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Yongnam	嶺南
Yoyudang chŏnsŏ	與猶堂全書
Yoyudang chŏnsŏ poyu	與猶堂全書補遺
Yŭ Hyŏngwŏn	柳馨遠
Yŭ Hyŏngwŏn, saehakp'ung	柳馨遠, 學風
ŭi sŏn'guja	柳馨遠, 學風의 先驅者
Yŭ Hyŏngwŏn ŭi pan'gye surok	柳馨遠의 磻溪隨錄
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Journal of Korean Studies 8 (1992): 37-80.

J. of Kn Studies 8 1992: 81-137

Yi Kwangsu and Korean Literature: The Novel *Mujŏng* (1917)

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My grandfather, early modern Korean writer Yi Kwangsu (b. 1892-d.?) was taken to northern Korea by Communist forces in 1950.¹ I have never met him, and have undertaken this study in an effort to better understand him and the controversy surrounding his life and work. An individual whose life spanned the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-45), World Wars I and II, and the

Research for this article was funded by dissertation fellowships from the Fulbright-Hays program and the Social Science Research Council. I am grateful to Professors Hong Ilsik, Kim Hosun, Namgil Kim, Kim Sŏnggon, Kim Yunsik, Ku Inhwan, Gari Ledyard, Lee Ki-moon, Marshall Pihl, Jeffrey Riegel, Michael Robinson, Ho-min Sohn, Kenneth Wells, Jack Wills, and Edward Wagner for their guidance, support and encouragement of this study, and would like to thank Professors Mack Horton, Peter Nosco, and Sharalyn Orbaugh for their advice in matters pertaining to Japanese literature.

1. Yi died in captivity in North Korea after being taken prisoner in 1950 by North Korean forces during the Korean War. The date and circumstances of his death, however, have been the subject of conflicting accounts. According to Chŏng Sangjin and Pak Killyŏng, former North Korean officials currently residing in the Soviet Union, North Korean troops retreating from United Nations forces in October 1950 took Yi and other political prisoners on foot towards the mountainous Kanggye region in North Pyŏngan Province (now Chagang Province). Yi died in a hospital in Manp'o, of severe frostbite and the chronic tuberculosis that had plagued him since youth. By this account, Yi died in December, 1950. Kim Kukhu, "Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu osimnyŏn mal Manp'o pyŏngwŏn sŏ pyŏngsa" [Ch'unwŏn

outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Yi was involved in the tumultuous history of his generation as novelist, journalist, and political activist. He wrote twenty-seven novels, numerous short stories, poems, religious and philosophical commentary, and essays on reform and the Korean independence movement. As political activist, Yi participated in the overseas independence movement among Korean students in Tokyo,² served in the exiled Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, and was a central figure in the nationalist organizations the Hŭngsadan (Corps for the advancement of scholars) and the Suyang tonghŏe (Society of friends for self-improvement).³ The Japanese colonial government often censored, confiscated, or banned Yi's works from publication or sale.⁴ Yi advocated gradual attainment of Korean national independence through cultural, social, and economic reform.⁵ His vision of gradual independence, however, seems to have entailed acquiescence with Japanese colonial rule during the process of reform. The implications of Yi's thought became perhaps most evident when Yi began actively collaborating with the Japanese government in 1939. Yi adopted the

Yi Kwangsu died in late December, 1950 in a hospital in Man'p'o; *Chungang ilbo* [Central Daily News], July 26, 1991: 1. According to Professor Suh Dae-sook of the University of Hawaii, a former North Korean official named Valentin Pak has alleged that Yi Kwangsu wrote to then Minister of Education Pak Namun while being taken north, but died before help reached him. Personal interview, University of Hawaii, May 1988.

Yi's son, Yung-keun Lee (my father) recently visited North Korea in search of his father's remains, and was shown a grave identified as that of Yi Kwangsu, in a public cemetery in Wŏnsin village, the district of Samsŏk, in P'yŏngyang. A stone marker on the grave dates Yi's death as being October 25, 1950. No documentation, however, was offered to substantiate the date on the grave. "Ch'unwŏn ŏsinnyŏn mal p'yŏngsa hwagin" [Death of Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu in late 1950 confirmed], *Chungang ilbo* August 2, 1991.

2. Yi wrote the "February 8" declaration of Korean independence proclaimed by the Korean Youth Independence Corps (Chosŏn ch'ŏngnyŏn tongnipdan) in Tokyo in 1919.

3. His involvement in the latter organization led to the arrest and imprisonment of Yi and other activists by the Japanese colonial police in 1938, on charges of political sedition. Yi was released six months later to be hospitalized for tuberculosis. Trials for the "Tonghŏe incident" lasted over four years, concluding with a verdict of not guilty for all defendants.

4. Serialized publication of his novel *Sŏndŏja* [Leader], based on the life of An Ch'angho, in *Tonggwang* magazine was interrupted on July 17, 1923, by the Japanese Government General. Yi's essay "Yi Sŏnghun ong" was deleted by censors from the December 1926 issue of *Tonggwang*. Censors intervened again on June 1, 1931, to stop publication in *Tonggwang* of Yi's "Mumyŏng sŏjon" [Biography of an unnamed individual], which was based on armed resistance fighter Yi Kap. The essay "Pisang si inmulŏn" [Some portraits of Koreans during a time of crisis] was also deleted from *Tonggwang* magazine, in October 1931. An essay on An Ch'angho, entitled "Tosan non" was deleted from *Tonggwang* by censors in June 1932. In 1937, authorities confiscated Yi's Korean translation of the Buddhist scripture, the *Pŏphwa kyŏng*. Many of the author's works were banned from sale in October 1940, and by 1944, all of Yi's writings were banned from publication. Cf. No Yanghwan, "Yŏnbo" [Biographical chronology], in *Yi Kwangsu chŏngnip* [Collected works of Yi Kwangsu], edited by No Yanghwan, end volume (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1978), pp. 150-94.

5. For a discussion of Yi's political thought, see Michael Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), pp. 64-77.

Japanese name of Kayama Mitsurō⁶ and wrote pro-Japanese articles and fiction in the Japanese language.

I initially began this study with textual criticism centered on the relationship between Yi Kwangsu and the Japanese colonial regime, but found that such an approach marginalized Yi's role as Korean author. My attempts to "explain" his collaboration ended only in obscuring Yi as a literary subject, a voice in Korean literature. Yet there is a need to re-evaluate Yi as a Korean author, rather than merely as an object of the colonial state.⁷ Yi contributed significantly to Korean vernacular literature, and his writing has recently been included in the Korean literary canon in North Korea, after long exclusion for his collaboration with Japan.⁸ I have therefore attempted in this article to examine Yi's place in Korean literature, focusing particularly on Yi's first novel *Mujŏng* (1917). I discuss the latter work in terms of the theme of *mujŏng* or "heartlessness," irony,

6. Though the action was prompted by the 1939 Japanese ordinance "encouraging" Koreans to adopt Japanese names, Yi averred publicly that he had voluntarily taken the name Kayama in deference to the Japanese emperor. He claimed to have taken his surname from a mountain named Kaguyama, located in present Nara prefecture. "Chidojŏk chessi ŏi sŏnsi kosim tan" [Some heartfelt words of advice on the selection of a (Japanese) name], *Maell shinbo* [Daily News] (1940.9.5), cited in Kim Yunsik, *Yi Kwangsu wa kŏ ŏi sŏdae* [Yi Kwangsu and his times] (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1986), p. 1000. Kaguyama is mentioned in poems by emperors Jomei (629-41) and Tenji (662-71) in the *Manyōshū*. Cf. poems 1.2; 1.13. The mountain was one of the "three mountains of Yamato" (i.e., Kagu, Unebi, and Miminashi). The mountain was also referred to as Ama no Kaguyama, or "Mount Kagu of the heavens," due to the legend that the mountain had originally descended from the heavens. Yi was ostensibly invoking Japanese imperial legend in choosing the surname Kayama. I am grateful to Professor Peter Nosco for advising me of the significance of Kaguyama. The third character (*mitsu*, or *kwan* in Korean) in his Japanese name was from his Korean given name, and the final character *ŏ* was adopted "in the manner of names on the homeland" (i.e., Japan). Ibid. The name Kayama Mitsurō nevertheless insinuated a hidden subtext of Korean nationalism in the characters *ka* (pronounced "hyang" in Korean, meaning "fragrance") and *yama* (pronounced "san" in Korean, meaning "mountain"), which were characters in the name of the Korean mountain Myohyangsan, situated in Yi's native North P'yŏng'an Province. Yi told my father that he chose a name alluding to Myohyangsan and to a mountain mentioned in Buddhist scripture, i.e., Xiangshan, or the mountain fragrant with the Buddha's wisdom. Myohyangsan was associated with the legendary Korean progenitor Tan'gun, a central icon of Korean cultural nationalism.

7. Professor Choi Chung-moo and Professor Kim Kyeong-hui criticized the colonial paradigm, in papers delivered at a conference entitled "Beyond Orientalism: East Asia in Global Culture Criticism," organized by Professor Lydia Liu of the University of California, and held at the University of California on April 24-25, 1992. Choi Chung-moo, University of California, Santa Barbara, "Simulacrum, Mimesis and the Discourse of Decolonization in South Korea." Kim Keong-Hee, University of Indiana, "Colonialism and Korean Women: the New Woman in the 1920s and 1930s." Jeanne Phik Kaumann discussed nation, culture and the individual in "Can We Have a Literature Without a Nation," a paper delivered at a regional conference entitled "What is Korean About Korean Literature," organized by Professor Stephen Epstein at the University of California at Berkeley on April 18, 1992.

8. Saegusa Toshikatsu of the Korean Language Department at Tōkyō Gaiokugo Daigaku has reported finding Yi's works published in a recent anthology of Korean literature published in North Korea. The anthology, entitled *Hyŏndae Chosŏn munhak sŏnjip* [Selected works of modern Korean literature], published by Munye ch'ulp'ansa, includes Yi's novel *Kaech'ŏkcha* [Pioneer] (1923), and the short stories "Sonyŏn ti pine" [Sorrow of a

and Yi's experimentations with language. A survey of early twentieth-century Korean literature has been included in an effort to provide a literary context in which to assess Yi's role in Korean literature.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY KOREAN LITERATURE

Prose literature that eluded colonial suppression and took root in the hostile soil of occupied Korea during the final years before the Japanese annexation of Korea⁹ included the novel of domestic intrigue, *t'oron sosŏl* or fiction of "debate," vernacular adaptations of foreign histories and biographies considered relevant to the crisis of Korean national independence, and fiction that depicted aspects of the Korean nationalist movement before the annexation.

The Novel of Domestic Intrigue

The novel of domestic intrigue combined the attributes of domestic comedy, the suspense novel, and social criticism. Dramatic tension was created through a sustained accretion of injustice. Elements of the detective novel figured in the labyrinthine depiction of slander, theft, extortion, forgery, abductions, and murder, and comedic resolution of the crime story through the punishment of evil. The emphasis was less on determining the identity of the criminal, however, than on the deliverance of the main character from implication. The main character, moreover, was usually a woman and her ordeals represented social, political, and economic problems in Korean society. The Korean novel of domestic intrigue offered a feminist critique of traditional society. Suspense arose from

youth (1917) and "Ōrin pot ege" [To my young friend], with criticism by North Korean literary critic Ōn Chongsŏp. The article notes that although Yi Kwangsu was not even mentioned in the North Korean literary history *Chosŏn munhak t'ongsa* [Complete history of Korean literature] (1959), Yi is described as a "representative early modern writer" in the more recent *Chosŏn munhak kaegwan* [Survey of Korean literature] (1986). North Korean literary critic Ōn Chongsŏp criticizes Yi as a reactionary and collaborator with the Japanese, but adds that Yi promoted nationalism during the early period of the Japanese occupation, and contributed to the development of early modern Korean literature. Chang Inch'ŏl, "Pukhan, Ch'unwŏn chakp'um baegŭm" [Ban lifted from Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu's works in North Korea], *Hanguk ilbo* 4 (October 1991): 10.

9. Japanese victories in wars against China and Russia in 1895 and 1905 secured international acquiescence with Japanese colonial expansion into Korea. Japan established a protectorate government in Korea in 1905, and eventually annexed Korea in 1910. Under the Japanese protectorate and colonial regime, Korean writers were constrained by censorship policies that are fairly well documented and have been noted by historians. Cf. Michael Robinson, "Colonial Publication Policy and the Korean Nationalist Movement," in Raymond Meyers, Mark Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1886-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 312-24.

conflicting claims on the heroine's body by parents, men, marriage brokers, jealous women, and the woman herself. Underlying these claims were contradictions in traditional Confucian norms of womanly virtue and the socioeconomic exigencies faced by the heroine. Like traditional Korean domestic comedy, the novel of domestic intrigue was set within the *naebang* or "inner room"¹⁰ where women were traditionally confined, and depicted the efforts of the heroine to overcome obstacles to harmonious union with a man of often higher social status. The ambivalent conclusions of these novels, however, belie a modern absence of social consensus as to what the proper destiny of woman should be. The novel of domestic intrigue raised issues of education for women, reform of traditional marriage customs, abolition of concubinage, and free love. The journey of the heroine from the limits of the "inner room" offered the woman reader vicarious escape and was a familiar leitmotif in traditional novels like the *Record of Madame Sa's Righteous Expedition to the South* (*Sa sŏt nam chŏnggi*), in which the heroine embarks on a long and perilous journey after being ousted from her home by a jealous concubine. The novel of domestic intrigue was a transitional genre that assumed the reader's familiarity with both traditional Korean literary conventions and contemporary social issues. The diction, occasional prosodic quality, sentence structure, and inflections of the new fiction were often evocative of traditional Korean oral narrative and vernacular literature. *The Magnifying Glass* (*Hyŏnmi kyŏng*) (1912) by Kim Kyoje, *The Peony Screen* (*Moran pyŏng*) (1916) also by Yi Haejo, *The Voice of the Ghost* (*Kwi ūi sŏng*) (1907) by Yi Injik, *The Spring of Reunion* (*Chaebong ch'un*) (1912), and *A Story within a Story* (*Hwa chung hwa*) (1912) are examples of this genre of literature.¹¹

T'oron sosŏl

The *t'oron sosŏl* or "fiction of debate" voiced fictionalized opinions about contemporary issues, through a text of dialogue.¹² Speakers were described briefly in the beginning of the work and

10. *Naebang* is translated as "inner room" in Laurel Kendall and Mark Peterson, *Korean Women: View from the Inner Room* (Cushing, Maine: Distributed by East Rock Press, 1983).

11. Cf. Ann Lee, "Escape from the Inner Room: The Novel of Domestic Intrigue in Early Modern Korean Fiction," *Korean Culture* (Summer 1991), pp. 14-21.

12. Kwŏn Yŏngmin notes the absence of conventional narrative in the *t'oron sosŏl*, in "Yi Haejo wa sinsŏl ūi hangye" [Yi Haejo and some limitations of the *sinsŏl*], *Han'guk kunda munhak kwa sidae chŏngsin* [Early modern Korean literature and the spirit of the times] (Seoul: Munye ch'ulpansa), p. 232. Cited in Sŏng Hyŏnja, *Sinsŏl e mich'in man Ch'ŏng sosŏl ūi yŏngnyang* [The influence of late Ch'ing literature on the Korean *sinsŏl*], no. 5 in the Paksa hagwi nonmun series (Seoul: Chongŭmsa, 1985), p. 115.

thereafter identified in parentheses or not at all. Voices in the *t'oron sosŏl* discussed current political events, and the need for political, economic, and cultural reform. The controversial subjects of discussion in the *t'oron sosŏl* did not escape the notice of Japanese censors; An Kuksŏn's *t'oron sosŏl*, *Minutes of an Assembly of Animals*¹³ was banned and confiscated by the government, as evident in an advertisement in the *Sinhan minbo*, an overseas Korean newspaper published in San Francisco: "It is absorbing reading, and anyone will find it worth a look. It is also written in the Korean alphabet and therefore easy for anyone to read. So get a copy and read it soon. It has been confiscated in the peninsula by authorities and is impossible to obtain there even if you try. We have thus reissued the book here [in the United States]."¹⁴ Other *t'oron sosŏl* included *The Liberty Bell*,¹⁵ which took the form of a debate among women,¹⁶ *Conversations Among Country Folk Visiting the City*,¹⁷ *The Cart Driver's Misunderstanding*,¹⁸ and *The Bell that Warns the World* by Kim P'isu.¹⁹

Historical Fiction

Historical fiction based on foreign history set forth nationalist allegory displaced in space and time. Early twentieth-century Korean adaptations of foreign histories presented models of nationalism, or admonitory examples to be taken to heart by Koreans. *The Biography of Mazzini*, serialized in the *Taeahan maeil sinbo* from December 14 to December 21, 1905, was a biographical sketch of the life of Italian nationalist and republican revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-72). Fiction in this period was often published anonymously due to the nationalist tone in many of the works, and the *Biography of Mazzini* was likewise published anonymously.

Since works of this nature dating from the first decade of the twentieth century were often based on Japanese or Chinese texts, they

13. An Kuksŏn, *Kŭmsu hoeŭirok* (Hwangsŏng: Hwangsŏng sŏjŏk ŏpchohap, 1908).

14. *Sinhan minbo* [New Korean People's Newspaper], Aug. 25, 1909.

15. Yi Haejo, *Chayŭjong* (Hwangsŏng: Kwanghak sŏp'o, 1910).

16. Song Hyŏnja has identified the possible influence of the late Ch'ing novel *Hwang xiu giu* (1905) by I So, which dealt with the theme of women's emancipation. Song Hyŏnja, *Sinsosŏl e mich'in man Ch'ŏng sosŏl ŏi yŏngnyang* [The influence of late Ch'ing literature on Korean *sinsosŏl*], no. 5 in the *Paksa hagwi nonmun series* (Seoul: Chonggumsa, 1985), p. 119.

17. Uŭi-saeng, "Hyanggaek tamhwa," *Taeahan maeil sinbo*, Oct. 29, Oct. 31, Nov. 1, Nov. 7, 1905.

18. Anonymous, "Kŏbu ohae," *Taeahan maeil sinbo*, Feb. 20 - Mar. 7, 1906.

19. Kim P'isu, *Kyŏnggaejong* (Hwangsŏng: Kwanghak sŏp'o, 1908).

were written with an extensive use of classical Chinese closely paralleling Chinese texts or the *wakan konkō* (mixed Chinese and Japanese) style of Meiji texts. Chu Sigyŏng's translation of Liang Qi-chao's *History of the Fall of Vietnam*²⁰ was exceptional in its vernacular style, but nevertheless maintained the run-on sentence structure characteristic of traditional narrative. *Biography of Mazzini* was similarly written in pure *han'gŭl*, with vernacular diction and traditional sentence structure. The first installment, for example, consisted of one sentence that finally ends in the first paragraph of the fourth installment.

Experimentation with briefer sentence structure appears to have begun with the writings of Ch'oe Namŏn in *Sonyŏn* ("Boys" magazine) (first ed., 1 November 1908), the student periodical that Ch'oe founded and edited. Translations of Western works such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* were written in relatively simple, terse sentences, although other articles in the magazine continued to adhere to traditional sentence structure. Difference between spoken and written speech was particularly apparent in narrative, in which the quoted speech of characters usually consisted of sentences much briefer and simpler than those in the expository text of the same works. The writing of Ch'oe Namŏn and Yi Kwangsu represented an effort to more closely approximate modern spoken Korean.

Literature of Reform and Dissent

Several short stories and novels portrayed characters involved in the Korean independence movement in the late nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century. Unlike allegorical works, such fiction portrayed more or less contemporary characters in Korea, Japan, Manchuria, and even the United States during the Sino-Japanese War, Russo-Japanese War, and the period of Japanese "protectorate" rule in Korea (1905-10). Yi Injik's *Tears of Blood* (1906) portrayed the ordeals of a Korean family during the Sino-Japanese War, and the experiences of the daughter of the family as a student in Japan and the United States.²¹ The novel was set in

20. Liang Qi-chao, *Yue-nan mang guo shi*, trans. by Chu Sigyŏng (Hwangsŏng: No Ikhyŏng ch'aeksa, 1907). Cited in Kim Pyŏngch'ŏl, *Han'guk kundaŭ pŏnyŏk munhaksŏ yŏn'gu* [Research in the History of Early Modern Korean Translations of Foreign Literature] (Seoul: Uryu munhwasa, 1975), pp. 216-17.

21. Professor Kichung Kim discusses language, verisimilitude and narrative in "Hyŏl-ui nu: Koren's First 'New' Novel," *Korean Culture*, March 1985, pp. 38-45; (June 1985), pp. 17-25; September-December 1985, pp. 16-26.

P'yongyang, Osaka, and Washington, D.C. around the time of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). It was originally serialized in fifty installments in the *Mansebo* from July 22 to October 10, 1906.²² The *Mansebo*, the title of which meant "Long live [an independent Korea]" had been founded June 16, 1906, by members of the Ch'ondogyo religious group, and continued publication until August 1907, when it became a pro-Japanese publication called the *Taeahan simmun*. Articles in the newspaper included essays on Ch'ondogyo religious doctrine, often run at the head of the front page. The newspaper also published articles on government and politics. The *Mansebo* was written in several different styles; columns on government and current affairs were mostly written in a style consisting virtually entirely of literary Chinese, with Korean articles and auxiliary verbs. Chinese characters often appeared with either (1) the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character, or (2) a vernacular Korean semantic equivalent of the character, written in small *han'gŭl* letters beside the Chinese character. These readings duplicated the Japanese use of *furigana* beside Chinese characters.²³ The side-readings were also used in fiction serialized in the *Mansebo*, as in the *Mansebo* edition of the novel *Tears of Blood*.

22. *Tears of Blood* appeared in several significantly different editions. It was published in book form in 1907 and 1908 by Kwanghak sŏp'o. The 1908 edition has been made readily available in a facsimile edition published in 1978. Cf. Kim Yunsik, Paek Sunjae, Song Minho, Yi Sŏnyŏng, eds. *Han'guk kaehwagi munhak ch'ongsŏ* [Anthology of Korean literature of the Enlightenment period]. Series 1: *Sinsosŏl, Pŏnan (yŏk) sosŏl* [The new fiction, and Korean translations/adaptations of foreign literature], vol. 1 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1978). A copy of the 1907 edition is in a private collection. Professor W. E. Skilled refers to an edition in the possession of Chŏn Kwangyong. W. E. Skilled (1964), "Tears of Blood: A Novel by Yi Injik with Notes and a Translation by W.E. Skilled" (from a manuscript of Columbia University language teaching materials), p. ii. Professor Skilled has translated the novel into English. Cf. Yi Injik, "Tears of blood," trans. W. E. Skilled, *Korean Classical Literature: An Anthology*, Chung Chong-wha, ed. (London: Kegan Paul International Ltd., 1989), pp. 159-221. The 1908 edition was written in *han'gŭl*, without Chinese characters. The Korean side-readings (rather than the Chinese characters they accompany) in the 1906 *Mansebo* edition appear to have been adopted as the main text in the 1908 text. Yi Injik had indicated in a short story published earlier in the *Mansebo* [(September 1906) "Sosŏl tanyŏn"] that the side-readings were to be interpreted as the text. Cf. W. E. Skilled, "Tears of Blood: A Novel by Yi Injik, with Notes and a Translation by W. E. Skilled" (Department of Chinese and Japanese, Columbia University, 1964), p. i. Lee Ki-moon, "Kaehwagi ūi kungmun sayong e kwannhan yŏn'gu" [Korean language usage in the Enlightenment period], *Han'guk munhwa*, Dec. 1984. Other editions of the work include one published in 1940 in the literary magazine *Munjang*. Cf. *Munjang* [Literature] 2, no. 2: 224-57. Cited in Skilled, "Tears of Blood." Discussion of *Tears of Blood* in the present study is based on the original 1906 *Mansebo* edition, since the 1940 edition and later versions are less salient to a discussion of Korean literature in the first decade of the twentieth century. Specific passages analyzed below are virtually identical in the 1906 text and the later 1908 edition.

23. Lee Ki-moon briefly discusses this method of notation in his "Kaehwagi ūi kungmun sayong...."

Interior monologue and ambivalence in *Tears of Blood* added new depth to character portrayal in Korean narrative. The omniscient narrative closely portrayed the state of mind of Ongnyŏ's mother, for example, after her separation from husband and daughter in the confusion of war, and her return to an empty house. When the woman returns home and finds herself alone in an empty house, her thoughts become the focus of the narrative. No quotation marks are used to demarcate passages of thought: instead, the use of first-person pronouns indicates the shift in narrative voice to first-person interior monologue, and only embedding constructions at the end of a first-person passage indicate quoted speech or silent thought. The narrative closely follows the woman's thoughts through a progression of anxieties that lead her eventually to suicidal despair.

A novel entitled *The Pine Harp* (*Songnoe kŭm*) (1908) was set in Korea and Japan during the Russo-Japanese War. Through two concurrent related plots involving a family separated by the war, and a youth attempting to build a business in international trade, the novel dealt with the effects of the Russo-Japanese War on Korea, early Korean immigration to Hawaii, the issue of feminist social reform in Korea, the need for political reform, and nationalist efforts to strengthen Korea through economic development. The heroine of the novel, Kim Kyeok, sets out for Japan with her mother and brother to take a trans-Pacific boat to Hawaii, where her father Kim Kyŏngsik has gone to work on a plantation. Their goals are to educate themselves and return to Korea to serve their country.

The text invokes the theme of self reliance in its emphasis on national self-strengthening through economic development. Kyeok's father is a businessman concerned with agriculture and trade. The man she loves, Kūnam, runs a shipping company and seeks to build national economic strength through domestic and international trade. Kūnam is disgusted by Korean officials' ignorance of and disdain for economic affairs. Kūnam attributes the loss of national independence in part to such incompetence. He particularly cites Korean acquiescence with foreign exploitation of Korean natural resources, and resolves to resist foreign exploitation through economic self-strengthening. In a dream, he envisions a sage exhorting him to contribute to the development of industry and agriculture in Korea. The sage tells him to read Samuel Smiles's *Self Help* (*Chajoron*), a book that had been a popular inspirational text to

the Japanese during the Meiji period and had been translated into Korean in 1906.²⁴

A Korean official who refuses orders to suppress the Korean independence movement is demoted and eventually jailed in the short story "An Empassioned Life" ("Tajŏng tahan").²⁵ The story briefly describes various stages in the main character's life, including his early disillusionment with traditional learning, his subsequent pursuit of "practical learning" and the "new learning of other nations," his official career, retirement, and efforts to promote education, and his conversion to Christianity while in jail. Like other characters in traditional Korean fiction, he sets out in youth on a pilgrimage "through the regions of the eight provinces in order to gain expertise in the supernatural and esoteric, and to study human nature and human ways in different lands." He visits "those who were reputed to be remarkable men, Taoist sages, monks... masters of augury and the occult." Unlike his counterparts in earlier heroic tales, however, he is disappointed to find that these savants are either no different from other people or charlatans. He then returns home and lives in seclusion while cultivating himself in practical learning.

After carefully preparing himself in this manner, he accepts appointment to the office of Police Bureau Chief in 1896, the same year an organization called the Independence Club is founded. The latter group was an actual organization formed under the leadership of Sŏ Chaep'il (1866-1951), with the goal of preserving Korean national independence from increasing foreign intervention, particularly the growing Japanese presence after the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). The newborn independence movement soon meets with violent suppression, however, and members of the Independence Club are brutally attacked by men from the "Peddlers' Guild," recruited by the government. The people seethe with discontent and students stage mass boycotts of universities and primary schools. When the police chief refuses to obey orders to attack Independence Club members, he is demoted to the position of district chief in Mokp'o. His disobedience nevertheless wins him the trust and respect of other police officers. In Mokp'o, he

24. Anonymous translator, "Chajoron," *Choyangbo* [Morning Sun Newspaper] June-July 25, 1906. Cited in Kim P'yŏngch'ŏl, *Han'guk kŏndae pŏnyŏk munhaksa yŏn'gu* [Research in the history of early modern Korean translations of foreign literature] (Seoul: Uryu munhwasa, 1975), p. 211. Kim P'yŏngch'ŏl argues convincingly that this translation was based on a Japanese translation by Azegami Kenzō, entitled *Jisho ron* and published by the Naigai Shuppan Kyōkai in three volumes in 1906. The Korean translation was a partial, abridged version of the Japanese text.

25. Paegak ch'unsa, "Tajŏng tahan: sasil sosŏl" [An impassioned life: a true story], *T'aeuguk hakpo*, Jan. 24 - Feb. 24, 1907.

proceeds to curb a cruel official who administered excessively harsh punishments to laborers; he treats his own subordinates with generosity and compassion. He also abolishes traditional religious practices and burns down local shrines.

After his retirement from public office, Mr. "Thrice Awakened" devotes himself to a second calling, that of education. If his first awakening is disillusionment with traditional learning, his second is a realization of the importance of educating the Korean people in the "new learning," and he sets out in his retirement to help his community build a school. His activities attract official notice, however, and he is jailed on charges of seditious, nationalist activity. Police torture him in efforts to extract a confession of guilt from him. While in jail, he reads Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible, and is moved to accept Christian faith.

The experiences and aspirations of Mr. Thrice Awakened represent those of certain Korean nationalist progressives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A native of P'yŏngan Province, he embodies in particular the enlightenment movement among Christian-influenced nationalists in the northern province of P'yŏngan.²⁶ Mr. Thrice Awakened's interest in "practical learning" corresponds to the emphasis on commerce and industry, agriculture, economics, and practical preparedness in the thought of cultural nationalists like An Ch'angho, himself a Christian from P'yŏngan Province.²⁷ It is hardly a coincidence, moreover, that the story appeared in a magazine founded by a group of students who were natives of P'yŏngan Province.

The short story "Dream Tide" ("Mongjo")²⁸ portrayed the widow of a Korean nationalist who dies in prison, punished for "seditious" activities. Published just weeks after Kojong's abdication under Japanese coercion, and two months after the failed secret mission to the Hague International Peace Conference (and Yi Chun's

26. Professor Kenneth Wells has written a monograph on Protestantism and nationalism in Korea. Cf. *New God, New Nation: Protestants and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

27. For analyses of the reformist thought of An Ch'angho, please see Wells, *New God, New Nation*; Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea*, chap. 3, "Within Limits: Moderate Nationalist Movements," pp. 78-106.

28. Written by an author who assumed the pseudonym "Panha," the short story was serialized in 24 installments in the *Ilwangsŏng sinmun*, Aug. 12-Sept. 17, 1907. The story was written in *han'gŭl*, with occasional Chinese characters, added in parentheses beside certain Sino-Korean words.

subsequent death),²⁹ the story was pervaded by a mood of crisis and the desire to dispel a growing sense of powerlessness among Koreans. In the story, a man named Han Taehŭng³⁰ embarks on a path of educational, social, and political reform out of anger and shame at Korea's helplessness. "It angered me that our nation had failed to venture forth beyond the seas. . . . We were a cripple among nations. In order that Korea might enter the ranks of the other nations of the world and participate in world affairs on an equal standing with other nations, I wanted to join hands with the neighboring nation who had been the first country in the Far East to open her doors to the West,"³¹ and revolutionize Korean politics, build a firm foundation for the [Korean nation], introduce the new civilization of the great West, and broaden the scope of my fellow countrymen's knowledge."³²

Han studies political science in Japan for several years before returning to Korea to work for national independence. He envisions a future in which Korea and Japan would be neighbors—friendly, but equal and independent states. "I would have flown the Korean flag over embassies in Paris, London and Washington," writes Han wistfully of his quest to regain the diplomatic autonomy that had been wrested from Korea in 1905 under the Protectorate Treaty. Han's fiery zeal, however, leads only to his imprisonment and death. His widow lives on in despair. The narrative observes with irony that Han and his wife are not among the "happy, fortunate ones" who live life aimlessly, evading responsibility or risk, seeking only self-interest, drifting with the tides of opportunity, in a world of vicissitudes bizarre as a dream—hence the title "Dream Tide."

The overwhelming despair of the story is broken momentarily with the appearance of a missionary—a woman in her forties, dressed in Korean clothes, carrying a large sack "like the one that comb peddlers carry." She gives a copy of the Book of Luke to Han's widow, and discusses Christianity. Her sermon includes Biblical passages characterized by paradox: for example, "For whosoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). The missionary emphasizes in

29. Kojong dispatched former minister Yi Sangsŏl, former Supreme Court prosecutor Yi Chun, and Yi Wijong, son of a former consul to Russia, to the International Peace Conference at the Hague in June 1907. The representatives were, however, refused admission to the conference. Yi Wijong then issued a statement before an international conference of journalists, denouncing Japanese colonial expansion in Korea.

30. Han's name means "may Korea be rejuvenated and greatly flourish."

31. This refers to Japan though, strictly speaking, China had opened its doors earlier. Yi dynasty relations with Japan had been conducted under the rubric of "neighborly" relations (*kyorin*), as opposed to the tributary relations between China and Korea.

32. From the text of Han's last letter to his wife. *Hwangŏng sinmun*, Aug. 13, 1907.

particular the tenets of penitence, humility, faith, hope, and love. The absence of these, she warns, will imperil oneself, one's family and the nation. ". . . if you have faith, you will have hope, and if you have hope, you will have the love with which to realize those hopes. The person who esteems only pride and distances his or herself from love will perish. If the ruler of a nation is proud, that nation will perish. If the head of a family is proud, that family will perish. The proud will perish. . . . Nations, families and individuals perish because of pride and the lack of love." She uses the word "love" (*sarang*) in the sense of a humanitarian, selfless love. "Everyone knows what love is," she tells the widow, "but there are several kinds of love. There is the love of a man for his concubine, and the love of a drinker for his wine. There are many kinds of love, but these are private, selfish kinds of love; a public-minded, all-encompassing love does not love such love, but reaches broadly beyond the bounds of such love. That is genuine love."

The missionary's exposition of the relationship of personal morality to family and state forms parallels with Confucian ideals of personal ethical relationships as the moral bases of the state and society.³³ The terms "private" (*sasa*) and "public-minded, fair" (*kongp'yŏng*), moreover, correspond to similar concepts of the "private" (*sa*) and "public" (*kong*) in Neo-Confucian thought. The missionary's sermon in "Dream Tide" attempts to instill new hope and spiritual values, in terms Koreans would accept and understand. Her words seem to answer the characters' need for a system of spiritual beliefs that might guide them through the absurdities of life's "dream tide." Religious literature of the early twentieth century in Korea also included Buddhist and Tonghak, or "Eastern learning" literature. The *Chosŏn pulgyŏgye* (World of Korean Buddhism) journal published Buddhist parables in an erudite literary style combining Korean and classical Chinese. The *Ch'ŏndogyŏhoe wŏlbo* (Monthly journal of the Ch'ŏndogyo society) published vernacular Korean fiction that set forth the beliefs of the Tonghak organization that published the journal. Denunciation of shamanistic beliefs was also a major theme of early twentieth-century Korean fiction; works like *Kumagŏm* (The Demon-expelling Sword) sought to undermine

33. Kenneth Wells discusses the "ethical foundations of self-reconstruction nationalism" in *New God, New Nation*, pp. 47-70.

"superstition."³⁴ The costs of shamanistic ritual and Buddhist worship are blamed for the financial ruin of the old man in the short story, "An Old Man from the Countryside Visits a Pharmacist" (1905).³⁵

Rebellion and the Korean armed resistance movement against the Japanese occupation were depicted in "Little Diamond Mountain,"³⁶ a short story serialized in the Korean People's Newspaper (*Taehan minbo*). The story depicted armed rebellion in Kangwŏn Province, and the Korean overseas independence movement in China, in western Jian-dao. The story, by an anonymous author who wrote under the pseudonym of Pinghŏja (One who leans on the void), depicted a fictional gang of armed vigilantes based in a cave on Pogae Mountain in Kangwŏn Province. The gang is nicknamed the "Little Diamond Mountain" gang after the mountain on which they are based—a mountain renowned for its beauty, and likened to the Diamond (*Kumgang*) mountain range to the north. The group also names itself the "Save the Poor" (*hwalbindang*) gang, in reference to a vigilante group of the same name in the Yi dynasty story "The Tale of Hong Kiltong," by Hŏ Kyun (1569–1618). Like their earlier counterparts, the robbers in the "Little Diamond Mountain" band seek to redress injustice and corruption by stealing from wealthy, corrupt officials and distributing the stolen goods to the needy. "We are not mere plundering thieves," declares the gang's leader, "but have been brought together by our shared anger and indignation over injustice. We uphold only righteousness, and seek to restrain the powerful and the weak."³⁷ The story describes the gang's formation and eventual migration to western Jian-dao, at the border between China and Korea, where the former vigilantes devote themselves to farming and industry, building practical strength with which to eventually return to Korea and establish Korean independence from foreign domination.

34. Yi Haejo, *Kuma gŏm* [The demon-expelling sword] (Seoul: Taehan sŏrim, 1908, 12). Cited in Chŏn Kwangyŏng, *Han'guk kŭndae sosŏl ūi thae*, vol. 2, 1931–45 (Seoul: Minbunsa, 1983), p. 948. I have consulted a facsimile of a 1917 edition of *Kuma kŏm*, i.e., Seoul: Pangmun sogwan, 1917, in Kim Yunsik, Paek Sunje, Song Minho, Yi Sŏnyŏng, eds., *Sinsosŏl, pŏnan (yŏk) sosŏl*, Han'guk kachwagi munhak ch'ongsŏ 1, vol. 5 (Seoul: Asa munhwasa, 1978). This particular work appears to have been influenced by the late Ch'ing novel *Sao mi zhou* (1905) by Zhuang Zhe. See Yi Chaesŏn (1981) *Kaehwagi sosŏl yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak), pp. 100–103. Cited in Song Hyŏnja, *Sinsosŏl e mŏch'in man Ch'ŏng sosŏl ūi yŏnghyang*, p. 74, n. 134.

35. Discussed above.

36. Pinghŏja, "So Kumgang" [Little Diamond Mountain], *Taehan minbo* Jan. 14–March 6, 1910.

37. Pinghŏja, "So Kumgang," *Taehan minbo* Jan. 30, 1910.

CONCLUSION

Virtually all works of early modern Korean literature in the period 1905 to 1910 shared a nationalist intertext advocating reform and/or resistance to foreign domination. These works envisioned various paths to national independence. Visions ranged from the gradualist reform sought by characters in *The Pine Harp* to armed rebellion as depicted in "Little Diamond Mountain." The novels *Tears of Blood* and *The Pine Harp* portrayed young Korean men and women who pursue national independence through a program of education, social reform, and practical economic strength. Characters in these novels study abroad in Japan and the United States. Reformist novels, moreover, took a somewhat conciliatory stance toward Japan, though aspiring ultimately to Korean independence. Kūnam seeks to build economic strength through international trade with Japan and China, and invokes Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, a work that had been introduced to Korea through a Japanese translation. Still other characters, however, openly defy authority and endure imprisonment and even death as the price for unyielding resistance. The official in *An Emphasized Life* refuses orders to punish nationalist dissidents and is demoted as a result; his nationalist efforts to promote education lead to his imprisonment. Han Taehŭng of "Dream Tide" dies in prison for his pursuit of nationalist reform. The "Little Diamond Mountain" rebels combine nationalist reform with armed revolt as they form a "righteous army" in Korea to challenge Japan, and eventually emigrate to Manchuria to form a community base for further armed resistance.

Fiction of the period evinced continuities with traditional narrative. Prose was written in the lengthy sentence structure characteristic of traditional narrative, with its chains of conjoined clauses. Ch'oe Namsŏn introduced a terse, modern, vernacular style in nonfiction works and translations published in the magazine *Sonyŏn*, but Korean fiction of the period continued to be written in traditional prose until the publication of several experimental short stories by Yi Kwangsu in 1910. Texts often lacked a clearly identified author as was the case in traditional fiction. Fiction, moreover, often lacked psychological depth; characters in works like "Little Diamond Mountain" were coarsely sketched. Yi Injik's *Tears of Blood* was one of only a few works that achieved a degree of psychological complexity in its use of interior monologue and evocation of character.

Certain elements nevertheless distinguished the literature of this period from traditional fiction. Many works assumed a contemporary

setting. Literature explored the theme of temporary exodus to countries like Japan, China, and the United States, though even this motif could be considered a variation of the journey of apprenticeship undertaken by a hero or heroine of traditional Chinese and Korean fiction.³⁸ Women escaped the confines of the "inner room" and their lives became representations of the national struggle for liberation. Religious literature attempted to formulate new values and morals in the void created by the erosion of traditional Confucian beliefs. The emergence of newspapers like the *Korea Daily News* and *Korean People's Newspaper* provided a new forum for vernacular literature. With the annexation of Korea to Japan in 1910, and the Japanese policy of effacement of Korean identity,³⁹ Korean literature would assume an even greater significance as a medium of cultural expression.

YI KWANGSU AND KOREAN LITERATURE: THE NOVEL *MUJŎNG*

Yi Kwangsu's first novel, *Mujŏng*, was serialized in the newspaper, the *Maeil sinbo*, in 127 installments from January 1 to June 14, 1917. The title echoed that of Kuroiwa Ruikō's 1902 Japanese translation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, entitled *Mujō!* (i.e., "mujō" and "mujōng" are the Japanese and Korean readings respectively for the Chinese compound "wu qing.")⁴⁰ The title of the novel means to be "without emotion, without love" and may also refer to the state of insentience. Its conventional meaning is close to "cruel, heartless." A range of these meanings is present in the novel *Mujŏng*. The heartless individual or society lacks compassion. Heartlessness may also be sexual repression. *Mujŏng* is manifested also in the apathy of a people who forsake their nation, yielding it to

38. Professor Cho Tongil discusses this theme in traditional and early modern Korean literature. *Sinsŏl ŏl munhakchŏk sŏnggŏpŏk* [The literary nature of *sinsŏl* (early twentieth century Korean fiction)] (Seoul: Seoul Taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1983), pp. 14-105.

39. Beginning with the annexation of Korea in 1910, the Japanese colonial government carried out a policy of assimilation (*dōka seibaku*) through promotion of the Japanese language and eventual banning of the Korean language in government, education and publication. Cf. Dong Wonmo, "Assimilation and Social Mobilization in Korea," in Andrew Nahm, ed., *Korea Under Japanese Colonial Rule* (Western Michigan University Center for Korean Studies, Institute of International and Area Studies, 1973). Michael Robinson discusses the response of the Korean language movement to Japanese colonial policy, in *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea*, pp. 82-92.

40. Kuroiwa Ruikō (original name: Shōroku) (1862-1920) was a journalist and celebrated author of detective stories. Yi wrote that he read Kuroiwa Ruikō's translation when it was serialized in the *Yorozuchōrō* newspaper (Oct. 8, 1902-Aug. 22, 1903) (i.e., M. 35-6). The novel was also published separately in two volumes (vol. 1, Jan. 2, 1906, vol. 2, April 25, 1906) (Tokyo: Fusōdō). Cited in Kim Pyŏngch'ŏl, *Han'guk kundaeh pŏnyŏk munhaksa yŏn'gu*, p. 362. Yi later read an English translation, though he did not specify when or which English version he read. Yi also read a Japanese complete translation entitled

colonial occupation. The novel was significant for attaining a new narrative complexity in Korean fiction. Yi wrote the work, moreover, in a style that differed from that of earlier narrative, particularly in sentence structure, diction, and certain verbal affixes.

The reading public reacted strongly to Yi's work. Critics accused him of corrupting Korean morals. Yi recalled the controversy over his first two novels *Mujŏng* and *Kaech'ŏkcha*⁴¹ in a later interview:

Q: "In the novel *Mujŏng*, you made the character of Pak Yŏngch'ae too pitiful, and in *Kaech'ŏkcha*, you killed off the character Sŏngsun too tragically. Did you not receive any objections from the high school girls in Tokyo?"

A: "There were occasionally objections from girl students, but the most severe critics were Confucian scholars, and academicians in the Confucian schools. 'What I cannot forget is that 'Baron' Han Ch'angsu and twenty other 'gentlemen' of the Central Advisory Council (*Chungch'uwŏn*)⁴²... wrote joint petitions to the Governor-General (*Ch'ongdŏk*), the head of administration (*Ch'ongmu*), and the Inspector General (*Ch'onggam*), and the President of the *Maeil sinbo*, demanding that *Kaech'ŏkcha* not be published. (My article "Sin saenghwallon" [Treatise on a new life] must have been another cause for their petition.) President Katō, who never wavered in protecting me in this matter, later showed me the petition. It attacked me as "a backwoods commoner's son who grew up without a father or mother." They said that Sŏngsun's morals, with her new views of love and free marriage, were destroying "good, traditional Korean morals."⁴³

Aishi [A Sorrowful History], though he did not specify the translator. Tokuda Shusei wrote a translation of *Les Misérables* entitled "Aishi," which was published by Shinchosha in 1914 [T. 3], as part of the *Seiyō datcha monogatari sŏsha*, vol. 3. Nihon Kokuritu kokkai teshōkan, *Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa honpaku bungaku mokuroku* [Index of translated literature during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras] (Tokyo: Fukan shobō, 1972), p. 648. Another translation entitled "Aishi," by Togawa Shukotsu, was published in 1914-15 [T. 3-4] by Kokumin bunkō kankōkai, as part of its *Taisei metcho bunkō* [Library of famous western literary works] series. Yi's admiration for Hugo increased when he read Tolstoy's praise of Hugo's *Les Misérables* as the greatest work of literature. He recalled also having seen a movie version of the novel in Seoul. "Wigo ti sahu osimnyŏn che e," *Chosŏn ilbo*, May 23, 1935, in Yi Kwangsu, *Collected Works* 10: 591-92. Ch'oe Namsŏn's Korean partial translation of *Les Misérables* appears to have been based on a Japanese translation by Hara Yōgorō, published Feb. 3, 1902 [M. 35] as "ABC kumiai" [The ABC Club] (Naigai shuppan kyōkai, bunkō han) (Kŏm Pyŏngch'ŏl: 291). Cf. Ch'oe Namsŏn, trans., "ABC kye" [The Friends of the ABC], *Sŏpŏn* July 17, 1910, pp. 1-60. Hara acknowledged having translated from an English translation. Korean writer Hong Myŏngch'ŏl wrote a partial translation of *Les Misérables* in 1914 entitled "Nŏ ch'am pulsang!" [lit., How pitiful you are]. Yi Chaeŏn, *Han'guk kaechwagŭt sŏd' yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1972), p. 320, n. 17.

41. Yi Kwangsu, *Kaech'ŏkcha, Maeil sinbo*, Nov. 1917-March 1918.

42. Edward Wagner translates *Chungch'uwŏn* as "Central Council," in Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 314-15. The Central Council included Korean "councillors" but was politically powerless.

43. "Yi Kwangsu discusses *Mujŏng* and his other works," *Samch'ŏlli* [Three thousand li], Jan. 1937, *Collected Works* 16 (1963): 300-301.

Other readers expressed support. Yi received many letters of encouragement from "progressive youths," including a joint letter from twenty high-school students in Seoul asking Yi to "keep on fighting hard."⁴⁴

Yi's contemporary, Kim Tongin (1900–51) seems to have misread irony in *Mujŏng*. He bemoaned the "spineless" main character Yi Hyŏngsik, and wondered how the novelist could accomplish anything with such "inconsistent" characters.⁴⁵ He failed to understand a narrative that ironically subverted the main characters themselves. Such irony differed from traditional irony, which was directed not at the main characters but only at such characters as corrupt officials, cruel siblings, jealous wives, scheming concubines, and other assorted villains hostile to the interests of the main characters. In *Mujŏng*, narrative irony exposed the hypocrisies, conceits, and doubts of the protagonist Yi Hyŏngsik. The novel has also been widely interpreted as a "love story" (*yŏnae sosŏl*), and yet to read *Mujŏng* as a love story is to completely miss the irony of a text in which human relationships are without love.

The two main protagonists of the third-person omniscient narrative of *Mujŏng* are a high-school English teacher named Yi Hyŏngsik and a woman named Pak Yŏngch'ae. Hyŏngsik and Yŏngch'ae encounter one another at the beginning of the novel after having been apart for eight years. Yŏngch'ae's father, Scholar Pak, had been a second father to Hyŏngsik when the latter was orphaned at an early age. The young girl and boy were informally betrothed to each other in childhood, but parted after the imprisonment of Yŏngch'ae's father and brothers under circumstances related to the father's nationalist efforts to educate Korean youth. Yŏngch'ae then sold herself as a *kisaeng*, or professional hostess, to acquire money to free her father and brothers. Instead of winning her father's approval, however, her deed caused her father and brothers to despair and commit suicide in jail. When Yŏngch'ae finds Hyŏngsik in Seoul years later at the beginning of the novel, she withdraws from his presence in silence, ashamed that she has become a *kisaeng*. Her worldly appearance little suggests that she has remained a virgin in

44. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

45. Kim Tongin, "Ch'unwŏn yŏn'gu" [Studies on Ch'unwŏn (Yi Kwangsu)], *Munjang*, Jan. 1935, p. 250.

hopes of eventually fulfilling her father's wishes that she marry Hyŏngsik. Yŏngch'ae is eventually sold, however, to a patron who rapes her when she resists his advances. She then resolves to commit suicide. After reading a suicide note from Yŏngch'ae, Hyŏngsik abandons all thought of her and marries a woman named Sŏnhŏng, only to realize later that Yŏngch'ae is still alive.

Plot in *Mujŏng* differed from traditional configurations of event in the depiction of lovers who are reunited after a long separation only to eventually become permanently estranged. Comedic resolution of the lovers' obstacles to union was supplanted by a narrative of parallel journeys—paths converging momentarily, only to separate. When Yŏngch'ae attempts suicide, the narrative cautions readers not to expect a miraculous delivery and reunion typical of traditional fiction. "Some of you readers may be crying over Yŏngch'ae's death. Others may be smirking knowingly to themselves, anticipating the usual novelist's bag of tricks: that as sure as childless old couples in traditional novels give birth to sons who inevitably prosper, and as sure as drowning people in stories are saved, so too will Yŏngch'ae be saved from drowning in the Taedong River by some noble person, and become a nun in a hermitage until she eventually meets Hyŏngsik again, and they are married and prosper and have many sons."⁴⁶ Yŏngch'ae escapes death and eventually meets Hyŏngsik again, but only after his marriage to another woman and Yŏngch'ae's renunciation of her Confucian obligation to marry Hyŏngsik.

Narrative focus shifted from the traditional pattern of conflict between the individual and external forces, to that within the individual character.⁴⁷ This represented a departure from genres of early modern fiction such as the novel of domestic intrigue, which frequently involved rivalry between wife and concubine, or confrontations between a virtuous heroine and evil adversaries.⁴⁸ In

46. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujŏng*, chap. 86, *Collected Works* 1 (1978): 149.

47. Cho Tongil, however, has interpreted traditional Korean masked drama as representing internal psychological conflict through incongruities in costume and speech. Cf. Cho Tongil, *T'alch'um ūi yŏksa wa wŏlli* [The history and principles of masked dance] (Seoul: Hongsŏngsa, 1977).

48. Cho Tongil has described the narrative structure of confrontation between evil and virtuous characters as the *agŭn mŏphae hyŏng* (lit., "evil-people-plotting-harm-motif"). *Sinsŏl ūi munhak sajak sŏnggyŏk* (Seoul: Seoul taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1983), p. 22.

Mujŏng, the locus of dramatic conflict is internalized within the self. Doubt and uncertainty compel Hyŏngsik and Yŏngch'ae to seek self knowledge.

The dual spiritual journeys of the main characters resemble the plot structure of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, a work mentioned in chapter 57 of *Mujŏng*.⁴⁹ Hyŏngsik, like the character of Nekhlyudov, wavers between a socially and financially advantageous marriage, and a less reputable alliance with a woman to whom he feels bound by the past and a sense of moral duty. Sŏnhŏng, the daughter of a wealthy church elder named Kim, is the approximate counterpart of Princess Korzhagin; though not a princess, Sŏnhŏng comes from a yangban, or aristocratic, lineage. Her father, alderman Kim, is a wealthy former consul to the United States, and an elder in a Presbyterian church. Sŏnhŏng's mother had formerly been a *kisaeng*, and had been elevated from the status of concubine to that of wife when the elder's first wife died. Pak Yŏngch'ae corresponds to Tolstoy's Katyusha, the orphaned servant whom Nekhlyudov seduces and who eventually becomes a prostitute.

Both works introduce the male main character and the woman from his past in a scene involving a sudden, startling recognition of one character by the other, or revelation of a character's identity to another character. Nekhlyudov is accidentally reunited with Katyusha after a period of several years, in the courtroom scene in which she appears as a defendant in a murder trial in which Nekhlyudov is participating as a juror. He recognizes her as she appears before the court, and is shocked at her altered appearance and situation. In *Mujŏng*, Hyŏngsik and Yŏngch'ae meet after a period of eight years, when Yŏngch'ae seeks him out in Seoul. He does not recognize her until she identifies herself, and is deeply moved when he realizes her identity.

After retrospective passages that set forth the history of the lovers prior to their reunion, the narrative proceeds to depict the

49. Hyŏngsik recalls scenes from *Resurrection* when he goes to a P'yŏngyang police station to search for Yŏngch'ae. Yi Kwangsu, "Mujŏng," *Collected Works 1* (1978): 103. Pak Nakch'ŏng critically analyzes Yi Kwangsu's interpretations of *Resurrection*, in "Soyang myŏngjak sosŏl ūi chuch'ejŏk ihue rŭl wihae: Tolstŏi ūi Puhwal ūi chungsim ūro" [Towards self-reliant Korean readings of Western novels: Tolstoy's *Resurrection*], in *Wŏlha Yi Tonmyŏng sŏnsaeng Hwan'gap kinyŏm munlip* [Commemorative collection of essays honoring the sixtieth birthday of Wŏlha Yi Tonmyŏng], 1982, reprinted in Pak Nakch'ŏng, *Minjok munhak kwa segye munhak. II* [National and world literature, 2] (Seoul: Ch'angbisa, 1985), pp. 176-203.

emotional and spiritual turmoil experienced by the characters after their re-encounter. Moved to penitence and compassion, the male characters experiences the rebirth of his conscience. These developments are paralleled by the exodus of the heroine from despair to hope. For Yŏngch'ae, however, it is the death of her past self that prepares the path for spiritual regeneration, whereas Katyusha finds new life through the "resurrection" of her former soul. Yŏngch'ae does not seek to recall an original innocence, but to destroy the myth of its significance. According to the Confucian norms of chastity by which she was raised, she has no choice but to die when the baron's son Kim Hyŏnsu rapes her. Though prepared to die, she is saved by the character of Kim Pyŏnguk, who admonishes her that she need not obey a moral code that destroys life. Yŏngch'ae must give up the past and begin anew.

The narrative depicted the ordeals endured by individuals before becoming "complete" human beings. The "true person" (*ch'am saram*) within each character initially lies obscured and inchoate. This true person is fundamentally good, and capable of the unselfish emotions of compassion, love, and devotion to ideals or entities beyond the self. "Heartlessness," or *mujŏng*, however, often blinds one to this inner being within others and oneself.

Yŏngch'ae tries to emulate the virtuous women of Confucian texts. When her father and brothers are jailed unjustly for conspiracy in theft and murder, she recalls the examples of virgins who sold themselves to deliver their parents from hardship, and decides to do the same for her father. "She thought that if she sold herself like the virtuous virgins of former times, her father and brother would be freed with the money. They would praise her when they got out of jail. People would call her a filial daughter and record her deed in books, like the virtuous virgins of old, and young girls who read about her would weep and praise her, just as she had done when she had read such stories."⁵⁰ Yŏngch'ae resolves, moreover, to fulfill Confucian duties of filial piety and chastity by guarding her virginity and devoting herself to Hyŏngsik, the man whom she believes her father wanted her to marry. Her sacrifices, however, prove empty

50. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujŏng*, chap. 15, *Collected Works 1* (1978): 36.

because of her blindness to others: she does not anticipate her father's suicide over her plight, or Hyöngsik's indifference to her devotion. Seeing a correspondence between the benevolent world of her childhood and the Confucian primers and storybooks she read as a girl, she had grown accustomed to imposing on the world a literal interpretation of the texts she read, assuming a unity between reality and the moral universe of the text.

Yöngch'ae had never known any bad people when she was a child. Her father had been good and her brothers and the students who had stayed in her father's study or came to join his classes had all been good people too. The people in the Book of the Lesser Learning and the Biographies of Virtuous Women had also been good people.

Yöngch'ae thought that her family and the people around her were just like the characters in the books she studied. She herself was good. She thought herself the same as the women in the Book of Family Precepts and the Biographies of Virtuous Women. The world would be like her home, and the people in the world would be like those who surrounded her in her childhood.⁵¹

When her expectations prove wrong, Yöngch'ae reacts by drawing a sharp dichotomy between her world, the "good world," and that of others who seek to harm her, that is, "the bad world." "There was a bad world and a good world, she thought, and bad people and good; bad and good were different, and like oil and water could not be mixed."⁵² Yöngch'ae adopts the moral rhetoric of traditional fiction, that is of the "good" individual versus "bad" or hostile people. Such a view does not admit ambiguity or individuality in others. Thus it does not occur to her that her father might be humiliated and angered by his daughter's sacrifice, and thereafter lose all desire to live. Her devotion to Hyöngsik, moreover, is based on moral obligation rather than love for a particular man. She has "never loved Hyöngsik, but had created a man she could love and named him Hyöngsik. Believing that the two were indeed one and the same, she had gone looking for Hyöngsik, only to find that he was not the man she had expected."⁵³

51. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, Ch. 89: 153.

Yöngch'ae emulates the idealism of Wölhwa, a *kisaeng* slightly older than Yöngch'ae. Wölhwa admires the poetic genius of T'ang dynastic poets and regrets not having been born in China during that era. She dreams of meeting men like heroes from traditional Korean fiction. The men who patronize the establishment where she is a *kisaeng*, however, disgust her with their pettiness and greed, convincing her of the ignorance and the coarseness of the Korean people. She tells Yöngch'ae that there is not a poet or man of culture to be found in the city of P'yöngyang. Then one night she overhears the melancholy song of a poet singing from atop a cliff overlooking the Taedong River.

Dawn breaks
and the sun rises.
On earth, all creation
dances for joy.

While all others dream,
I alone am awake.
Looking up at the sky,
I sing a sad song.⁵⁴

She senses in the singer the voice of the lonely prophet, and empathizes with him. Explaining the poet's words to Yöngch'ae, she says, "He feels lonely and sad because he is the only one who has awakened from the deep sleep in which his fellow countrymen still lie. No matter how hard he tries to rouse them, they refuse to be awakened. And so he raises a sorrowful song to the heavens. . . . I too sing to the heavens. . . . For who else but I among all the *kisaeng* in P'yöngyang am awake? None of them knows anything about man or heaven. I am the only one who is not asleep. And I am lonely and sad."⁵⁵ She falls in love with the unknown singer, and later recognizes his voice when she hears him speak to an assembly held at the Taesöng school where he is principal. After hearing his speech, she realizes that he possesses the visionary idealism she has long sought. She then commits suicide, satisfied at having at last met a man worthy of her love, but convinced of the futility of her love for him. The story of Wölhwa and the schoolteacher resembles a similar

54. *Ibid.*, Ch. 32: 64.

55. *Ibid.*, Ch. 34: 67.

subplot in the Japanese novel *Pillar of Fire* (Hi no hashira) (1904), by Kinoshita Naoe (1869–1937). The fierce idealism of the work had appealed to Yi when he read the work in middle school.⁵⁶ Wölhwa's love for the schoolteacher, Hahm, is similar to the geisha Hanakichi's admiration for the Christian-Socialist activist Shinoda Chōji in *Pillar of Fire*. At a party in which she is ordered to serve a reluctant Shinoda, who insists on abstaining from drink, Hanakichi is impressed by his dignity and compassion. Shinoda's vocal advocacy of the abolition of prostitution inspires her to run away from the establishment where she works, and take refuge in his house. His sympathy and encouragement help her regain her self-respect, and dispel the hatred in her heart towards men. "At first sight," she says to a friend, "he looks fierce almost, not friendly at all, but deep down there seems to be a marvelous tenderness. That's what they call 'dignity without disdain,' I suppose."⁵⁷

The geisha Hanakichi and *kisaeng* Wölhwa present Magdalen figures who love with mixed feelings of reverence and tenderness. In *The Pillar of Fire*, Shinoda refers to the "boundless comfort" that Christ may have received in the ministrations of the women who tended to him.⁵⁸ Shinoda, in turn, is a Moses-like prophet striving to lead his people through darkness, guided by the "pillar of fire" of God's inspiration. In *Mujōng*, Hahm's admonitions to his people and his poetic lamentations suggest allusions to the texts of Biblical prophets. In his speech at Taesōng school the night Wölhwa goes to hear him speak, he exhorts the Korean people to recall the vision and vigor of the ancestors who built the city walls of P'yōngyang and

56. In the autobiographical short story "Kim Kyōng," the main character reads the book "from cover to cover" in a single night, his heart becoming a "burning ocean of fire":

It was no accident that the youth's blood was quickened by the novel, since the work featured social injustice, decay and evil, purity of spirit, passionate fervor, the vigor and sensitivity of the idealists of old, and a beautiful woman in love—a woman who was as virtuous as she was beautiful. He wanted to be like the characters in the novel. Though brief, the novel exposed him to noble beliefs, the desire to fight for a cause, the bittersweet taste of love. The ethical views he came to cherish, moreover, bearing overtones of traditional idealism, had been derived from this book.

"Kim Kyōng," *Ch'ōngch'un* [Youth] March 1915, pp. 118–26, in Yi Kwangsu, *Collected Works* 1 (1978): 569. Yi Sōnyōng examines the influence of Kinoshita Naoe on Yi Kwangsu, in "Ch'unwōn ūi pigyo munhakjōk koch'al" [A comparative investigation of the literature of Ch'unwōn Yi Kwangsu], in Kim Hyōn, *Yi Kwangsu* (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisōngsa, 1977), pp. 121–57.

57. Kinoshita Naoe, *Pillar of Fire*, trans. Kenneth Strong (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972), p. 112.

58. Kinoshita, *Pillar*, p. 79.

Ulmi pavilion, and compares the current state of moral decay in Korea to the ruins of the city. Alone atop the cliff at Pubyōk pavilion, he sings the solitary song of the prophet surveying the ruin of his people, his voice unheeded.⁵⁹

Wölhwa chooses to commit suicide when she realizes the hopelessness of her love for Hahm. Her death provokes sneers, however, from one of her clients and from the proprietress of the brothel where she worked.

That night, a fishing boat on the Taedong River drew up a body which turned out to be that of Wölhwa. Since she had left no suicide note, no one knew why she had died; only Yōngch'ae, who wore the jade ring Wölhwa had slipped on her finger the day she died, understood and wept. Wölhwa's proprietress, resentful of the loss of profitable capital, said the girl had been a "mixed up thing." Kim Yunsu's son regretted having lost an amusing plaything. "Crazy wench," he said.

Her corpse was wrapped in thick hemp and carried by two or three water bearers outside the northern gate of the city to Pungmang Mountain, where the body was buried. The evening of the burial, the hand that wore the jade ring showered the grave with a handful of flowers and a handful of tears. No grave marker was erected, so there is no way of knowing now which is the grave of the acclaimed *kisaeng*, Kye Wölhwa.⁶⁰

Her purity of heart deeply influences Yōngch'ae, but her suicide amounts to a perversion of values: she chooses the extinction of life for the preservation of ideals, which according to the narrative are of relative value and ultimately derivative of life itself. Life does not consist of particular ideals but these "arise from life."⁶¹ Life is "absolute," while morality and law are relative. When Yōngch'ae attempts suicide later, she does so under Wölhwa's influence, but is prevented by the young music student Pyōnguk, who convinces her that the moral ideals for which she wishes to sacrifice herself are only a part of her life and not its entirety.

59. Hahm appears to have also been modeled after An Ch'angho, prominent political activist and educator, whose biography Yi wrote in 1947. An founded the Taesōng school in 1907. Cf. Chong-sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 97.

60. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujōng*, Ch. 34, *Collected Works* 1 (1978): 68.

61. *Ibid.*, Ch. 53, pp. 97–98.

Pae Myöngsik and Kim Hyönsu consider *kisaeng* to be less human than other women. They believe that "it is all right to rape an uncooperative *kisaeng*." They consider it "wrong for a woman from a respectable family to have illicit relations with a man, but a *kisaeng* was by definition an object available for any man to amuse himself with. Chastity applied only to women of good background and not to *kisaeng*."⁶² Hyöngsik's friend, the journalist Sin Wusön, demonstrates the same double standard in his treatment of Yöngch'ae, whom he tries to seduce at first because she is "only a *kisaeng*," but whom he later praises as a virtuous woman once he realizes that she is the daughter of Hyöngsik's former teacher.

The old woman who sells Yöngch'ae to the man who eventually rapes her perceives Yöngch'ae mainly as a means of earning money.

If Yöngch'ae had entertained overnight guests over the past five years, with one hundred guests per year at a rate of five wön per guest, she would have had about five hundred guests and brought in at least 2,500 more wön. But the old woman had been weak enough to put up with Yöngch'ae's stubborn notions. Thinking about it made her so angry she could have kicked Yöngch'ae. She regretted having "vainly" fed and clothed Yöngch'ae all that time.

"But now that she has started having clients. . . ." The old woman had second thoughts about having sold Yöngch'ae to Kim Hyönsu for only a thousand wön. If she kept Yöngch'ae for two or three more years, she would be able to recoup her past expenses. "That would be the best thing to do."

She laughed again. If she sold Yöngch'ae to Kim Hyönsu as a concubine, she could charge at least two thousand wön. By now, he would probably not stop at ten thousand wön to have her. No, she would sell Yöngch'ae rather than keep her. If she kept Yöngch'ae for a long time, the girl might get diseased. It would be better to sell her for a lump sum of two thousand wön and thereby eliminate medical bills and possibly the cost of burying the corpse.

Kim Hyönsu would visit the next morning. She would settle the deal in those terms.⁶³

While Yöngch'ae contemplates suicide, the old woman can think only of how to best exploit the girl.

62. Ibid., Ch. 40, p. 76.

63. Ibid., Ch. 41, p. 79.

Hyöngsik perceives Yöngch'ae in terms of traditional obligation. He has remained unmarried in deference to her father's wish that he marry Yöngch'ae. Her father, Scholar Pak, had been a friend of Hyöngsik's father, and had virtually adopted Hyöngsik after the early death of his parents. Though no formal vows were exchanged, Pak had indicated his desire that Hyöngsik marry Yöngch'ae. The sight of Yöngch'ae reminds Hyöngsik of his duty to his former benefactor.

Hyöngsik associates Yöngch'ae with traditional morality, and envisions her as either a paragon of Confucian virtue or a harlot. He can see her only as an embodiment of traditional polarities of good and evil. When they meet in Seoul, Hyöngsik's main concern is whether or not Yöngch'ae has remained a virgin during the eight years they have been apart. He recalls with some affection the image of her innocence in childhood, but recoils from her present worldly appearance.

He looked carefully at her face and body again. He knew that a woman's face and body were altered after intimacy with a man. She seemed to be a virgin still, and yet not so.

Her neatly plucked brows and hairline and the smell of perfume from her body were decidedly un-virginal. He felt a sudden loathing for her. There was no telling to whom the girl had given herself already. Perhaps the very mouth with which she had told him her life story now had sucked the lips of all manner of filthy men and uttered seductive words to all kinds of dubious characters. What if her visit, and the sad story, and the tears and sedate manner were all a trick to try and seduce him, taking advantage of their earlier friendship of seven years before?

No, I do her an injustice, he thought. She remembered me enough to seek me out, and gladly told me about her life over the past few years just as if I were her own family. It is wrong of me to have such vicious thoughts about her. She would never have besmirched her body — not the daughter of a man as noble as Pak, not the pretty flowerlike girl I knew. She would have been as steadfast as the pine and bamboo in guarding her virginity.⁶⁴

The pine, with its perennial verdure, was a traditional image of constancy. The bamboo served as a metaphor for moral rectitude, with the even regularity of its joints.

64. Ibid., Ch. 10, p. 29.

Hyöngsik uses the same duality in his comparison of Sönhhyöng and Yöngch'ae. "Were they not as different as a heavenly fairy and a harlot?" he wonders. Sönhhyöng represents impeccable purity, versus Yöngch'ae's questionable virtue. Hyöngsik feels further drawn to Sönhhyöng, moreover, after Yöngch'ae is raped by Kim Hyönsu. He imagines himself choosing between the two girls, and leaning towards Sönhhyöng, only for Yöngch'ae to change into a vengeful, demonlike figure.

Her snow-white clothing was replaced by a torn, bloodstained skirt of some kind of silk, and her legs could be seen bloodstained through the rip in her skirt. Tears flowed from her eyes and her lip was bleeding. The flower in her hand disappeared and instead she grasped a handful of filthy dirt.

Hyöngsik shook his head and opened his eyes. Sönhhyöng still stood there dressed in white clothing holding out her hand to him. "Take my hand," she said smiling, and averted her head. Enchanted, Hyöngsik reached for her hand, only for Yöngch'ae's expression to undergo a ghastly transformation. She clenched her teeth together and bit her lip, spraying him with blood. Hyöngsik started in terror.⁶⁵

To Hyöngsik, Yöngch'ae and Sönhhyöng exist on the plain of symbol, embodying good and goodness corrupted.

Hyöngsik's image of Yöngch'ae as demon serves also as a manifestation of his guilt and anxiety. In his nightmarish visions of Yöngch'ae, Hyöngsik sees her as she looked the night he found her at Ch'öngnyangni after she had been raped. The memory haunts him, an apparition that arouses his pity, aversion, and fear. He laments her fate, yet is inwardly repelled. Stricken with guilt over his inability to love her, he imagines her as a vengeful demon seeking to keep him from Sönhhyöng. To Hyöngsik, she is the ghost that cries for vengeance — a familiar motif in traditional Chinese, Japanese, and Korean fiction. The old prostitute who sold Yöngch'ae to Kim Hyönsu somewhat similarly casts Yöngch'ae in the image of her own guilt; she dreams of drowning in the Taedong River as Yöngch'ae's wrathful spirit watches her, refusing to heed her cries for help. The image of a woman's ghost as embodiment of one's own guilt appeared also in Ozaki Kōyō's nineteenth-century novel *Konjiki yasha* (The Demon Gold) (1897). After deserting her former fiancé, Hazama Kanichi, to marry a rich man, Shigizawa Miya repents and pleads

65. Ibid., Ch. 45, p. 85.

with Kanichi to forgive her. He refuses, but inwardly regrets his own hardness of heart, and later dreams that Miya has committed suicide in a pond and is returning to drag him with her.

Sönhhyöng does not love Hyöngsik, but like Yöngch'ae, creates an image of him to which she devotes herself. At first she finds him physically unattractive and dislikes his personality. His face is "too long, with high cheekbones, somewhat hollow cheeks, eyes that slanted downwards at the corners, and three or four wrinkles across his forehead — marks left by years of poverty." His manners "bore the unmistakable stamp of penury" and he lacks poise. She disdains, moreover, his personal background and occupation as schoolteacher. Though she detects dignity and strength in his character, she does not love him for such features. Her father's intention to marry her to Hyöngsik thus disappoints and angers her, but she obeys out of a sense of filial duty. Unable to love Hyöngsik as he is, she tries to make a fictional man she can love.

She tried to pick out Hyöngsik's good points. She fixed his face in several places, raising the corners of his eyes, pushing in his cheekbones, making his hands smaller, shortening his long chin to make his face round, and fleshing out his cheeks and forehead where they needed it and dying them pink. With each correction, his face gradually became acceptable to her tastes.

Sometimes, though, the cheekbones she tried to push in jutted out again, and the cheeks she tried to puff out sank in further. The eyes either grew very narrow or expanded to become as large as cow's eyes. When that happened, Sönhhyöng would lose her temper and stamp out Hyöngsik's eyes with her feet, then sit still with her eyes closed. Then, as if still unsatisfied, she would start to make his face up all over again.

Once in a while, when his face turned out the way she wanted it to and she sat alone in admiration, the real Hyöngsik would come in with a happy expression on his face and do irrevocable damage to the face she had worked so hard to create.⁶⁶

Sönhhyöng tries to force herself to love an illusion.

The text also attributes "cruelty" or "heartlessness" to certain social institutions and morals. The traditional practice of early, arranged marriages, for example, allegedly trapped men and women in loveless marriages. Bride and groom were betrothed at an early age by parental mandate, and mostly for economic and social reasons. In

66. Ibid., Ch. 96, p. 164.

Mujŏng, Hyŏngsik's friends Kim Pyŏngguk and Sin Wusŏn suffer in marriages to women whom they do not love. "It is not because of a particular flaw in my wife," writes Pyŏngguk in a letter to Hyŏngsik, "nor is it out of any waywardness on my part. But recently I have come to feel an acute loneliness, one which my wife cannot assuage. What I seek is neither physical nor spiritual love alone, but a love which involves the entire self, combining the spiritual and physical."⁶⁷ Unsatisfied in his marriage, Pyŏngguk finds himself drawn to his sister's friend, Yŏngch'ae. Pyŏngguk's sister senses the growing attraction between the two and decides to leave for Tokyo, taking Yŏngch'ae with her. A man named Sin Wusŏn is also drawn to Yŏngch'ae, though he is married. He and his wife live as strangers.

His wife was ignorant. She knew only how to cook and sew and have babies. They had been married over ten years but he had never once sat down with her and had a friendly conversation, let alone told her his innermost thoughts and dreams. They were only together in bed. It was as if his wife existed only for his sake. He went to her bedroom like a widower driven by lust to a brothel.

Living in this manner, they had had a son and had come to call themselves "husband" and "wife." They had been together over ten years, but neither knew the other's thoughts, nor did they try to. It was truly amazing that such a relationship could exist.⁶⁸

Disillusioned with their marriages, Hyŏngsik's friends are eventually driven to women other than their spouses. Wusŏn tries to seek from *kisaeng* the pleasure he cannot derive from his relationship with his wife. He reasons that brothels and the institution of concubinage exist for the express purpose of compensating for the shortcomings of marriage. Like the men who rape Yŏngch'ae, he believes it virtually expedient for a man to have a concubine or sleep with *kisaeng*.

Yi had criticized traditional marriage customs and the practice of concubinage earlier in his short stories "The Sorrows of a Youth" (1917)⁶⁹ and "Mujŏng" (1910).⁷⁰ In "The Sorrows of a Youth," the girl Nansu is married off by her family to a rich man's son who turns out

67. Ibid., Ch. 97, p. 166.

68. Ibid., Ch. 110, p. 185.

69. Yi Kwangsu, "Sonyŏn ūi piaek" [Sorrows of a youth], *Ch'ŏngch'ŏn* June 1917, in *Collected Works* 8 (1978): 58-65. The story bears a title similar to that of a Japanese short story by Kunikida Doppo, entitled "Shōnen no kanashimi" [Sorrows of a youth], but shares little else in common with the story.

70. Yi Kwangsu, "Mujŏng," *Tae-han hŭnghakpo* [Journal of the Korean Society to Foster Learning] March-April 1910, in *Collected Works* 1: 561-65.

to be an ill-tempered imbecile several years her junior. The main character of "Mujŏng" kills herself after her husband, several years younger than she and to whom she was married when he was only a child, takes a concubine. She willingly kills also the unborn infant she has conceived, despairing over a shaman's prediction that the child will be a girl. Her sorrow over the prophecy is due both to her disappointment over not being able to provide her husband with an heir, and to her pity for a girl who may be condemned to a life like her own.

The novel *Mujŏng* also depicts the cruelty of a society that perpetuates the poverty of the poor, yet mercilessly punishes transgression of the law when destitution and the indifference of society leave no recourse but to resort to "lawlessness." Like the main character of Yi's earlier short story, "A Self-Sacrificing Man,"⁷¹ Yŏngch'ae's father establishes a private school based on a Western curriculum,⁷² and finances the school with his own money when the community spurns his appeals for support. The expenses eventually drive Pak to bankruptcy. One of his students then tries to rob a rich man to feed the scholar's poverty-stricken family, and stabs the man when he resists. He steals five hundred wŏn from the man's house and presents the sum to his horrified teacher, who promptly orders him to return the money. "Why have you done such a thing?" he admonishes the student. "Heaven feeds and clothes those who work hard!" The student is arrested on his way back to the rich man's house and jailed together with Pak and his sons. Two months later, Pak and his student are sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to a jail in P'yŏngyang, along with Pak's sons, who are sentenced to fifteen years each, and several other students who are sentenced to five to seven years in jail. Pak and his sons commit suicide by starvation later when they find that Yŏngch'ae has sold herself to a brothel to obtain money to help her father and brothers. Society rewards the efforts of

71. Yi Kwangsu, "Hönsinja" [A self-sacrificing man], *Sonyŏn*, August 1910, *Collected Works* 1: 565-68.

72. The character of Pak *chinsa* appears to have been partially based on Namsang Yi Sŭnghun (1864-1930). Yi Sŭnghun established the Osan School in Chŏngju County, North P'yŏngan Province, with the goal of educating Korean youth in modern learning, and instilling nationalist spirit. He was a member of An Ch'angho's underground nationalist organization, the Sinminhoe [New People's Association], and was exiled to Cheju Island in 1911 for his role in the organization. He was also arrested with numerous other nationalists in 1911 on charges of participation in an alleged plot to assassinate Japanese Resident-General Terauchi, and spent over four years in jail; he was later imprisoned again for three years for his participation in the Korean independence movement. Yi Kwangsu taught at the Osan School from 1910 to 1913. Cf. Kim To'ae, *Namsang Yi Sŭnghun*

the honest and sincere teacher with cynicism and the destruction of his family.

The criticism of social injustice may have been related to similar themes in Hugo's *Les Misérables* (to which work Yi alluded in his novel's title *Mujŏng*). Pak's diligence ends in poverty, and eventually in the crime that permanently exiles Pak and his sons from society. In *Les Misérables*, the main character Jean Valjean is sentenced to the galleys for having tried to steal a loaf of bread to feed his sister's starving family when his own diligent efforts at honest labor prove futile. The scene of Yŏngch'ae's visit to the P'yŏngyang jail, moreover, echoes that in which Cosette sees prisoners in a chain gang and expresses fear and disgust, never suspecting that her adoptive "father," Jean Valjean, had been amongst their ranks. Both Yŏngch'ae and Cosette recoil with horror from the spectacle of beastlike human beings, and cannot identify the prisoners with their fathers. Both works mourn the moment "in which society withdraws itself and gives up a thinking being forever."⁷³

Confucian morality is also depicted as a social force that inflicts suffering on the individual. Traditional morality compels Yŏngch'ae to attempt suicide for having failed to preserve her chastity. Injunctions of filial piety and of womanly chastity obligate her to remain faithful to a man whom she does not love and who does not love her. When she is raped, it is she who is guilty and not her rapists: the loss of her virginity amounts to unfaithfulness to her husband under traditional moral codes. She becomes guilty, moreover, of unfilial behavior, as well as of having been unchaste. Overwhelmed by the burden of shame placed upon her by traditional morality, she concludes that she has no further purpose in living.

The themes of individual and social cruelty converge in the image of Yŏngch'ae, the raped virgin. Yŏngch'ae represents the Korean nation, deserted by its people. Through the pervasive cruelty of their society, the Korean people have wounded and forsaken their nation. Allusion is made to the Biblical image of the disgraced woman as symbol of fallen Jerusalem and of the sinner's fall from

[Biography of Namgang Yi Sŭnghun] (Seoul: Mungyosa, 1951). Kim Yunsik has suggested that Pak *chinsa* in *Mujŏng* was also modeled in part on a man named Pak Ch'amnyŏng, a member of the Tonghak religious movement and a personal mentor to Yi Kwangsu after Yi was orphaned in 1903. Kim Yunsik, *Yi Kwangsu wa kŭ ū sidae* 1: 261.

73. Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, translated by Charles E. Wilbour (New York: The Modern Library, 1931), "Fantine: Book 6: Jean Valjean," p. 72.

grace with God, as portrayed in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. The day after Korea had been annexed to Japan on August 28, 1910, Yi had summoned a prayer group before dawn, and recited the Lamentations of Jeremiah aloud as all wept. "Only one who has known the sorrow of national ruin could write this work or comprehend it. Unfortunately, we had become a people who could understand the meaning of the Lamentations only too well."⁷⁴ He recalled the mournful event in the autobiographical essay "My Confessions," and cited several passages of the Lamentations as particularly relevant to Korea, including the following:

How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!
She has become like a widow
Who was once great among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces
Has become a forced laborer!
She weeps bitterly in the night,
And her tears are on her cheeks.
She has none to comfort her
Among all her lovers.

All her friends have dealt treacherously with her;
They have become her enemies. (1:1, 2)⁷⁵

The Biblical passage was echoed in the scene from *Mujŏng* in which Yŏngch'ae weeps through the night after having been raped by Kim Hyŏnsu. She has become "like a widow" because she has lost the virginity which she had saved for her intended groom, and also represents Korea "widowed" of nationhood. She has no friends except for the old proprietress who sold Yŏngch'ae as a concubine to Kim Hyŏnsu and encouraged him to take her by force. Abandoned by Hyŏngsik, Yŏngch'ae is also the nation forsaken by prophets who have seen "false and deceptive visions."⁷⁶ Further allusion to the text of the Lamentations appears in the scene in which Hyŏngsik walks along the city walls of P'yŏngyang and views the walls as an animate being.

74. Yi Kwangsu, "Na ū kobae" [My confessions] (Seoul: Ch'unch'usa, 1948), reprinted in *Collected Works* 7 (1978): 234.

75. Yi also translated these verses of the Lamentations in an essay on literary criticism published in the first five issues of the journal *Chosŏn mundan* (The Korean literary world) Oct. 1924–Feb. 1925. He quoted the verses in the context of a discussion of the role of inspiration in poetry, and described the Lamentations as one of the greatest of all literary works and a model for a "literature of the people" (*minjung munhak*). "Munhak kanghwa" [A discussion of literature], *Chosŏn mundan* Oct. 1924–Feb. 1925, in *Collected Works* 10 (1978): 387.

76. Lam. 2:14. Quoted in Yi Kwangsu, "Na ū kobae," *Collected Works* 7: 235.

The two walked southwards down a steep path at the base of the city walls. The low grasses stood slightly wilting in the strong sunshine, heads bent. Hyöngsik gazed at the crumbling walls and thought of the people, his ancestors, who had built those walls, and what spectacles the structure must have witnessed in the days when those ancestors had flourished. He wondered how many times the walls had been struck by bullets and cannonballs.

It seemed to him that the walls which stood perched atop the steep slopes would have feelings and tears like a human being. They seemed sorrowful, as if having much to say but no one to listen to them. . . .⁷⁷

The walls seem to suggest the dirge of the fallen city in the Lamentations: "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, / which the Lord inflicted / on the day of his fierce anger."⁷⁸ The Biblical origin of the allusions is suggested also in the chapter in which Wölhwa overhears the voice of the solitary prophet-poet, Hahm, singing from atop a stone wall overlooking the Taedong River. Hahm signifies the prophet lamenting the fate of his people. The allusions to the theme of the solitary prophet in *Mujöng* establish a Biblical intertext.

Allusions to a fallen city in *Mujöng* suggest a nationalist subtext. Yöngch'ae's suffering, moreover, represents the grief of the violated and forsaken woman, the despair of the fallen nation, and religious sorrow. Various faces of the misery of heartlessness are united in the allegorical image of the raped virgin.

Love and Compassion in *Mujöng*

The theme of heartlessness in *Mujöng* affirms an antithetical text of love. In the absence of love, the main characters Yöngch'ae, Hyöngsik, and Sönhöyöng are incomplete beings who await the "baptism of life."⁷⁹ The experience of love releases the individual from egoistic isolation. Sexual emotion initiates the emotional rebirth of Hyöngsik and Yöngch'ae as individuals. The text distinguishes,

77. Yi Kwangsu, "*Mujöng*," Ch. 63, *Collected Works* 1: 115.

78. Lam. 1:12. Quoted in Yi Kwangsu, "Na ti kobaek," p. 235.

79. Yi, *Mujöng*, *Collected Works* 1: 56.

however, between egoistic and selfless love. Erotic love awakens the self from the insensate state of *mujöng*, but involves selfish emotion. Selfless love for another human being, by contrast, enables the characters to attain full humanity and overcome their loneliness. Compassionate love in *Mujöng* helps the individual to realize the self and at the same time see beyond the self.

Sexual emotion is depicted as a positive, liberating force that frees Hyöngsik and Yöngch'ae from their emotional heartlessness.⁸⁰ Hyöngsik and Yöngch'ae experience sexual epiphanies, or moments of intense emotional and spiritual elation sparked by nascent eroticism. Yöngch'ae's physical attraction to Pyönguk's brother inspires in her a state of romantic elation. "She tried to force herself not to think of him but to no avail. When she lay in bed, the image of his large face appeared before her, and she could not fall asleep. . . . She used to consider it a great sin if a man's image so much as crossed her mind; she would pinch herself and try to block out the thought. Until now she had lived not as an individual human being but as an exemplar of some moral rule. Just as a silkworm spins its cocoon and crawls inside, Yöngch'ae had built herself a house of the anomalous virtue of chastity, and had made it her world."⁸¹ Yöngch'ae visualizes the face of Pyönguk's brother, although she has never been able to visualize Hyöngsik's face. Shorn of her cocoonlike identity, Yöngch'ae discovers her emotions. "For the first time, her heart coursed with the blood of the living, and she began to burn with a human emotion." She feels as though she had "been living in a narrow, dark cave, only to emerge into a world where the sun shone, breezes blew, flowers blossomed and birds sang."⁸²

Hyöngsik is similarly altered by sexual emotion. He has never been on familiar terms with any women other than his female relatives, let alone had sexual relations. He believes love to be "one of the most important and sacred of all workings of the spirit in human relations,"⁸³ and views physical union as a base form of love. The only

80. Evident in this theme is the influence of Japanese Naturalist works of fiction, which "often presented the sexual awakening of their protagonists" and criticized the "sacrifice of the sensual self in the service of an abstract ideal." Janet Walker, *The Japanese Novel of the Meiji Period and the Ideal of Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 100-102. Yi acknowledged the influence of Japanese naturalism on his early work, in "Tananban pansaeng üi tojöng" [Halfway through the path of an arduous life], *Chogwang* [Morning light] April-June 1936, in *Collected Works* 8: 446.

81. *Mujöng*, chap. 94, *Collected Works* 1: 161.

82. *Ibid.*, 162.

83. *Ibid.*, Ch. 115: 192.

love he has known until then has been that between himself and his students, who are "parents, brother, sister, wife, friend and son" to him.⁸⁴ Hyöngsik fulfills his need to love and be loved through his students, just like the main characters of Yi's early short stories "Kim Kyöng" and "Wandering" (Panghwang).⁸⁵ He is thus hesitant and unsure in relations with the opposite sex, and bewildered when facing Sönhöyng during their English lessons. He tries to think of her as a younger sibling, suppressing any sexual feelings towards her.

Hyöngsik's chaste view of love is similar to sentiments of late nineteenth-century Japanese writers.⁸⁶ Kitamura Tökoku had written of the social and metaphysical significance of love between man and woman. In the essay "The World-Weary Poet and Woman," Tökoku emphasized the primacy of "chaste love," as opposed to carnal love. The essay "On Womanly Chastity" (1892) asserted that the "source of noble, lofty love lies in pure chastity. The ultimate path to love is attained when romantic love is arrived at from chaste love. However, a love which is impure from the start is fleshly love, as unstable and inconstant as an object tossed about on ocean waves. It is worthless and utterly lacking in beauty."⁸⁷

Sexual emotion increases Hyöngsik's awareness of self through the awakening of libidinal desire. Hyöngsik narrates his experiences to himself in sexual epiphanies. The "inner being" within him opens its eyes, and he perceives reality as a text that he has only now begun to understand; he wishes to "re-read all literature, life and the world"⁸⁸ in light of his new awareness.

When he closed his eyes, the memory of poems and novels he had read before came to him with a meaning different from that which he had derived when he first read them. There were stronger colors and fragrances and meanings to everything.

I have looked at life and literature without understanding their meaning, he thought. He drew out former memories and looked at them with new eyes. All of his memories took on a new aspect.

84. Ibid., Ch. 68: 121.

85. "Kim Kyöng," *Ch'öngch'ün* [Youth], June 1915, pp. 118-126, in *Collected Works* 1: 568-73; "Panghwang" [Wandering], *Ch'öngch'ün* March 1918, in *Collected Works* 8: 91.

86. For a brief discussion of the Japanese romantic concept of platonic love, see Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984).

87. "Shöjo no jünkeisu o ronzu" [A virgin's chastity], *Hakuhö, Jögaku Zasshi*, no. 329 (Oct. 8, 1892), reprinted in *Tökoku zenshü* [Collected works of Kitamura Tökoku], ed. Katsumoto Seichirö 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, Shöwa 25 [1950]): 26.

88. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujöng*, Ch. 28: 58.

He closed his eyes as if dazzled by the sight, and smiled. Then he looked at the books lined up on his desk. He realized that he had in fact not understood any of what he thought he had read with complete comprehension.

He wanted to re-read all literature, life and the world. Even if he had to read everything over from the first line on the first page, he believed every letter and every line would appear before his eyes with a new meaning, as if he had never read it before....

The inner being within Hyöngsik had at last opened its eyes. He could now understand the inner meaning of all phenomena with the eyes of this inner being. His inner being had only now been liberated.⁸⁹

In his altered state of consciousness, Hyöngsik perceives Sönhöyng as an "expression of some unknowable force emanating from the universe and mankind."⁹⁰ He senses an "intimate intercourse"⁹¹ between all beings of creation. The universe seems to hold "something ineffable that he had never known before."⁹² An immanent unity that otherwise eludes reason becomes apparent to him. Hyöngsik experiences a similar rapture in the presence of the young *kisaeng* Kyebyang, whom he meets in P'yöngyang when he goes there to try to prevent Yöngch'ae from committing suicide. Sitting in her room, he derives an "intoxically pleasurable sensation" from her voice and appearance. Her touch on his thigh as she steadies herself to light his cigarette makes his body "sting with the feeling one gets when touching an electric current." Though the encounter does not go beyond a brief flirtation, he believes that his soul and that of the young *kisaeng* have "shed all their manmade shells and joined in naked union."⁹³

Sexual love, however, is ultimately depicted as a selfish form of love. Although sexual feeling inspires in Hyöngsik a new awareness of reality, he remains nevertheless indifferent to Yöngch'ae's fate. His joy with Kyebyang leads him to abandon his search for

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid., p. 57.

91. Ibid., Ch. 26: 55.

92. Ibid., chap. 28: 58.

93. Ibid., chap. 59: 108.

Yŏngch'ae. Standing with Kyehyang at the grave of Yŏngch'ae's father and brothers, he feels no sorrow for the dead, only happiness for the living. He remains blindly forgetful of his role in Yŏngch'ae's decision to die, and thinks of her as an icon of the past.

He did not . . . feel sad looking at the graves. He was too happy to feel sad about anything he saw. He thought it better to rejoice over the living than mourn for the dead. He would not lament the bones that were all that was left of the decomposed body of his pitiful benefactor, but rather took joy in the flowers that had grown on the grave, fed by the decomposing flesh.

He thought of Yŏngch'ae, and imagined her body floating down the Taedong River. No sad thoughts occurred to him, however; there was only the boundless joy that he felt when he saw Kyehyang standing by his side.⁹⁴

In failing to bow before the graves and mourn for his deceased benefactor, as Confucian custom would require of him, Hyŏngsik in essence renounces his surrogate father and all that he associates with the father figure, that is, authority, his Confucian duties to Pak and Yŏngch'ae, the weight of the past. The graveside scene resembles a passage in Shimazaki Tōson's *Hakai* (The Broken Commandment) in which a young man standing before his father's grave renounces a promise that he had made to his father. His father had made him vow never to reveal that he is from the outcast *eta* class. Eventually, however, the son refuses to continue to conceal his social background. The renunciation frees him from the burden of shame and guilt born by the father and handed on to the son in the father's injunction. In pushing aside the memory of Yŏngch'ae as an apparition of the past, however, Hyŏngsik buries a living soul. Sensuality is depicted as liberating the individual from tradition but not from the individual's own selfishness.

Ideal romantic love in *Mujŏng* "involves the entire self, combining the body and soul."⁹⁵ The characters seek a love that combines sexual love and "spiritual union, the commingling of two souls": "Love that combined both the physical and the spiritual

94. *Ibid.*, chap. 64.

95. *Ibid.*, chap. 110: 185-86.

would have the breadth of the universe and the depth of the sea . . . yielding endless wonders like the miraculous transformations of a spring day."⁹⁶ Erotic emotion awakens in Hyŏngsik other emotions that arouse him from his state of "heartlessness." In the span of three days, he experiences a variety of intense emotion — grief over Yŏngch'ae's fate, rage towards the men who have raped Yŏngch'ae, sexual attraction to Sŏnhŭyŏng and Kyehyang, joy over his new insights into life, shame over his past deeds. Emotion changes his perceptions, and gives him awareness of his individuality. Whereas formerly he had been a "lifeless lump of clay,"⁹⁷ emotion gives him vitality. According to the text, however, his emotional rebirth is incomplete without the dimension of selfless, compassionate love. Yŏngch'ae's sexual awakening is similarly imperfect; she must deny her desire for Pyŏngguk because he is married, and overcome selfish emotion when she encounters Hyŏngsik on a train with his bride Sŏnhŭyŏng. Self-realization in *Mujŏng* becomes complete only with denial of the self.

The text portrayed selfless, compassionate love as a higher form of love than sexual love; altruistic love empowered the individual to transcend the isolation of *mujŏng*. The portrayal of compassion bore resonances with Christian, Buddhist, and Mencian ethics, and would become a recurrent theme in Yi's later works. Compassion was portrayed as a pure love, innate in sentient beings. Human nature possessed a natural capacity for compassion. This was not a learned or acquired facility; certain intelligent animals could have this capacity as well.⁹⁸ The ability to feel compassion for another living being was a part of original human nature; it was part of the "inner being" (*sok saram*) within each person. As in Yi's earlier short story "Mujŏng," man was not entirely motivated by biological impulses, but by the need for friendship and affection.

Hyŏngsik's old landlady is one of the most compassionate figures in the novel. She responds with warmth and love to others in need.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*, chap. 65: 170.

98. Cf. Yi's earlier story, "My Cow and Dog" (1916), in which animals demonstrate instinctual compassion. "Nae so wa kae," in *S'mun tokpon* [A reader in contemporary prose], ed. Ch'oe Namson (Seoul: Simmungwan, 1916), in Yi, *Collected Works* 8: 472-74.

The old woman presents an image of blind human instinct.

She would eat medicine when she got sick, and wear padded clothes in winter. She had never given thought to death. Perhaps she expected some new happiness to be lying in store for her the next day or the next year, for when the night was over and morning came, she would rise from her bed again and cook and do laundry.

Once, after she had done the laundry and sat pounding her arching back with one hand and smoking her pipe with the other, Hyöngsik saw her and said, "You seem to live to smoke!"

The old woman laughed at him. Hyöngsik did not know what her laugh meant. He could not tell whether it meant that she agreed with him or not. No one knew, not even the old woman herself.⁹⁹

The old woman's laugh sums up her answer to life: it is neither a supercilious laugh, nor one of mirth or joy—just an ambiguous response. She seems to know nothing but the basic needs of human life: food, shelter, clothing, reproduction. It is the old woman nevertheless who first opens Hyöngsik's eyes to his egoism. Hyöngsik has lost compassion through his scruples over etiquette and custom.

"It is your fault that Yöngch'ae is dead."

"Why?"

"Because she has been thinking of you for over ten years, but when she came to see you, you treated her so heartlessly."

"Heartlessly? In what way was I heartless?"

"What were you if not heartless? You could have kindly taken her hand in yours, and —"

"How could I take her hand?"

"Why not? The way I see it, Myöngch'ae —"

"Her name is Yöngch'ae, not Myöngch'ae."

"Yes. The way I see it, Yöngch'ae was in love with you. How could you be so unfeeling? And when she said she was leaving, you could have at least grabbed her or gone after her." The old woman's words were full of reproach.¹⁰⁰

Hyöngsik had pitied Yöngch'ae when she came to him, but had

99. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujöng*, Ch. 73, *Collected Works* 1: 129.

100. *Ibid.*, chap. 74: 132.

refused to express sympathy because her appearance suggested that she might be a prostitute. The old woman, on the other hand, had instinctively responded with compassion. When the old woman admonishes him later for his cruelty, Hyöngsik realizes with surprise that she has indeed been kinder than he, for all of his acquired learning and ideals.

A journey through the countryside prompts a spiritual awakening in Hyöngsik. His mind seems to unite with nature, and he feels an empathy with all living beings. It is not until he has given up the search for Yöngch'ae in P'yöngyang, and travels through the rural areas to Seoul that he comes to repent of his cruelty to Yöngch'ae. Finding himself alone on a train full of strangers, in the midst of the Hwanghae mountains, he experiences a spiritual epiphany that helps him realize his heartlessness.

While on the train from P'yöngyang to Seoul, the sight of the Hwanghae countryside outside his train window stimulates Hyöngsik's imagination, and leads him to experience a flash of insight into the nature of existence. Unable to sleep since his feelings have been aroused to a feverish pitch in P'yöngyang, Hyöngsik gazes at the landscape outside the window while on the train back to Seoul. "He heard the sound of the train, but then he heard also the sound of the earth rotating, stars colliding in the infinitely distant sky, and the flow of molecules, so infinitely small, in gaseous matter. He could hear the rustling sound of grasses and trees growing in the night in the mountains and fields, and the blood flowing through his body, and the whisper of his cells as they joyfully received his blood."¹⁰¹ Communion with nature is described in a lyricism that celebrated a cosmos of interdependent "stars," "molecules," and "cells."

The text in *Mujöng* invokes the romantic theme of the unity of mind and nature. The forms of the Hwanghae landscape shape the inner imagery of Hyöngsik's thoughts and emotions. For "just as the moon transformed the mountains and fields, imbuing them with a dreamlike appearance, similarly the moon shone on Hyöngsik's mind and suffused it with a dreamlike quality."¹⁰² The mountains of

101. Yi, *Mujöng*, chap. 65, *Collected Works* (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1962) 1: 170.

102. *Ibid.*, chap. 65: 117.

Hwanghae Province lie swathed in shadow, creating an inky monochrome in the dim light of the moon. Looking at the landscape, Hyöngsik feels that his "own mind was in a similar state. Sadness, grief, desire, happiness, love, hate—all spiritual functions seemed to gather and melt together in his mind until it was impossible to distinguish between them."¹⁰³ Hyöngsik discovers correspondences between mind and nature, for, as in the poetry of Wordsworth, nature's "powers and aspects shape for mankind... the views and aspirations of the soul..."¹⁰⁴ Yi's interest in the poetry of Wordsworth was apparent in his translations of "Solitary Reaper" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," and his discussion of Wordsworth's work in the essay "Munhak kanghwa" (A Discussion of Literature).¹⁰⁵

The novel *Mujöng* draws correlations between nature and the good "inner person" of human nature, and urban civilization and the corruption of man. Yöngch'ae grows up in innocence in a rural village, but becomes a *kisaeng* after going to the city of P'yöngyang to visit her father in jail. She is raped near the city of Seoul, and the rapist and his accomplice are men from Seoul. Her spiritual rebirth begins with her exodus from the city and continues during her seclusion in the countryside with Pyönguk's family. As the train travels through the countryside, bearing her away from the city of Seoul, she sees the green mountains bathed in summer sunlight and the yellow waves of millet and barley, and derives pleasure from a fragrant breeze that brushes against her cheek. The rural setting in which Yöngch'ae undergoes a spiritual convalescence suggests the benevolent influence of nature. The city separates the soul from nature. Pyönguk remarks that "even people's hearts start to stink in the city."¹⁰⁶ The city street on which Yöngch'ae lives is described in a passage in which Hyöngsik, led by a student who knows the area, goes to find out whether or not the renowned *kisaeng* named "Moon Fragrance" is actually Yöngch'ae.

Hyöngsik and Huigyöng turned onto a dark street lined with tearooms along the bank of a stream.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

104. William Wordsworth, "The Prelude: Book Seventh," lines 754-55, in David Perkins, ed., *English Romantic Writers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1967), p. 247.

105. Yi Kwangsu, "Munhak kanghwa" [A discussion of literature], *Chosön mundan* [The Korean literary world] Oct. 1924 - Feb. 1925, in *Collected Works* 10: 389-90.

106. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujöng*, Ch. 101, *Collected Works* 1: 172.

Men and women had spread hemp mats by the side of the stream, and sat talking and laughing. When Hyöngsik and Huigyöng came near, they stopped and watched the two in the darkness. Then, once the two were no longer in sight, they started talking and laughing again. One caught an occasional glimpse of the pomaded head of a girl peering from the back window of the servants' quarters of nearby houses.

... Hooded rickshaws lay outside the front gates of some of the houses, and the rickshaw men sat on the footrests of their rickshaws, talking in low voices. There were nameplates with lovely names like "Acacia Jade" and "Snow Plum," and from somewhere came the sound of the first line of a *sjö* poem being recited: "This heart, half sick with sorrow..." The sound of several men laughing followed soon afterwards.¹⁰⁷

People in the entertainment quarters are furtive, and wary of strangers; the rickshaws parked in front of tearooms and brothels during the day convey a sense of decadent idleness.

Environment is described in anthropomorphic metaphor. Hyöngsik perceives the crumbling city walls of P'yöngyang as a sentient being with "feelings and tears like a human being... sorrowful, as if having much to say but no one to listen."¹⁰⁸ A stream in the valley outside Hyöngsik's train window "flowed sluggishly, as if its meager waters had just survived a long recent drought and were reluctant to be on their way."¹⁰⁹ Even a streetcar rushes past on its tracks "staring ahead with its two eyes wide open."¹¹⁰ In a passage describing the part of the city where Sönhöng lives, inanimate objects are likened to living beings or described in terms associated with living beings:

The yellow soil of Pugak mountain glowed red in the slanting rays of the sun, and from an old grove of trees in Kyöngbok palace came the evening chatter of magpies. The clay tiles of the roofs which had been heated red-hot by the sun all day long exhaled warm breaths of air into the gentle breeze that blew from the Han River... Sunlight still capped Inwang mountain like a nun's hood. A bluish curtain fell over the thousands of houses in the city. One end of the curtain spread itself over Pugak mountain. Eventually even the nun's hood was dyed

107. Yi, *Mujöng*, Ch. 29: 60.

108. *Ibid.*, chap. 63: 115.

109. *Ibid.*, chap. 66: 118.

110. *Ibid.*, Ch. 29: 59.

blue. . . . Small lights in the city came to life, blinking like fireflies.¹¹¹

Roofs breathe palpably in the evening cool, dusk spins a web, and mountains are haloed with the pale hood of a Buddhist nun. The benign aspect of the urban setting is due to the presence of Sŏnhwŏng, to whom Hyŏngsik is betrothed that evening. Sŏnhwŏng imbues the city with a tranquil purity.

Hyŏngsik's romantic elation while contemplating the Hwanghae countryside eventually subsides into a calmer state at the sight of a solitary light in the darkness of a valley. The inanimate entity of the light is associated with a living being, and becomes a metaphor of loneliness. Hyŏngsik imagines a weary couple watching over their ailing son. He recalls his own parents' hardship. His family had been poor, and he himself had been a sickly child, in need of constant care. The memory of his own suffering moves Hyŏngsik to feel compassion for others. The solitary light seems a symbol, moreover, of his own loneliness: "The light shone all alone when the whole world lay in darkness, and a person sat beside that light, as the rest of the world slept. When he thought of all this, it seemed to Hyŏngsik that the plight of the light was none other than his own."¹¹² Hyŏngsik identifies with the imaginary parents keeping watch by the light. He has known poverty and sickness. The parents, moreover, are like the lonely prophet, waiting in the darkness for his or her people to awaken and recover. Hyŏngsik himself feels the burden of the prophet, the responsibility of enlightening his people, and sees his fate mirrored in the image of the solitary light. The text alludes to the New Testament metaphor, "You are the light of the world,"¹¹³ which refers to the duty of the faithful to help and care for others.

Sobered by the image, Hyŏngsik looks about the train at his fellow passengers with awakened compassion and interest. The other passengers doze in their seats while Hyŏngsik alone remains awake, unable to sleep. He notices a young laborer, dressed in soiled clothing, fast asleep from exhaustion, and takes his own blanket and puts it over the laborer. Formerly contemptuous of the uneducated, recent events have given him a new humility. He has for the first time in his life been in close contact with prostitutes, and found in them

111. *Ibid.*, chap. 78: 137.

112. *Ibid.*, chap. 66: 118.

113. Matt. 5:14.

the same emotions and compassions as those in other human beings; the proprietress who sold Yŏngch'ae had accompanied Hyŏngsik to P'yŏngyang to help search for Yŏngch'ae, and Hyŏngsik had been moved by the woman's genuine grief over Yŏngch'ae's suicide. At first he had looked at her sleeping face on the train with disgust, and muttered, "Filthy woman."¹¹⁴ He realizes upon further thought, however, that she cannot be blamed for her ignorance. Had he been in her situation, "he would have become the same as she. Likewise, had she received fifteen years of education as he had, she would have become like himself." With these thoughts, Hyŏngsik's "hatred and loathing for her gave way to pity."¹¹⁵ On the train back to Seoul, Hyŏngsik reacts to the vulnerable faces of the sleeping passengers with compassion rather than the scorn he had felt earlier.

He can also visualize the faces of others vividly now, in a multitude of expressions. He is no longer thinking of Yŏngch'ae as an abstract symbol of the past, but as a person. "Thoughts of Yŏngch'ae, Sŏnhwŏng, his old landlady, Superintendent Pae, Yi Hwiŏng, the old man he had seen outside Seven Star Gate, Pak's grave, and Kyeŏng flashed through his mind in no particular order. Hyŏngsik saw their faces with his eyes closed. Some laughed, some cried, some pouted as if angry, others glared, and some feigned indifference, with an expression as impassive as if carved on wood. Yŏngch'ae's image in particular stayed before him the longest, and appeared most frequently."¹¹⁶ He thinks, moreover, of the things Yŏngch'ae left with him—a suicide letter, the ring that Wŏlhwa gave her, and the knife she wore to use against herself if her chastity were threatened. The mementos revive his memory of her, as he realizes the extent of his heartlessness. "A shiver ran through him and he opened his eyes. Ah, have I not been wrong? he thought. Have I not been too cruel [muŏng]?"

Compassion alters even the woman who sells Yŏngch'ae's body. The sight of Yŏngch'ae's despair after the rape arouses shame and compassion in the old woman, and helps her to overcome her blindness to others and to her own inner nature. When Yŏngch'ae bites at her own lips, repulsed by the memory of the rapist, the old woman is startled by the violence of Yŏngch'ae's emotions. Blood

114. Yi Kwangsu, *Muŏng* Ch. 54, *Collected Works 1*: 99.

115. Yi, *Muŏng*: 99.

116. *Ibid.*, chap. 66: 119.

from Yŏngch'ae's lips drips onto the back of the old woman's hand when she puts her arms around Yŏngch'ae, and soaks the front of Yŏngch'ae's skirt and the cloth that the old woman applies to the girl's lips. The old woman is shocked to see that another person's blood has been shed because of her own wrongdoing. The drops of warm blood falling on her hand "stirred the pure soul within the old woman — a soul that had been asleep, buried in sin and evil. Her pure soul had opened its eyes, beheld the immaculate, crystalline purity of Yŏngch'ae's soul, and then had looked upon her own soul."¹¹⁷ Empathy with another awakens the individual to the inner being within others and within oneself as well.

Christian concepts of love appear in the portrayal of brotherly love and salvation. The image of the solitary light in the Hwanghae countryside merges with an image from the text of Matthew and an image from Hyŏngsik's memory, moving Hyŏngsik to compassion for the old prostitute beside him and the shabby passengers on the train. Hyŏngsik and Yŏngch'ae's spiritual rebirths parallel the dual plot of Tolstoy's Christian novel *Resurrection*. Christian influence is evident, moreover, in the depiction of erotic emotion and chastity: though emotionally liberated, Hyŏngsik and Yŏngch'ae aspire to chaste love.

The portrayal of compassionate love in *Mujŏng* also suggests Buddhist influence. The sexual epiphanies ironically affirm an ascetic denial of the flesh, and passages throughout the novel portray transcendence of the self. Compassionate love was, moreover, the defining trait of the Bodhisattva, or enlightened being who chose to remain in the chain of being in order to deliver others from rebirth. The very title of the novel *Mujŏng* bore Buddhist connotations in its allusion to the Buddhist concept of insentient being. Yi had studied Buddhism while a philosophy major at Waseda University in Tokyo, and later wrote several novels with Buddhist themes. His Buddhist works included "The death of Ich'adon" (*Ich'adon ūi sa*, 1935-36),¹¹⁸ "Love" (*Sarang*, 1939), "Master Wŏnhyo" (*Wŏnhyo taesa*, 1942),¹¹⁹ "Dream" (*Kkum*, 1939),¹²⁰ and "King Sejo" (*Sejo taewang*, 1940).¹²¹

117. *Ibid.*, chap. 52: 96.

118. Yi Kwangsu, "Ich'adon ūi sa" [The death of Ich'adon], *Chosŏn ilbo*, Sept. 30, 1935-April 12, 1936, in *Collected Works* 5: 15-158.

119. "Wŏnhyo taesa" [Master Wŏnhyo], *Maell sinbo*, March 1-Oct. 31, 1942, in *Collected Works* 5: 337-541.

120. "Kkum" [Dream], *Munjang* [Literature], July 1939, in *Collected Works* 5: 542-91.
121. Yi Kwangsu, "Sejo taewang" [King Sejo], in *Sinsŏn yŏksa sosŏl chŏnjip* [Newly selected anthology of historical fiction], vol. 5 (Seoul: Pangmun sogwan, 1940.5) reprinted in *Collected Works* (1978), vol. 4.

Virtually all of his works, however, express Buddhist values to some extent. Yi also wrote Buddhist poetry and prepared a Korean translation of the Lotus Sutra.¹²²

The emphasis in *Mujŏng* on the role of compassion and shame in restoring human nature to its original state of goodness seems also an allusion to Mencian philosophy. A passage in the *Mencius* on virtue states that "the sense of compassion is the beginning of humanity; the sense of shame is the beginning of righteousness; the sense of courtesy is the beginning of decorum; the sense of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom. Every man has within himself these four beginnings, just as he has four limbs. Since everyone has these four beginnings within him, the man who considers himself incapable of exercising them is destroying himself."¹²³ The depiction of self-realization through compassion is thus a parable of Mencian philosophy. The old woman's story, moreover, demonstrates the fundamental goodness of human nature—a basic premise of Mencian philosophy. She had acted evilly in the past not by nature but due to environmental influences obscuring her original goodness. Had Hyŏngsik been placed in her situation, "he would have become the same as she. Likewise, had she received fifteen years of education as he had, she would have become like himself."¹²⁴ If people were somehow given identical childhood circumstances and the same education and environmental conditions, then "in spite of differences in their genetic endowments, they would for the most part become similarly good people."¹²⁵

The egalitarian view of human nature presented in *Mujŏng* may also have been rooted in Tonghak¹²⁶ religio-philosophy, to which Yi had been exposed during his early youth. He had joined the Tonghak religious movement in 1903 at age eleven, and later recalled having been moved by the "spirit of equality" which he found in the Tonghak religion:

122. The manuscript was confiscated by police in July 1937 after Yi's arrest and imprisonment for his participation in the nationalist organization, the Suyang tonghoe [Self-cultivation association]. Yi and other members of the Suyang tonghoe had been seized on charges of political sedition. Yi was released six months later to be hospitalized for tuberculosis. Trials for the "Tonghoe incident" lasted over four years, concluding with a verdict of not guilty for all defendants.

123. "Mencius II A:6," William Theodore deBary, Wing-tsit Chan, Burton Watson, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition* 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960): 91.

124. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujŏng*, Ch. 34, *Collected Works* 1: 99.

125. *Ibid.*

People who practiced Eastern Learning (Tonghak) were all humble and kind. They would go out of their way to help even a child like myself, in order to live by Tonghak precepts. If I sought them out at night, they would let me sleep on the warmest part of the floor, and would treat me like an important guest. They would not use informal, condescending speech towards me, but would treat me like an adult. This arose from the Tonghak ethos of respecting people as being one with God. Genuine Tonghak members had so thoroughly practiced this ethos that it transcended habit, and virtually became instinct. The second thing I learned from Tonghak was equality. . . .

The third thing I learned [from Tonghak] was the spirit of democracy. The Tonghak precepts of "spreading virtue to all under heaven" and "salvation for all the masses" were meant to be carried out throughout the world. . . .¹²⁷

Kim Yunsik has noted that the character of Scholar Pak in *Mujŏng* appears to have been based on Tonghak leader Pak Ch'anmyŏng, for whom Yi Kwangsu worked when Yi was eleven years old,¹²⁸ and who became a role model for the orphaned boy. Tonghak influence is also discernible in the theme of brotherly love in *Mujŏng*, though as Kim Yŏngdok has pointed out, it is difficult to isolate elements of Tonghak influence on Yi from that of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity since Tonghak drew from all of these various bodies of thought.¹²⁹

Irony in *Mujŏng*

Irony may be a disparity between the apparent propositional content of a statement, and an unexpected, different meaning that is produced within a particular context. It may be a dislocation between self and how the self is interpreted by others, whether by other characters, the author, or the reader. Irony in traditional Korean fiction was directed primarily at characters or social forces and institutions depicted as "evil" and hostile to the interests of the

126. Tonghak, or "Eastern learning" was a popular religion founded in 1860 by Ch'oe Cheu (1824-64), and drew on elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity. The religion later reorganized under the name Ch'ŏndogyo, or "the heavenly way" in 1905.

127. Yi Kwangsu, *Na ūi kobaek* [My confessions], cited in Ku Inhwan, "Yi Kwangsu sasang ūi wŏnch'ŏn" [Sources of Yi Kwangsu's thought], in *Tongguk tae hakkyo pusŏl Han'guk munhak yŏn'guso, Yi Kwangsu yŏn'gu* [Yi Kwangsu research] 1: 537.

128. Kim Yunsik, *Yi Kwangsu wa kŭ ūi sidae* 1 (1978): 82.

129. Kim Yŏngdok, "Ch'unwŏn ūi kidŏkkyo immun kwa kŭ sasang kwa ūi kwangye yŏn'gu" [Ch'unwŏn's conversion to Christianity and its relation to his thought], in *Tongguk tae hakkyo pusŏl Han'guk munhak yŏn'guso, Yi Kwangsu yŏn'gu* 1: 161.

virtuous main characters. Unlike irony in earlier Korean fiction, however, irony in *Mujŏng* undermines principal characters as well as their adversaries. Passages of first person internal monologue are ultimately discredited by irony.

Hyŏngsik's bouts of self-recrimination and introspection are followed often by blind hypocrisy. His sexual anxiety becomes the subject of irony in the monologic passage in which Hyŏngsik worries about bad breath and how to behave with his young pupil, Sŏnhŏyŏng.

Should he put a desk between them, and teach sitting across from her? Then their breaths would meet. The front of her upswep hairdo would brush against his forehead from time to time. Their knees would touch lightly under the desk.

Hyŏngsik blushed and laughed at his thoughts. Alas, at that rate he might sin, if only in his thoughts, and what then? But of course, he would sit as far as possible from the desk and if her knees touched his, he would draw back in surprise. It would be very rude to a woman, however, to have bad breath, and though he had not had a cigarette since lunch, he covered his mouth with his hand and breathed on it, "just in case." He could test for odors when the breath reflected from the palm of his hand and into his nose.¹³⁰

The monologue exposes the incongruity between Hyŏngsik's outward pretensions of decorum, and his fantasies.

Irony reduces Hyŏngsik's moments of spiritual insight to the level of the "pseudo-epiphany." There is an ironic displacement between the reader and Hyŏngsik, for example, after his elated encounter with the young *kisaeng* Kyebyang. "He imagined Yŏngch'ae's body floating down the Taedong River. 'Ho sad thoughts occurred to him, however, only the boundless joy that he felt when he saw Kyebyang standing by his side. He was surprised at himself. Have I changed that much without realizing it, he wondered.'"¹³¹ Hyŏngsik forgets Yŏngch'ae, believing that he has "woken from a dream." He cannot restrain his happiness the next day when he returns to Seoul and receives a marriage offer from Sŏnhŏyŏng's family. The narrative observes with irony that "it occurred to him that Yŏngch'ae had died at an opportune moment for him."¹³² A tone of mock lyricism is used to describe his joy: "it was as when the snow melts all at once in the warm spring sun, and the mountains and fields suddenly become springlike. He could not lift his head. He was

130. Yi Kwangsu, *Mujŏng*, *Collected Works* 1: 15.

131. *Mujŏng*, Ch. 64 (1978), p. 116.

132. *Ibid.*, Ch. 76 (1978), p. 135.

too embarrassed to let the others see that he was happy." His happiness assumes ironic significance, coming so soon after Yŏngch'ae's death. There is irony also in the disparities between Yŏngch'ae's suffering and Hyŏngsik's disregard for her pain. The day after she has been raped, Yŏngch'ae sits in her room contemplating suicide, even as Hyŏngsik tutors Sŏnhŏng in English, oblivious of Yŏngch'ae's sorrow.

Yi's contemporary, novelist Kim Tongin (1900–51) criticized the chapters dealing with Hyŏngsik's tryst with a young *kisaeng* in P'yŏngyang, and his cruel abandonment of Yŏngch'ae as superfluous to the novel, and interpreted Hyŏngsik's treatment of Yŏngch'ae as being out of character. "Why doesn't [Hyŏngsik] look for Yŏngch'ae's body (if not determine her whereabouts)? In order to cover up Hyŏngsik's peculiar and contradictory behavior, the author talks about the sweat on the back of the *kisaeng* Kyehyang's blouse. . . . He should have . . . gone to the police station three or four times, and paced the banks of the Taedong River."¹³³ Kim failed to note the ironic significance of Hyŏngsik's cruel fickleness. Though Hyŏngsik believes himself "awakened from a dream," he remains blind to his cruelty to Yŏngch'ae. Irony subverts his sexual epiphanies.

Irony exposes the hypocrisy of Elder Kim and the shallowness of his Christian faith and knowledge of Western civilization. Elder Kim "was a disciple of Christ, who instructed his followers not to own so much as two sets of garments,"¹³⁴ nevertheless once he had seen the light of civilization, he too bought land, put savings in the bank, invested in stocks and a big house, and had dozens of servants at his beck and call.¹³⁵ The decor of the wealthy churchman's study is described with an ironic flourish. "A rug with a floral pattern of red peonies was spread on the floor, and framed paintings hung on the walls. Most of the paintings were of religious themes. The largest frame, hanging on the northern wall, held a portrait of Jesus praying in the garden at Gethsemane. Two feet to the right of the portrait was a slightly smaller painting of Jesus in the manger. On the western wall hung a portrait of the Elder himself."¹³⁶

The grotesque caricature of the intellectual vacuity and vanity of the school principal, Pae Myŏngsik, employs comic irony and invective. When Hyŏngsik asks him whether his educational

philosophy is at all influenced by Pestalozzi or Ellen Kay, Pae chortles, "Yes, I too have read the theories of Pustal and Ollinky. But those are all out-dated theories."¹³⁷ A geography and history major, Pae decides to alter the curriculum to suit his tastes: "He said that geography and history were crucial fields where all other fields converged, and he doubled the time scheduled for those subjects. Mathematics and natural history were not that important, he said, so he shortened their hours by a third."¹³⁸

Pae is known to his students by the nicknames "tigress," "fox," and "dog," referring to his "fierce ruthlessness," his williness, and, finally, the way he "would do anything for someone who was one level his superior, kowtowing, and wagging his tail and licking their heels like a dog upon seeing the master that has fed it for so long."¹³⁹ The students' invention of bestial sobriquets for the principal brings to mind the nicknames assigned by Natsume Sōseki's Botchan to the motley assortment of characters on the faculty of the provincial elementary school where he teaches, that is, art teacher Red Shirt, drawing instructor Clown, head math teacher Porcupine, principal Badger, and English teacher Green Pumpkin.¹⁴⁰ School superintendent Pae's infatuation with the *kisaeng* Wŏlhyang (Yŏngch'ae's *kisaeng* name), moreover, and his attempts to obtain her as his mistress correspond to Red Shirt's dalliance with geisha at the hot springs and his schemes to win another man's fiancée for himself. Irony is used, moreover, in a passage in which Pae lectures feverishly to a diminishing audience of teachers. After his appointment to the post of academic superintendent, Pae has formulated two hundred new rules that he forces the faculty to accept.

One day he gathered all the faculty to a staff meeting and read each of the provisions of the new regulations aloud, explaining the spirit behind the new regulations.

The meeting started at one o'clock, but was still not over by the time it was past four o'clock. Pae's forehead and nose were sweating and his voice hoarse. The teachers' rear ends were so sore and their backs in such pain that they all kept shifting in their seats. Some teachers would lower their heads and snore, only to have their sound sleep broken by a loud expostulation from Pae. Some teachers would go to the bathroom, swinging the door shut behind them, never to be seen again.

137. Ibid., Ch. 20, 45.

138. Ibid., p. 44.

139. Yi, *Mujŏng*, Ch. 21, pp. 46-47.

140. Natsume Sōseki, *Botchan*, trans. Alan Turney (London: P. Owen, 1973).

133. Kim Tongin, "Ch'unwŏn yŏn'gu" [Studies on Ch'unwŏn Yi Kwangsu], in *Kim Tongin munhak chŏn'ilp* [Collected works of Kim Tongin] 12 (Seoul: Taejung sŏgwan, 1983): 372.

134. [These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, "Take] no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food." Matt. 10:10.

135. Yi, *Mujŏng*, Ch. 2 (1978), p. 16.

136. Ibid., Ch. 79, 138.

Hyŏngsik protested the excessive number of provisions in the new regulations. "Those aren't school regulations: they're laws for an entire nation."

The five or six teachers who still remained (after the others had gone to the bathroom) expressed agreement with Hyŏngsik's criticism. The regulations were nevertheless finalized, through Pae's authority.¹⁴¹

Irony reveals the selfishness of Pae's policies as a school administrator.

The novel *Mujŏng* set a precedent in Korean literature in the use of an irony that was subversive of the main characters themselves, rather than merely critical of characters antagonistic to the main characters. Irony distanced reader and main character. Narrative included, moreover, not only conflict between individual and society, but contradictions within the individual as well. The cruelty that formed the theme of *Mujŏng* originated within the individual.

Language in the Early Writings of Yi Kwangsu

Yi's writing went through various stages of stylistic development in the years between 1910, the year of his earliest extant work, and 1917, when he wrote his first novel, *Mujŏng*. His stylistic experimentation during this period led to a vernacular style characterized by the relative simplicity of sentence structure and brevity of sentences, certain verbal affixes, adoption of a neutral politeness level, and vernacular diction.

Sentences in early short stories by Yi grew increasingly simple and terse, culminating in the style he developed for *Mujŏng*. The relatively terse sentences in *Mujŏng* marked a departure from the lengthier, more elaborate sentence structure of earlier fiction; traditional narrative and early twentieth-century Korean novels were written in convoluted sentences consisting of chains of conjoined clauses. Yi's literary style represented an attempt to develop a literary style that more closely approximated modern vernacular.

Another component of Yi's style was the eventual elimination of the *-tŏ-ra* style characteristic of traditional narrative.¹⁴² The affix *-ra* indicated that a given event or state had been witnessed or

¹⁴¹ *Ang*, Ch. 20, p. 45.

¹⁴² (in) Namgil of the University of Southern California describes the *-tŏ-ra* style as "evidential," in his work on tense and modality in Korean. Cf. "orean," paper presented at a meeting of the Association of . . . 1991.

experienced personally by the speaker. It has been described as cutting across mood and tense since it refers to the past and also the speaker's perceptions.¹⁴³ Its aspectual properties, if any, are not entirely clear, but there seems to be a general consensus that the *-tŏ-ra* ending as a whole conveys a sense of imperfectiveness.¹⁴⁴ The *-tŏ-ra* style became a literary convention of vernacular oral and literary narrative. Paradoxically, though it claimed for narrative the compelling authenticity of an "eyewitness account," as a literary convention the retrospective had come to signal to the reader the fictional nature of the events narrated. It has been observed that the *-tŏ-ra* style created the impression that events took place in a mythic, distant past.¹⁴⁵ In the writings of Yi Kwangsu, the *-tŏ-ra* style would eventually be abandoned in favor of a style perceived to be more representative of modern Korean language. This would be consistent with the early twentieth-century Korean writer's goal of verisimilitude, that is, the effort to create a mimetic semblance of reality. The use of contemporary vernacular would contribute to the "credibility" of a literary representation of reality.

Yi experimented, moreover, with various politeness styles in an attempt to determine a level appropriate to modern fiction. He tried writing in the somewhat pompous, literary *ha-no-ra* style,¹⁴⁶ the archaic *ha-na-i-ra* style,¹⁴⁷ and the epistolary *ha-o* style.¹⁴⁸ Yi eventually chose the relatively neutral *hae-ra* style, which conveyed a level of politeness slightly more deferential and more formal than the informal *hae-yo* style, and less so than the *ha-o* and *hap-si-o* styles. The inflectional style evident in *Mujŏng* set a stylistic model adopted in subsequent Korean prose. Also evident in Yi's early experimental works is the gradual shift from the *kukhanmun* style combining

143. Cf. Sohn Ho-min's discussion in "Retrospection in Korean," *Language Research* 11, no. 1: 87-103.

144. Sohn Ho-min attributes this imperfective quality not to *-tŏ* itself but to a zero filler. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 97. Hŏ Ung agrees with this hypothesis. For Hŏ's historical discussion of the affix, see *Kugŏ ttae maegimbŏp ūl p'yŏnch'ŏnna* [A history of changes in Korean tense] (Seoul: Sae munhwasa, 1987).

145. Kim U-ch'ang, "The [sic] Narrative Tense in the Korean Novel: A Speculative Observation," in *Korean Studies* 5 (1981): 79-91. Kim does not, however, note the modal property of *-tŏ*.

146. Cf. "Ōkchung hogŏl" [The imprisoned hero], *Taehan hŭnghakbo*, January 1910, in *Yi, Collected Works* 1: 573-75.

147. "Sanghaesŏ" [From Shanghai], *Ch'ŏngch'un* [Youth] Dec. 1, 1914-Jan. 1, 1915, in *Collected Works* 9: 130-34; "Taegu esŏ" [From Taegu], *Maell sinbo* [Korea Daily News] Sept. 11-23, 1916, in *ibid.*, 9: 134-37. "Haesnmwi rosŏ" [From Vladivostok], *Ch'ŏngch'un*, March 1, 1915, *ibid.*: 137-39.

148. E.g., in "Hŏnsinja" [A self-sacrificing man], *Saŏyŏn* August 1910, in *Collected Works* 1: 565-68; "Taegu esŏ" [From Taegu], *Maell sinbo*, Sept. 22-23, 1916, in *Collected Works* 9: 134-37; "Nongch'on kyebal" [Agrarian development], Nov. 26, 1916-Feb. 18, 1917 *Maell sinbo*, in *ibid.* 10: 62-97.

literary Chinese and Korean, to a vernacular style written in pure *han'gŭl*. Yi himself considered the novel *Mujŏng* (1917) to be the first work he wrote in pure *han'gŭl* in a vernacular style.¹⁴⁹ To the extent that it represented contemporary vernacular speech, Yi's style was more a reflection of developments in the Korean language than a result of his own personal innovations *per se*. Nevertheless, Yi's writings are the earliest texts of Korean fiction that evince a vernacular style modern in diction, sentence structure, and verbal affixes.

The problem of politeness level and honorifics is a significant aspect of literary style in the agglutinative languages of Japanese and Korean. Korean uses affixes after words to indicate grammatical function and derivation.¹⁵⁰ Among other things, the speaker's relationship to the hearer, and the relationship between speaker and a particular referent, and between listener and that referent are encoded in certain vocabulary and verbal affixes. Grammarians differ as to the precise classifications of the various honorific levels in Korean, but generally speaking the *-n-ta*, or *-hae-ra* style characteristic of modern prose has come to be classified as a style less deferential to the listener than the more polite, honorific *hap-si-o*, *ha-o* and *ha-ge* styles¹⁵¹ but more polite and deferential than the informal *hae* style. Yi experimented with various levels of honorifics before adopting the *hae-ra* style in his fiction writing.

The informal, conversational tone of the first-person narrative in "A Self-Sacrificing Man" (*Hŏnsinja*) (1910) constituted an unusual stylistic feature of this particular story. Told from the perspective of a narrative persona who "knows" the main character, the story depicted a businessman who devotes his wealth to education; the novel *Mujŏng* would portray a similar character named Scholar Pak (Yŏngch'ae's father). Written in *kukhanmun*, that is, the Korean alphabet and Chinese characters, the text used the *ha-o* style, a conversational and epistolary style; of the several grades of politeness in Korean conveyed by certain inflections, the *ha-o* style of verb endings is a polite style of speech more formal than the *hae-ra* style, but a degree less polite than the formal *hap-si-o* style.¹⁵² Writing in the *ha-o* style tacitly established the relationship of narrator to reader

149. "Chakcha rosŏ pon munhak ūi simnyŏn" [The past decade in Korean literature: a writer's view], *Pŏl kŏn gŏn* [A different world] January 1930, *Collected Works* 10: 583.

150. Yuen Ren Chao, *Language and Symbolic Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 88.

151. The styles have been named after the imperative form of the verb *ha-la* in various levels of politeness.

152. Nowadays, the *ha-o* style is used mainly among women, and bears connotations of familiarity. Sŏ Chŏngsu, *Chondaebŏp ūi yŏn'gu* [Research on Korean honorifics] (Seoul:

as that of a speaker addressing one who is either his junior or his peer, with polite deference.

Ch'oe Namsŏn had also experimented in narrative tone, using verb endings in the *ha-o* style instead of the *hae-ra* style of traditional vernacular fiction. Nonfiction articles in *Sonyŏn* had, for the most part, been written in the plain *hae-ra* style, but the *ha-o* style had been used in editorials and articles on science. Yi Kwangsu assisted Ch'oe in writing and editing *Sonyŏn* magazine, and his remarks elsewhere on the various levels of politeness offer insight into early twentieth-century perceptions of the various styles. In "Models for Letter Writing,"¹⁵³ Yi described the *ha-so* style (that is, the *ha-o* style, using the *-so* variant after verb stems ending in a consonant)¹⁵⁴ as one that could be used in written correspondence "between friends and to distant relatives who are one's inferior, and in writing to those with whom one is in a position to use the *ha-ge* style in conversation."¹⁵⁵ According to Yi, "one uses the *ha-ge* and *hae-ra* styles [in written correspondence] with relatives who are one's inferiors, or between teacher and pupil."¹⁵⁶ In spite of Ch'oe Namsŏn's experimentation with the style in *Sonyŏn* magazine, however, the *ha-o* style was rarely used in fiction, though it found wide application in the grammatical examples given in early modern grammar books, and in the expository text of Korean textbooks during the Japanese occupation period.¹⁵⁷ The use of the *ha-o* style in the story might also be

Hansin munhwasa, 1985), p. 52. It has nevertheless been classified as a formal honorific a notch less formal than the *hap-si-o* style, which is the most formal honorific style; "formal" refers to the use of the style in situations where distinctions in social status must be observed and where the speaker and person addressed are not particularly intimate (*ibid.*, p. 40). *Ha-o* is less formal than the *hap-si-o* style, but more formal than the *hae-ra* style, which Sŏ classifies as the "informal honorific style." *Ibid.*, p. 52. Three speaker-listener relations in which the *ha-o* style might be used include: that in which one addresses someone who is one's superior, when the gap between the speaker and the person addressed is not that great; addressing someone who is one's inferior, when the gap between the speaker and the person addressed is not that great; and addressing an unfamiliar younger person when the speaker is an elderly person (*ibid.*, p. 55).

153. *Ch'unwŏn sŏgan munbŏm* [Ch'unwŏn's models for letter writing] (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1939), in *Collected Works* 9: 196-327.

154. In "Hŏnsinja," the narrative persona uses the *-so* affix in indicative statements after verb stems ending in a consonant, instead of the *-u-o* ending that, strictly speaking, is the form that should follow a verb stem ending in a consonant in a *ha-o* style indicative sentence. Ko Yŏnggŭn has noted that it was more common in early modern texts to use the *-so* variant than the *-u-o* when using the *ha-o* style in a declarative sentence. Ko Yŏnggŭn, "Hyŏndae kugŭ ūi chonggyŏl ŏmi e taehan kugŭjŏk yŏn'gu" [Linguistic research on modern Korean final affixes], *Ŏhak yŏn'gu* [Linguistics research] 10, no. 1 (1974): 124.

155. *Ch'unwŏn sŏgan munbŏm* [Ch'unwŏn's models for letter writing] (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1939), in *Collected Works* 9: 212.

156. *Ibid.*

157. Ko Yŏnggŭn, "Hyŏndae kugŭ ūi munch'e pŏp a taehan yŏn'gu: sŏbŏp ch'egye" [Studies in modern Korean literary style: modality], *Kugŭhak yŏn'gu* [Studies in Korean Linguistics] 12, no. 1 (1976): 20.

interpreted as corresponding to its other application in early modern Korea: that is, in advertisements and public speech, in which the speaker addressed a general audience.

With the novel *Mujŏng*, Yi's style had evolved from that of "The Young Sacrifice" (1910) and "Mujŏng" (1910), using the *-tŏ-ra* style and the expansive sentence structure typical of traditional fiction, to the modern vernacular sentential style that Yi adopted in all of his subsequent fiction.

CONCLUSION

The early works of Yi Kwangsu contributed significantly to the development of Korean prose style, and introduced a new thematic and psychological complexity to Korean literature. While early twentieth-century Korean literature often appropriated features of traditional narrative, Yi's texts diverged from the narrative canon. Irony distanced the reader from the hero/heroine. Introspection and internal conflict replaced the traditional paradigm of dramatic conflict between virtuous main characters and hostile external forces. The author's literary style differed from earlier prose, moreover, in diction, sentence structure, and verb forms. Yi's style evolved from an archaic Sino-Korean style of diction to the vernacular style in *Mujŏng*. Yi also chose to write in the relatively brief sentences of modern vernacular Korean rather than the sentences of earlier narrative; traditional sentences had usually consisted of lengthy chains of conjoined clauses. The plain, nondeferential, neutral politeness level adopted in Yi's literature is still in use in modern Korean prose.

The novel *Mujŏng* depicted spiritual growth as the experience of love, and depicted love as a spectrum of emotions differing in degree of "selfish" and selfless emotion. Yŏngch'ae renounces Confucian sexual norms, and discovers her individuality through the experience of sexual desire. Her assertion of self through libidinal desire changes her because she has effaced herself for so long under repressive Confucian belief. Erotic emotion similarly frees Hyŏngsik from the prison of *mujŏng* (or "heartlessness"). He emerges from sexual epiphany with a new sense of self that alters his perception of the

world. Sexual love was nevertheless portrayed as an egoistic and limited form of love, and characters aspire ultimately towards loss or momentary loss of self. Irony, moreover, subverted the egoism and hypocrisy of the main characters.

Mujŏng was written in the Korean alphabet, in a modern, demotic style. Modality and honorifics were significant for the ways in which they grammatically encoded relations between author, reader, and referent. Yi sought an honorific style that neither deferred nor condescended to the reader. Yi's style also eliminated the archaic *-tŏ-ra* narrative style, in which an oblique, experiential first-person narrative perspective was encoded in modal affixes such as *-tŏ*. Yi chose, moreover, to write in relatively terse sentences rather than in the lengthy chains of conjoined clauses typical of traditional and early modern narrative. These alterations, of course, simply reflected existing linguistic changes in spoken Korean and were not arbitrary changes effected by a single author. The decision to write novels in contemporary vernacular nevertheless required a conscious authorial initiative. Yi can be credited with having achieved a vernacular style in the full-length novel that set an example for subsequent prose literature.

Journal of Korean Studies 8 (1992): 81-137.