past three years, the womenfolks have been digging up grassroots for food. Severe droughts hit South Korea, so they planted millet instead of

rice in the paddies and fields. But even that did not ripe properly. The millet and beans harvested in the autumn were confiscated by the landowners and the farmers were compelled to sun-dry the leaves of radish and Chinese cabbage, red pepper, and bean leaves for food. Oftentimes they could not get these enough either. So, they wandered through hills and hillocks to find grass roots. Each year, debts were incurred for farming costs. Household items that had any value were sold until there was nothing valuable left. If the grass roots in the fields had owners, the farmers would have starved to death and no one would have survived. (Hyuk-joo Jang, 2006)

Due to the good reception of this narrative of the devastation of so many people in the colony caused by famine, Hyuk-joo Jang moved his home from Korea to Tokyo in 1936 and became earnestly active in the Japanese literary circle. He was trying to achieve success with novels written in the Japanese language because his Korean works were not well-received in Korea. But whenever he wrote the way the Japanese writers did, he was not well received in the Japanese literary world. The Japanese literary world had a high opinion of Hyuk-joo Jang only to the extent that he provided the exotic taste for the colonies that Japanese readers found interest in. Unaware of this, Hyuk-joo Jang tried to assimilate into the empire by imitating the Japanese literati who were “in close contact with the literature of the mainland,” (Nakane 272) caught between having to prove his worth as a writer by writing about Korea once again, and singing praises about Japanese imperialism. Ultimately, after the liberation of Korea, he was naturalized in Japan and lived the rest of his life as a Japanese citizen.

Sa-ryang Kim (金史良, 1914-1950) took a different path from Hyuk-joo Jang and was a more recognized writer than Jang in Japanese literature. Like many other Korean intellectuals and writers, Sa-ryang Kim went to Japan to study during the Japanese colonial rule. There, he wrote novels in Japanese, and his work *Into the Light* was nominated for the prestigious Akutagawa Prize. He was ranking with the mainstream Japanese writers. (Jooyoung Kim, 235)

Into the Light succeeds in its portrayal of the struggle faced by a colonial intellectual who goes to Tokyo Imperial University for study and dreams of being incorporated into the imperial order. As can be seen in the following



Sa-ryang Kim

quote, the protagonist experiences a serious identity crisis through his conflict between using a Japanese surname and a Korean surname.

I don't know when, but I passed for Minami (南) sensei within the association. As you may know, my surname should be pronounced as Nam (南), but for various reasons, I was known by a Japanese name. Above all, it must have been because my colleagues called me so. It weighed heavily on my mind at first. But later on I thought to myself that it might be better this way for the sake of playing together with these innocent children. *And so I used to repeat to myself time and time again that I had no inclination towards hypocrisy neither had I a reason to be servile.* Certainly, I found myself preparing an excuse that if there had been a Korean child in this class, I would have forcefully asked him to call me by the name Nam. And that would have had a bad emotional effect on both the Korean and the Japanese students. (S. Kim 7, italics mine)

As we can see from the quotes, the hero could not free his desire to be called by a Japanese surname without having to go through the pain of providing a justification for it. What distinguished this main character from



Into the Light by Sa-ryang Kim

those found in the novels of Hyuk-joo Jang was that the colonial intellectual who entered the empire contemplates about the ethical problem relating to his identity in the first-person.

It is common to describe one's own inner world in the first person point of view, but in this novel, the protagonist reveals the subtle ethical problems involved in living in a colonial reality by objectifying the image of himself in the act of pandering to imperialism. This characterizes the ethical dilemma felt by the writer himself who also wanted to assimilate into the empire by writing novels in the Japanese language.

Sa-ryang Kim reflects on his pro-Japanese activities just as Minami does in the novel, and turns away from his past when he cooperated with imperialism to move towards a nationalist stance instead. Immediately before Korea's liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, he sympathized with North Korea's nationalism, which can be regarded as a kind of atonement for his pro-Japanese career.

Unlike Hyuk-joo Jang, who ultimately remained in Japan, he joined the movement for the communist revolution of Korea in 1945 and, after the

division of the Korean Peninsula, wrote novels in North Korea that glorified the proletarian revolution. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, he enlisted as a war writer and presumably died during the conflict. (Jooyoung Kim 236)

Hyuk-Joo Jang and Sa-ryang Kim undeniably experienced the same identity crisis as colonial intellectuals. The colonial situation of this time could not have helped but set the stage for the development of such ambiguities. The two writers both lived in Japan during the colonial period. However, the story of the third writer, Dal-soo Kim (金達壽, 1919-1997) who made his debut after Korea's independence, takes on a different path.

Dal-soo Kim's *The Street of Descendants* (1948), which he began writing in 1946 shortly after Japan's defeat in the Second World War, illustrates why and how he was so symbolic as a pioneer of post-colonial Korean-Japanese literature.⁸

The Street of Descendants by Dal-soo Kim is unusual in that it includes reflections on the colonial experience of the first-generation Zainichi Korean writer. After working as a newspaper reporter in Japan, the main character returns to his colonial homeland to become a reporter for the official organ of the Japanese Government-General of Korea in which Japanese was used as the 'official language,' and hence, the paper's language.

The story revolves around the young man who returns to his homeland from Japan and finds himself blending easily into Japanese culture even though he is resistant to the colonial rule. What is of particular interest here is that the story narrates the anxiety that the protagonist suffers as a result of the fact that he can no longer speak his mother tongue unable to use it especially for literary expression. Obviously, this is a case of an author who brings the contemporary historical context into his work as fictional material. *The Street of Descendants* was the starting point for the awareness of the linguistic dimension of the problem of the literature of Korean writers in Japan who were writing in Korean and not in Japanese rendering the status of the Korean writers in Japan at that time somewhat peculiar and complex. Hyuk-joo Jang and Sa-ryang Kim belonged to the generation of Zainichi Korean writers who wrote in the Korean language. After a while, Dal-soo

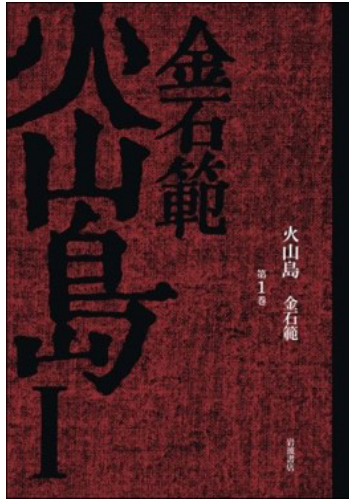
Kim and most of the second-generation Zainichi writers wrote in Japanese. Before and after the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule, ethnic Koreans who had grown up in Japan found it very difficult to speak Korean above the level of everyday conversation caused by the discrimination against Koreans and the lack of Korean educational institutions in Japan.

The apparent anxiety of the protagonist about the well-being of his own folks and the guilt about his inability to speak the national language (his mother tongue) are not only internalized but also externalized, coming to the surface of his consciousness, and making him “feel out of place” (Hayashi 12). Such a feeling was triggered by the fact that the Zainichi Korean writers had to write novels in Japanese. Even though they abhorred the colonizers, they were forced to acknowledge that they were fully acquainted with the language of their very rulers.

IV

Suk-bum Kim (金石範, 1925-) was born in Japan when Korea was under Japanese rule. He came to Jeju Island, Korea, where he lived until 1946, a year after Korea’s Independence from Japan. That year, he smuggled himself into Japan, planning to stay there only for a short time. However, the “Jeju Uprising” broke out on the 3rd of April, 1948. In the turmoil that ensued, Kim had no choice but to remain in Japan. He has lived there ever since.⁹ “The Jeju Uprising”, which is sometimes called “the Jeju Massacre” or “the Jeju 4.3 Incident,” can be traced back to the time when police fired into demonstrators on March 1, 1947 during a collision between the Korean police and the people of Jeju Island.¹⁰ Numerous innocent civilians were killed in the armed conflicts. Interpretation of the incident is still a controversial matter.¹¹

The South Korean government was established after the US military occupation of South Korea. Dal-soo Kim¹², who remained in Japan as a first-generation emigrant, and Suk-bum Kim, who moved to Japan just before the Jeju Uprising, declared the South Korean government to be anti-nationalist. They supported Il-Sung Kim’s regime of North Korea, believing it to



Volcanic Island Suk-bum Kim

be closer to the nationalist ideology. However, most Korean writers in Japan were native to South Korea but due to their outspoken support of North Korea, they were considered enemies by the South Korean government. The road to their homeland was closed off.

Suk-bum Kim opposed anti-nationalism because he abhorred the US military government in South Korea and the Syngman Rhee regime that triggered the Jeju Uprising. Yet, this was not to say he sympathized with the communist regime of North Korea. Suk-bum Kim's epic novel *Volcanic Island* (1957-1997), based on the Jeju Uprising, depicts a divided nation exercising force over a fragmented people. Kim believed the unified, homogeneous nation of "Joseon", before it was colonized by Japan, to be his homeland. Therefore, when the time came to choose his nationality, he did not acknowledge the division of the country into the North and the South. He became stateless and remains so to this day. Living in Japan, he owns neither a North nor a South Korean passport. However, he claims to be of "Joseon nationality", but the country of "Joseon" does not exist. This was a terrible ethical punishment brought about by post-colonialism upon the nationalist

writers of Korean-Japanese literature. Seeking atonement for the guilt he feels from fleeing to Japan during the Jeju Uprising, Kim forbids himself from visiting his homeland.

This tragedy is not unique to the writers of Korean-Japanese literature. Within Japan, Korean residents are divided into two groups: those that are pro-Pyongyang and those that are pro-Seoul. This division was the source of ceaseless political, economic, and cultural confrontation and conflict among the Zainichi Koreans¹³. The discord quieted only in the late 1980s and early 1990s when they witnessed the collapse of communism worldwide, and the miserable reality of the North was exposed to the world. As the North Korean regime increasingly became a personality cult, Korean writers in Japan gradually turned away from their support of the North to embrace the South. Even during this process, the ethical conflicts and confrontations did not cease to exist. As for Suk-bum Kim, he never intended to support the North, nor could he support the South where the military regime continued to rule. Acquiring South Korean nationality was nothing more than an act of betrayal to his beliefs. The second generation of Korean Diasporic writers in Japan were faced with the bleak reality of post-colonialism that forced them to make ethical choices regardless of their will.¹⁴

When faced with ethical conflicts and confusion, people make moral choices by establishing principles based on subjective and objective criteria. However, as for the second-generation of Zainichi Korean writers, when they make choices based on their conscience, they will be bound to repress their basic human rights to return home and meet their family. If they choose to follow through with their right to return home, they will be faced with conflicts that could only betray their beliefs. This situation makes their decision an ethical one, but the ethical choices concerned did not originate in their actions but were in front of them from the outset. Nevertheless, there are still some writers like Suk-bum Kim who have chosen their beliefs.

There are writers like Kaisei Ri (李恢成), Suk-bum Kim's contemporary, who are burdened by their fathers' sins. Born in Sakhalin, now part of Russian territory, Kaisei Ri moved to the Japanese mainland when Japan lost

the war, and has lived there ever since as a writer. In 1972, he became the first Zainichi Korean to win the Akutagawa Prize.

Kaisei Ri's work would be found in the description of the guilt associated with his father.¹⁵ Choonsoo, the protagonist of his magnum opus *Watershed Above* (1992), recalls an incident when his father cooperated with Japanese colonialists, but still ran away in secret with his family as Japan lost the Second World War and relates how he resents the father who he thinks is the cause of the problems within the family.

The protagonist reacts very sensitively to his father's actions and feels guilty that he has fled and left behind his relatives. The guilt stems from his rumination that he himself was an accomplice to this immoral action. His father betrayed his compatriots by cooperating with Japanese imperialism, but Choonsoo feels that he himself was no different despite being but a child back then. His remorse is directed towards his 'self' who was convinced of the victory of the Japanese empire during his childhood in Sakhalin. There would have been no way for a child to have known anything about the empire, Japan, or Korea.

Therefore, it might be an excessive form of self-censorship to regret his childhood. However, this is also an example of how difficult it is for the second generation of Zainichi Koreans to form a diasporic identity. For them, the idea of fatherhood has a negative connotation in that the father is the cause of the son's life as the rootless outsider. As a son of such a father, when trying to define himself he finds nothing but a negative self-image. He is mindful of this negativity surrounding himself because he faces internal turmoil due to the discrimination in Japan and the conflict caused by the division of the Korean Peninsula.

The case raises an ethical issue that Korean residents in Japan face when they try to establish their own identity. The struggles arise from the conflict between their relationship with the homeland and the fathers who are to be blamed for their situation.¹⁶

Just like the original sin, this situation threatens to smother the characters and is conveyed through the scenes depicting the father's fits of violence.

Let's take an example from *The Sorrow of the Land* by Hak-young Kim, a second-generation Korean-Japanese writer:

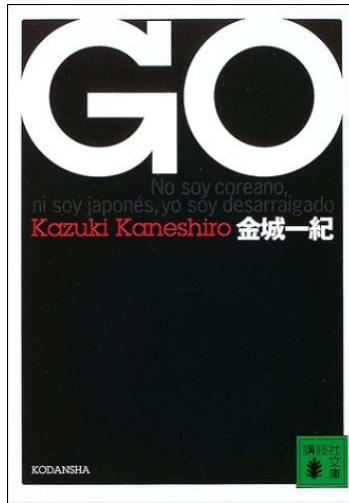
My father often beat my mother. Ever since she married my father at the age of 21, my father has beat her repeatedly hundreds and thousands of times. He seems to think that afflicting her with physical pain was a form of education. (. . .) "I don't even know how many times I have taught you. Regardless, the attitude of women doesn't seem to see any improvement." But this was a perverse claim. My father was uneducated, illiterate, and ignorant. He did not have enough rational control of himself to suppress his temper, and merely wielded tyranny blindly and impulsively. Just as he had once beaten me almost to death, propelled by a blind impulse unbeknownst even to himself, my father continued to beat my mother, driven by this very same impulse that he could not control. (309)

The violence of the father, especially one that is directed at the mother, is a scene that often appears in the works of second-generation Korean-Japanese writers. The gaze of the son, who is the narrator and protagonist, is cold. The father in the eyes of his son is not a fearful man, one that is uneducated and incompetent. We see a man who has lost his moorings and wields impulsive violence to hide his complexity.¹⁷

V

The father figure represented in the novels of third-generation Zainichi writers is of the second generation of immigrants and does not wish to pass on to the next generation the burdens he has shouldered. He wishes to contain it within his own generation. On the other hand, the writers among the third generation of emigrants desire to liberate themselves from the instability of their identities through various experimentations. They seek to establish their identities in the borderline between the Korean and the Japanese.

With the thawing of the Cold War and the introduction to an era of globalization, the writers of the third-generation migrants in Japan desire to walk their own path seeing themselves to be situated across national, generational, and cultural boundaries. For them, Korea may be the home-



GO by Kazuki Kaneshiro

land of their grandfather but it is not their own. They are not naturalized as Japanese citizens, but neither do they wish to define themselves as being Koreans. There lies a conflict in their dream of a utopia—which shows them in a possession of a distinct identity as Korean residents in Japan rather than have a certain nationality. They are more engrossed in their own personal problems than with issues of nationality.

In this regard, Kazuki Kaneshiro's novel, *GO* (2000) is a typical, third-generation Zainichi Korean literature that pursues individual freedom rather than ideological or nationalist values. *GO* not only won the prestigious Naoki Prize but is also significant in that it is a novel by a Zainichi Korean writer that became a bestseller. The novel shows a young Korean man who is no longer tied to the ideology of nation and race. This novel suggested a new direction in Korean-Japanese literature by humorously portraying the serious national and ethnic subject that restrains individuals.

The work portrays a family in a fierce conflict which was frequently dealt with in second-generation Zainichi Korean literature. The father, who is a former boxer, beats his son, but the son fights back with his fist.

We no longer see a timid weakling of a son suffering from a tyrant father. Nevertheless, the father is a gentle husband to his wife, and a courageous father who, hitherto a staunch adherent of the political ideology of North Korea, abandons Marxism to secure his son's freedom of travel.

I mentioned earlier how selecting South Korean nationality over the North Korean nationality causes a significant ethical conflict in second-generation Zainichi writers. However, third-generation writer Kazuki Kaneshiro does not approach it from an ethical standpoint, but turns it into a matter of personal choice. In other words, the father's conversion is an effort to get out of the legacy of colonialism by eliminating the possibility of such a burden falling on the son.

The main character, now free from the possibility of the conflict, falls in love with a Japanese girl. In the novel, there is also an episode in which he confesses that he is a Zainichi Korean and embarrasses the Japanese girl. Most Japanese residents in Japan use Japanese names, speak Japanese, and are educated in Japanese. Therefore, their identities are not easily exposed except when they choose to unveil themselves, or when there are certain occasions such as employment, marriage, overseas travel, and issuing of official documents. In giving a solution to these ethnic issues, *GO* was different from the works of second-generation writers.

Even more crucial is the point that the main character, the Korean boy, does not define himself either as a Korean or as a Japanese. He wants to turn away from the issue of nationality in order to live as an individual pursuing his personal happiness. More important than the discussion of the feasibility of the utopia of the young man is the fact that the imagination in Zainichi Korean literature moves away from the trauma of imperialism towards the pursuit of happiness of individuals.

I would like to remind you that the novel was published in 2000. Due to the ease of movement and the demand for multiculturalism brought about by globalism, traditional issues such as the diplomatic problems in Korea-Japan relations and the isolation of the North Korean regime fail to exert their power as factors that bind individual lives. By boldly propounding this new

phase, *GO* can be regarded as the first step in the healing process of the scars of colonialism in the field of literature.

To be sure, political and economic discrimination in the lives of the colonized directly or indirectly affects their formation of self-identity. Interestingly, the characters exposed to postcolonial oppression not only vent their hate for the perpetrators but are also often linked to the moral issue of their own victimization, exacerbating their instability further. The Zainichi Korean writers amongst the first-generation migrants in Japan represented the diasporic situation in their condition of being drifters of a ruined nation. Whilst yearning for their homeland, they often agonized over the hypocrisy and helplessness they felt in being forced to pretend to be Japanese. In a situation not unlike Orientalism, in which they internalized the scrutiny of the people of the far-advanced Japanese culture, these writers could not help being tormented by the incongruity of their identities as colonial subjects.

On the other hand, the works of the second-generation Zainichi Korean writers frequently address the issues of the helplessness, rebellion, and resistance to the discriminatory life forced upon them. They often attribute their anger for their unstable identities to the violence they experienced from their fathers at home. This was because the father was the very person who compelled the son to suffer discrimination. The depiction of the violent father and the poor suffering mother by second-generation writers delves into the gender issues of diaspora and intensifies the identity crisis they endure. Faced with the predicament of being unable to assume either the Japanese identity or their father's, they found solace by sympathizing with the patient suffering weathered by their mothers. The works of the second-generation ethnic Koreans in Japan are also characterized by a representation of the unresolvable political friction between North and South Korea, and how it made their life in Japan much more arduous.

With the thawing of the Cold War and the introduction to an era of globalization, the writers of the third-generation ethnic Koreans in Japan view themselves being situated on national, generational, and cultural boundaries, and as such, they desire to walk on their own independent path.

For them, Korea may be the homeland of their grandfather but it is not their own. They are not naturalized as Japanese citizens, but neither do they wish to define themselves as being Koreans. They dream of a utopia on the borderline between the two identities. In the narratives of third-generation Zainichi Korean writers, the main characters tend to prefer the separate identity of being Korean-Japanese (Zainichi Korean) rather than having a certain nationality. They are more engrossed in their own personal problems than the issues of nationality, ethnicity, ideology, and politics. Furthermore, they are more keen on the solidarity of the minorities.

Notes

1. In fact, the literature of such second-generation immigrants is the core of Korean-Japanese literature because they express 'HAN'. 'HAN (恨)' is a word used to express a particular sentiment that is difficult to express beyond the Korean language. The word embodies the deep-set pain of bitterness, remorse, grief, and distress. It is the pain felt by those that were forced to live in a foreign land without the ability nor the choice to leave. It is a sentiment embodying a fateful bitterness stewed from a prolonged and accumulated suffering. Koreans imagine that the sentiment subconsciously flows within their people. (The following example may help to understand the implications of 'Han': 'I cannot close my eyes for the Han that I feel in not being able to meet my mother again due to the separation of Korea'.) Although Korea and Japan are in close proximity to one another, the sea called the Korea Strait between the two nations has proven to be a great barrier to the Korean residents in Japan. In connection with this, the literature narrates some of the absurd circumstances faced by the Korean Japanese during their involuntary residence in Japan. Moving beyond simply being a literature of foreign immigrants, Korean-Japanese literature will reveal the characteristic of demonstrating the extreme fissures that appear in daily life from the result of immigration.
2. This is an important subject that embodies the aberrations of post-colonialism beginning with the first generation of immigrants up to the current generation. Caused by the destruction of their land, culture, and society under Japanese colonial rule, the physical and psychological wounds internalized in the lives of the Korea residents in Japan could not help but surface in Korean-Japanese literature.
3. Politically, the progressive governments under the presidencies of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun worked to liquidate the legacy of Japanese rule. However, this process was slowed down during the presidencies of the opposing party when Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye were in office. For instance, President Roh Moo-hyun put into place the Presidential Committee for the Inspection of Collaborations for Japanese Imperialism (PCIC, 2005-2009) to brush away the footprints of colonialism. However, the effort fizzled out in the conservative regimes that followed.
4. The Rhee Syngman and Park Chung-hee governments exploited the political ideology to maintain their dictatorial power.
5. The anecdotes of Gyung-sik Seo and his brothers, second-generation Korean intellectuals living in Japan, will hopefully provide a glimpse of this situation. Gyung-sik Seo is a theorist who writes for the solidarity of the minority by

expanding the historical experience of Korean residents in Japan to the discussion of Diaspora. In 1971, his two brothers who were studying in South Korea were accused of being communist ideologists and arrested for thought crimes on the basis that they visited North Korea, an act that was forbidden under South Korean law. After seventeen years of imprisonment under false accusations, Jun-sik, Gyung-sik's second eldest brother, was released. Seung, the eldest, served nineteen years. While being tortured, Seung tried to commit suicide and suffered severe burns on his face. He served out his time as an unconverted long-term political prisoner. Jun-sik Seo finished his sentence of 7 years, but had to serve additional 10 years because he refused to turn away from socialist thought. (Seo, 70)

6. Millions of Koreans in China and Russia were completely deprived of their opportunity to return due to the ideological rifts of the Cold War era. Only with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reforms of China did they regain the opportunity to visit their homeland.
7. Hyuk-joo Jang and Sa-ryang Kim were authors who embodied what Homi Bhabha refers to as 'ambivalence' and 'hybridity' of colonial intellectuals (Jiyoung Kim, 19). If the above-mentioned two writers were colonial literary figures, each of whom formed a hybrid self between the identity of the empire and the identity of the mother country, Dal-soo Kim, who wrote in Japan after Korea's independence from Japan, pursued a strong nationalist streak.
8. In 2006, *The Collection of Korean-Japanese Literature* compiled 18 volumes of more than 600 works of literature by 54 Zainichi Korean writers. Included in this collection are the works of Dal-soo Kim. There is a common perception amongst academics that Korean-Japanese literature starts from Dal-soo Kim.
9. As Suk-bum Kim was born in Japan, he is sometimes said to belong to the second-generation writers of Korean immigrants. But, it might be more accurate to say that he is of the 1.5 generation because he himself chose to go to Japan.
10. The delayed settlement of the incident and the intervention of the communist party (which was active at that time in South Korea) further complicated the problem. On March 3, 1948, a popular uprising took root. From that point until September 21, 1954, the uprising of the people of Jeju Island and the suppressive force of the Korean government violently clashed.
11. Differing viewpoints can be found between the progressive and conservative politics of Korea. The casualties of the Jeju conflict are estimated to be over ten times larger and much crueler in nature than those of the 1980 Gwangju Democratization Movement, a comparable uprising. Since the Gwangju Democratization Movement was a resistance against a dictatorship, the conservatives cannot help but acknowledge their mistakes. Applying an anti-communist angle to the incident is difficult as this would be a claim that communists

intervened in the conflict. The Jeju Uprising, on the other hand, was a clear case of conflict between the conservative and the progressive, between anti-communism and democracy. For the conservative faction, any communist intervention in South Korea, a nation divided by two antagonistic political ideologies, was unacceptable in the maintenance of the conservative regime.

12. In his magnum opus *The Korea Strait*, Dal-soo Kim strongly supported the North Korean line and portrayed Il-Sung Kim, now regarded by many as a notorious dictator, in favorable light.
13. Zainichi Koreans refer to ethnic Koreans who live in Japan. 'Zainichi' means 'living or residing in Japan'. In this paper Zainichi Koreans are alternatively referred to as 'Korean residents (living) in Japan' and similar phrases.
14. As such, Suk-bum Kim scathingly criticized Kaisei Ri (Hoesung Lee in Korean), who chose to acquire a South Korean nationality once the democratic government came to power with pacifist Dae-jung Kim at its helm as president. Undoubtedly, Kaisei Ri's decision was no simple matter. Kaisei Ri's acceptance of the South Korean nationality was an act of abandonment for his belief that the homeland could only be a unified whole. It was an acknowledgement of the aberrant state of post-colonialism. Regarding this, Suk-bum Kim condemned Kaisei Ri's defection in his "What is 'Nationality' for the 'Korean Residents in Japan' Now—A Letter to Mr. Kaisei Ri" (Suk-bum Kim, 131-142).
15. The following discussion of Kaisei Ri is from Shin, Inseop; and Kim, Jooyoung. "Ethics of Father and Son in Ri's 流域へ (Watershed Above) and Kaneshiro's GO." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 17.5 (2015), with some revision and the permission of the co-author.
16. In this novel, during his trip to the Soviet Union, he reflects upon his ethics using his father as a mirror. The ethical debt bequeathed to him manifests itself in the poignant self-criticism and self-examination of the protagonist. The core theme of the story is that, by reorienting himself in his relationship with his father the son is reborn as a responsible ethical agent in time for a new future to unfold with the end of the Cold War. The father's generation was that of the Cold War, but the ethical responsibility to settle the inherited debts is placed on the shoulders of the son.
17. This theme of patriarchal violence also appears frequently in the works of the aforementioned Kaisei Ri. The 'father' was the cause of ethical conflict for many of the second-generation emigrants. The work of Kaisei Ri depicts the identity crisis of the protagonist that stems from the connection between his change of nationality and the poor judgement of his father who strives to survive in the empire.

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