(En)Gendering a New Nation in Missionary Discourse:

An Analysis of W. Arthur Noble's *Ewa*

[In some places, "West" is capitalized, and in others, "west" is lower case. Need to choose whether to put it in lower or upper case, and make it consistent throughout.)

Abstract:

The article analyzes William Arthur Noble's novel, entitled *Ewa: A Tale of Korea* (1906) as an example of missionary discourse that reflects the complex dynamics of a contact zone where Koreans and American missionaries encountered each other with drastically different cultural assumptions and developed ongoing relations in response to that contact in theunder specific historical circumstances. It pays particular attention to Noble's narrative as a window to understanding his western subjectivity, which is being shaped and reshaped by the contact. Examining the authorial motives in employing a first-person narrative, the article shows how Noble engages in a complex discourse on civilization, race, gender, and nationhood that goes beyond the typical binary oppositional spectrum that locates the West as superior and the Other as inferior. It concludes that although Noble ultimately privileges Christianity as the foundation of a new Korea, his intimate knowledge of Korea offers him a platform from which he not only represents Koreans as he understands them but also recasts his own Wwestern culture and society through the mirror of Korean tradition.

~~(En)Gendering a New Nation in Missionary Discourse~~
~~An Analysis of W. Arthur Noble's *Ewa*~~

In 1906, ~~A~~an American Methodist missionary in Korea, William Arthur Noble[1], published a ~~fiction~~novel, entitled *Ewa: A Tale of Korea*~~, in 1906~~. In his preface, Noble states that his goal in writing the book ~~is~~ was to "represent Korean affairs from the standpoint of the Korean." More specifically, Noble intended~~s~~ "to show the great struggle of new Korea for a better life; to illustrate the type of manhood that is leading the people toward reform; awaken sympathy for a people who have become the victims of an unjust exploitation by a foreign power," referring largely to Japanese imperial forces. Noble claims that the characters and incidents in the story are "historical." Indeed, the main backdrop of the story is the chaotic situation in Korea during and after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the murder of Queen Min by the Japanese in 1895, the events leading up to the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and the ongoing reform movements led by the Korean enlightenment-oriented intellectuals. He explains that "for obvious reasons names of persons still living and names of some places connected with them have been changed," and "where it has been necessary to enlarge upon them, the traditions and spirit of the people have been faithfully followed." What he suggests is that he largely bases his story on actual people and facts he observed but ~~he~~ adds fictional elements to make the story more interesting.[2]

[1] William Arthur Noble was born in Springville, Pennsylvania in 1866 and was educated at the Wyoming Seminary and Drew Theological Seminary. He was appointed as a missionary to Korea by the Methodist Church in the United States in 1892 along with his wife, Mattie Noble. They retired in 1934.

[2] Noble (1906a~~)~~, ~~"~~Preface~~)~~.~~"~~ It is noteworthy that the picture of Ewa, the female protagonist, on the first page of the book is the picture of a *gisaeng* ("entertainer"). In the story Ewa is not a *gisaeng*. Furthermore,

As a way to contextualize Noble's publication at this particular historical moment, it is crucial to understand some of the major circumstances that guided and characterized the evangelical activities of American missionaries at the time.[3] Of many, there are two related factors. One was the increase in ~~ing~~ nationalist consciousness among Koreans in the face of Japanese colonial expansion, especially after the Sino-Japanese War.[4] Keenly aware of the danger of political involvement by missionaries in support of anti-Japanese Koreans, the mission board consistently adhered to an official policy of separation between religion and politics, while it made efforts to maintain friendly relations with ~~the~~ Japanese authorities to ensure the continuity of ~~the~~ evangelical work in Korea. Alarmed by ~~the~~ politicized Korean converts after the Sino-Japanese War, Robert Speer, the Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the US, warned in 1897 of a "danger that Christianity may be politicalized [politicized?]" in the midst of political turmoil in Korea. He proudly reported that missionaries "wish Christianity to be introduced and extended as a spiritual movement, and are striving, as far as they can, to discourage the political idea." The political engagement of Koreans drew much more attention by missionaries after Korea became a Protectorate of Japan in 1905. Missionaries were strongly advised by the mission board to stay clear of any political involvement with Koreans.[5] However, observing the suffering of Koreans ~~sufferings~~ in

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the hair-style of the woman in the photograph~~y~~ suggests she is married. However, according to the story, Ewa hardly has time to pose for a picture after she married because she was beaten to death by her master. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that the novel is a mix of historical and fictional stories.

[3] Wells (1990); Park (2003); Lee (1996); Oak (2002); Paik (1987).

[4] In his book, Andre Schmid explores the ways in which Korean nationalist thought was shaped and reshaped by enlightenment-oriented intellectuals and organizations that actively participated in producing particular discourse on Korea and other nations through print media at the turn of the twentieth century. See, Schmid, ~~Korea between Empires 1895-1919 (New York: Columbia University Press,~~ (2002).

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[5] Report on the Mission in Korea of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1897), 32-34. Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1905-1910.

this political chaos, some missionaries expressed their sympathy for Koreans in their private writings or inner-circle briefings.[6]

The other circumstance that is perhaps more important in affecting evangelical work was the explosive growth of Christianity between the 1890s and 1910. Various reasons for this growth have been suggested, ranging from Korean temperament to evangelical strategies. But one of the most often-cited reasons is a political factor. Timothy Lee, while cautioning against any sweeping assumptions about the motivations, acknowledges that "at least some of the Koreans who had joined the church were driven by political agendas," and "many—especially among the young, educated, and politically conscientious members of the *yangban*—had joined the Protestant Church believing it would offer Korea a means to wade out of its predicament."[7] Indeed, a number of prominent national leaders, such as Yun Chiho, Seo Jaepil, Yi Sangjae, and Yi Seungman, were profoundly influenced by Christianity and believed it would help Korea transform into a new modern nation.[8] Chung-Shin Park argues that the "association between the church and Korean anti-Japanese sentiment and activity—the primary cause of the rapid growth of Protestantism during the early colonial period—was established unintentionally, not by the church, but by colonized Koreans who joined the religion and

[6] Diary of Mattie Noble, 9 December 1905; L. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832–1910* (fourth ed. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, (1987), 352); Gim Kim Seung-tae, "Hanmal Ilje Chimnyakki Ilje wa Seonkyosa ui Gwangye e daehan Yeon'gu (1894–1910)," [A study of the relationship between Japanese imperial power and missionaries during the Japanese encroachment in the Late Joseon Dynasty] *Han'guk Gidokkyo wa Yeoksa* 6 (1997): , 88–91).

[7] Timothy Lee, "A Political Factor in the Rise of Protestantism in Korea: Protestantism and the 1919 March First Movement," *Church History* 69.1 (March (2000): , 126).

[8] Bak Chanseung, *Han'guk Gundae Jeongchi Sasangsa Yeon'gu* [A study of the history of modern political thought in Korea] (Seoul: Yeoksa Bipyeongsa, (1993), pp. 29–107); Kenneth Wells (, "Yun Ch'i-ho and the quest for national integrity: the formation of a Christian approach to Korean nationalism at the end of the Chosen Dynasty," *Korea Journal* 22.1 (1982): , 42–59).

colored it politically."[9] In this vein, regardless of the extent to which the political crisis motivated Koreans to join the church, there is no doubt that it significantly contributed to the unprecedented growth of Christian population.

From the perspective of the missionaries, this "crisis hour" in Korean politics as well as the Koreans' demands for churches and schools provided an exceptional opportunity to expand their evangelical work, although they were expected to comply with the general mission policy of a strict neutrality in political matters. As a way to recruit immediate reinforcements from the home mission board in the United States, some prominent missionaries wrote books, exemplified by Horace Underwood's *The Call of Korea* (1908), James Gale's *Korea in Transition* (1909), and Annie Baird's *Daybreak in Korea* (1909), in which they outlined why Korea had incomparable potential in becoming a fully Christian nation within a short period of time and why many more missionaries should be sent to Korea to cope with the needs of the Koreans.[10] It was within this political and evangelical context that Noble wrote and published *Ewa*.

To be sure, Noble conforms to some of the typical missionary discourse. That is, he ~~is~~ was driven by the imperative that Christianity is the ultimate foundation of true civilization. His discourse offers vivid descriptions of the "pagan" customs, "superstitious" belief systems, and oppressive gender and class relations of the Other, all of which are destined to be eliminated with the introduction of Christian ethics.[11]

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[9] ~~Chung Shin~~ Park~~,~~ (2003, 35).

[10] For more detailed analysis of the differences in missionary discourse, see ~~Hyaeweol~~ Choi~~,~~ (~~"Christian Modernity in Missionary Discourse from Korea, 1905-1910," *East Asian History* 29 (June~~ 2005~~,).~~ 39-68).

[11] A classic example of missionary discourse can be found in ~~Annie~~ Baird ~~'s *Daybreak in Korea: a tale of transformation in the far East* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company,~~ 1909). She employs a "transformed melodrama" plot, which Judith Walkowitz defines as a story line "complete with stereotyped characters, extreme states of being and danger, rapid action, and the vindication of virtue over vice." It is designed to "reinforce and valorize a Protestant-based morality," and was quite popular among Christian women in the United States as well as in the foreign mission field at the turn of the twentieth century. See

However, Noble's discourse in his ~~fiction~~novel, *Ewa*, significantly differs from other missionary books. The most unique aspect of his discourse is that he opts for a *literary* representation of Korea in a first-person narrative using the voice of a Korean man as the main vehicle for telling the story. He endeavors to represent a Korean perspective, especially the concerns of enlightenment-oriented male intellectuals about the helpless condition of Korea facing ~~the~~ imminent colonization by Japan. Given the policy of the mission board that strongly discouraged missionaries from engaging in any political matters, Noble's choice to represent Korea through the voice of a Korean can be seen as a strategic one because it enable~~s~~d him to engage in ~~a~~ political discourse concerning the precarious future of Korea. Deeply empathizing with ~~the patriotic~~ young patriotic Korean men, Noble attempts to represent the ways in which Koreans understoo~~an~~d their past and present and envisioned the future. He often conflates Korean desire and vision with his own understanding of and vision for Korea.

Noble's discourse also offers interesting insights into not only his desire as a missionary to spread the gospel but also the evolution of his ~~w~~Western subjectivity through ~~the~~ interaction with "heathen" cultures and the particular local history of the mission field.[12] His transcultural encounter results in an interesting pluralistic discourse

~~Judith~~ Walkowitz~~,~~ (~~*City of Dreadful Delight: narratives of sexual danger in late Victorian London* (London: Virago Press; first published by the University of Chicago Press,~~ 1992~~)~~, 91); ~~Alison M~~ Parker~~,~~ ~~"'Hearts Uplifted and Minds Refreshed': The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Production of Pure Culture in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of Women's History* 11.2~~ (1999~~,):~~ 135-158); ~~Hyaeweol~~ Choi (~~, "Missionary Zeal in a Transformed Melodrama: Gendered Evangelicalism in Korea," *The Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 7.1~~ (2001~~):~~, 7-39).

[12] Research studies show that colonial encounters significantly reshaped ~~w~~Western identity. Ann Stoler's work on Dutch settlers in the East Indies illuminates how discourse on bourgeois European selves in the nineteenth century was densely indebted to "a hierarchy of distinctions in perception and practice that conflated, substituted, and collapsed the categories of racial, class and sexual Others." That is, bourgeois European identity was being formed *in relation to* colonial encounters with the Other. In his examination of American-Japanese relations in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Joseph Henning investigates how Meiji Japan profoundly challenged and discredited what Americans held dearly and how it served as "a catalyst in the endeavor of some Americans to subvert Gilded-Age hierarchies that separated Caucasian

on civilizations, unleashing tensions and dynamic interplay between eastern and western or old and new worldviews. More interestingly, Noble's representation of and vision for Korea culminates in a Korean romance that he closely ties ~~with~~ to a series of national crises and the emergence of modern subjectivities. He invokes the image of a virtually-martyred female protagonist, Ewa, whose sacrifice gives birth to a generation of new men who are to carry out the duty of regaining Korea's sovereignty.

In this article, I analyze the ways in which Noble's narrative strategies in *Ewa* render a rich and complex discourse that exposes the dynamic contact zone in which such issues as politics, gender, race, class and transcultural interactions are fleshed out not in a typical binary oppositional way but in an unsettled and fluid way.[13] While not entirely free from the predominant ideology of the time that privileged W~~w~~estern Christianity, Noble weaves the delicate political issues of the time into the individual struggles of young Koreans in their response to ~~the~~ rapidly changing societal circumstances. In the end, his discourse engenders an image of a new Korea embodied by the female character, Ewa, who represents the doomed fate of Korea on one hand and ~~the~~ an indispensable vehicle for the birth of the new nation on the other.

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and Mongolian, Christian and heathen, civilized and barbarian." What these studies emphasize is the critical impact of transcultural encounters in identifying and differentiating western subjectivity through the Other. See ~~Ann~~ Stoler, ~~*Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press,~~ (1995), 1-18); ~~Joseph~~ Henning, ~~*Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American-Japanese Relations* (New York: New York University Press,~~ (2000), 4-5); ~~Bill~~ Ashcroft, ~~Gareth~~ Griffiths, and ~~Helen~~ Tiffin, ~~*Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge,~~ (2000), 219-220).

[13] Mary Louise Pratt defines the contact zone as "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict." The contacts between Koreans and American missionaries were not "colonial encounters" in the traditional understanding of the term, and this fact significantly contributed to the dynamic relations between Koreans and American missionaries. See ~~Mary Louise~~ Pratt, ~~*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge,~~ (1992), 6).

Speaking for and as Koreans

To tell a tale of Korea, Noble employs a first-person narrative, adopting the voice of a Korean man. He tries to represent the Korean sentiments, pride, and agony, which ~~that~~ are presumably spoken by Korean characters but are in reality by Noble himself. He acts as a surrogate to convey Korean perspectives, whose voices inevitably reflect his own observations and knowledge of Korea. The Korean perspectives, in return, serve as a mirror to reflect and recast the W~~w~~estern culture and society with which Noble is familiar. Throughout the story, he attempts to make unfamiliar things familiar and, conversely, familiar things unfamiliar. Note that there were abundant writings representing non-western people and societies in a pejorative fashion from a western-centered point of view. In contrast, there was a lack of counter-representations of the west by non-western people. Noble's first-person narrative as a Korean man is by no means the same as what Koreans might have written. Yet, his story offers an interesting example of the Korean voice representing the west but being screened by the western author.

In the story, there are three main characters. Sung-yo, the main narrator of the novel, is the son of a concubine ~~in~~ from the "great Kim clan of the North."[14] Groomed as a member of the *yangban* ("literary upper class"), he has been "discouraged from taking robust physical exercise" and has "developed the physical effeminacy which is supposed to be the mark of a gentleman."[15] Tong-sik, a senior friend of Sung-yo, is not from "a family of rank" but represents a character of enlightenment who has had the experience

[14] Noble (1906a~~*Ewa*~~, 11).
[15] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 19).

of studying in Japan.[16] His interest in nation-building with new moral standards, part of which is Christianity, significantly influences Sung-yo. Sung-yo's parents have arranged a marriage for him, but he finds out his bride-to-be is a "hunchback, short and ugly" without a "trace of intelligence." He eventually falls in love with Ewa (literally, "pear blossom"), the title character of the story. Ewa is the daughter of a respectable family, but has lost her parents as a result of the political corruption rampant at the time. She is sold as a slave to Mr. Yi, who later turns out to have been a conspirator who was responsible for destroying Ewa's father and her family.[17] Ewa has to go through an unspeakable ordeal by herself, but her discovery of Christianity and her encounter with Sung-yo empower her. In a significant way, the story is a melodramatic romance with a tragic ending in which Ewa faces death in order to protect Sung-yo, her husband, and hold onto her Christian faith.

Noble's narrative is ultimately channeled into an idealized image of a new nation with Christian spirituality, as all the main characters are inspired by and devoted to Christianity in the end. However, his strategy to adopt a first-person narrative in the voice of Koreans enables him to engage in an intimate and complex discourse on race, class, gender, and civilization. He makes a concerted effort ~~in avoiding~~to avoid the simple binary representations that project "the Other" as backward and stagnant. Instead, he

[16] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 42).

[17] There has been a series of debates about the history of the slavery system in Korea. For example, James Palais argues that "Korea was a bona fide slave society" for many centuries as far back as the tenth century, while other scholars pay close attention to the differences between the Korean *nobi* system and slaves in America and Europe. See more details, ~~James~~ Palais ~~, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyŏngwŏn and the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press,~~ (1996); ~~Yeoksa Hakhoe~~The Korean Historical Association ~~ed., *Nobi, Nongno, Noye* (Seoul: Iljogak,~~ (1998). Arthur Noble was aware of the fact that the reforms of 1894 in Korea abolished the slavery system. In Noble's story, Ewa's owner claims that Ewa is still his slave because she ~~had been~~ was purchased as such ~~before~~ prior to 1894. Noble further describes the transitional period when many slaves chose to stay on in their master's house, although they were given freedom under the law.

often challenges and reverses ~~such a~~this binary opposition, offering plenty of examples that show the readers that Korea is a civilization as sophisticated as and sometimes better than any in the West. In addition, he amply demonstrates instances where westerners are observed by "the Other" as "foreign devils" or "barbarous" people.

Noble's fluid narrative is certainly indebted to his privileged and multi-layered position as a western missionary in Korea who had significant exposure to local culture and intensive contact with people on a daily basis. The central setting of the novel is Pyeongyang, where Noble spent most of his missionary life and gained his intimate knowledge of the region.[18] In his novel he refers to many historical events and incidents related to the city, including the 1866 incident in which the American trading ship General Sherman "sailed all too brashly up the Taedong River to Pyeng-Yang [Pyeongyang], only to be burned to the water line by a mob of the local populace and soldiery, with all who were on board perishing."[19] An episode like this is strategically placed in the story to show Koreans' resistance to the foreign powers that pressured Korea to open its doors in late nineteenth century.

Pyeongyang was also arguably the most successful site for American evangelical work in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century.[20] Speaking of Koreans' devotion and sacrifice for their church, Noble chastises the exotic view of the Other as "decadent" by westerners. He once wrote in the missionary journal, *The Korea Mission Field*, ~~that~~ "The world lauds the American people for their readiness to give their money to help philanthropic causes. We boast of it as a mark of civilization. but I stand ready with this

[18] ~~Naehan Seongyosa Chongnam, 1884-1984 [A comprehensive bibliography of missionaries in Korea] (Seoul: Han'guk Gidokkyo Yeoksa Yeonguso,~~Kim and Bak (1994~~)~~, 399-400).

[19] Noble (1906a,~~*Ewa*,~~ 50); ~~Ki-baik~~ Lee ~~, *A New History of Korea* (Seoul: Ilchokak,~~(~~-~~1898~~4)~~,~~ 263).

[20] ~~Pak~~ Bak ~~Yonggyu, *Pyeongyang Daebuheung Undong* [Great Revival Movement in Pyeongyang] (Seoul: Saengmyeong ui Malssumsa,~~(~~-~~2000).

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and other factors to challenge any people, whether white, brown, yellow or black, to show a better record ~~–~~than the Korean."[21] His sharp critique is in line with a group of seasoned western sojourners at the time who contested western representations of the "differences in habits of life, of food, of standards, and of social customs" of the Other in order to produce "a feeling of disgust." They call for "good judgment and a deep sense of respect for that which has held any people together, namely, time honored customs."[22]

Parallel to his critique ~~on~~ of the one-sided evaluation of the Other, his close understanding of Korea affordeds~~s~~ him the ability to maintain a critical distance from the assumption of western civilization as superior.[23] As a way to express his critical views on the presumed superiority of western civilization, Noble relies on the voice of Korean characters who hold their own unique ethics and customs and observe westerners and their customs as "barbarous." For example,

> Strange rumors had reached us of these barbarians from the West, their curious customs and incomprehensible names. It was said that they were all large of stature and dressed in black, the conclusion being that if they dressed in black they must be very dirty; but of course one should not be surprised at that, for what could one expect of barbarians?[24]
>
> His appearance reminded one in a startling manner of our old ideas of the appearance of his Satanic Majesty. His light complexion with a red cast, caused by the heat of the room, and very light hair reminded his audience humorously of the imaginary figure of the devil often drawn on screens in many of our homes, and it was not surprising that the words, "~~F~~foreign devil," were whispered about the room.[25]

There is an interesting mix of a genuine curiosity and an ethno-centric portrayal of "the Other," who are westerners in this case. Representing the Korean perspective in a

[21] ~~W.A.~~ Noble~~,~~ ~~"Korean Decadence," *The Korea Mission Field* 2.9~~ (1906b~~):~~ 176).
[22] "Books on Korea," *The Korea Mission Field* 4.1 (1908): 13-16 (at page 14). See also "Globe Trotters," *The Korea Mission Field* 4.1 (1908): 10.
[23] Noble (1906a~~*Ewa*~~, 40-41).
[24] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 25-26).
[25] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 204).

humorous way, Noble maximizes his privileged position as an insider. Often times, Noble mentions westerners' rudeness, lack of understanding of Korean or Asian tradition, and "an air of superiority," which is actually ridiculed by Koreans, who do not say it in front of their western guests because it would be impolite to say so.[26] This narrative strategy of reversal of representations renders a shifting and fluid sense of civilizations without privileging one over the other. The West is gazed at, objectified, and evaluated by "the Other." Noble also emphasizes how Koreans feel about their own cultural heritage and value system and how they have as much pride in their traditions as westerners do in western civilization. For example, Sung-yo states, "We lack many things in our country, and we are poor—how very poor! Yet we have a great wealth of politeness. If consideration for the feelings of our fellows is a criterion of civilization, in comparing us with other nations, I wonder where the great Judge of the world would place my people."[27] In the voice of Tong-sik, it is suggested that the wealth of politeness Korea boasted "was in the early ages the arbiter of civilization and a blessing to the world."[28]

It is noticeable in this discourse on civilizations that there is a clear distinction between material advancement and moral, ethical, and spiritual advancement. It is acknowledged that the West might be ahead of other civilizations in material aspects but the East is as respectful as (if not better than) any civilizations in ethical aspects. This distinction seems to serve as a critique of the standardizing global capitalist approach and

[26] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 40-41).
[27] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 45).
[28] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 99).

the subsequent modern effects on people's lives. The frenzied lifestyle in pursuit of materialistic modernity is described by Sung-yo. He says:

> The scene inside the city [Pyeongyang] was all animation, not the wild rush that I have since observed in American and British concessions of the Chinese ports, but a dignified moderation of which the East has always been proud. I have pondered much over the contrasted peculiarities of the East and West, and I protest against the popular insinuation that our poverty is the result of our moderation. It seems to be childish to scream and rush after one's dollars; to be indifferent to the immaculate character of one's suit while one works; to contort the face; to laugh with abandon; to leap and run; to enjoy the hurly-burly of competition… Such things bewilder one and border on violence. We love self-repression, dignity of carriage, and calm demeanor. Reflection and moderation are the ideals of our sages, yet foreigners refer to us as childish. I think they mean by that the smallness of our ideas and our petty prejudices.[29]

Drawing a line between materiality, unlimited ambition and a fast-paced life on one hand and ethics, moderation, and self-repression on the other, Noble seems to express his dissatisfaction with the crass materialism brought by western commerce to Asia. Hinting at his deference to the Eastern ways vis-à-vis the Western, he challenges the prevailing faith in material wealth, which had become a marker of civilization and the requirement to be a powerful nation-state. His viewpoint largely echoes how missionaries at the time felt about the unlimited drive for material wealth while religious faith was declining.

Noble strategically spells out the tensions between material and spiritual advancement in order to locate Japan, the colonial power in Korea, in his discourse on civilizations. Noble's first-person narrative is deployed largely to show his empathy with Koreans, who were losing national sovereignty at the time due to Japanese colonial encroachment. However, he does not simply demonize Japan. Just as he freely crosses the boundaries between ~~the~~ east and the west, so does he portray~~s~~ Japan as a complex entity. The fantastic rise of Japan as an imperial power, which yet remained a "heathen" nation,

[29] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 50-51).

drew significant attention from western imperial powers. While acknowledging Japan's success in the military and commercial arenas, the western nations had profound reservations about Japan's moral and spiritual capacity. Arthur Judson Brown, Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, once assumed that the material progress of the west could be copied by non-western countries, which was exemplified by Japan; however, mental or spiritual advancement could not be accomplished without adopting Christian ethics because Christianity was the foundation of any true civilization.[30]

Through the voices of Sung-yo and Tong-sik, Noble presents the complex relation bof the Koreans with Japan. Again he does this not in a binary fashion but in a more fluid way. On one hand, Noble vividly portrays the Japanese colonial encroachments highlighted by the terrible effects of the Sino-Japanese War on Koreans and the distrust Koreans held about the Japanese. Sung-yo laments that "the country [Korea] was helpless in the hands of its old enemy, the Japanese. They had taken possession of the army and our national independence was threatened. While they introduced many reforms which seemed salutary, yet their insidious hand of greed seemed to be closing on the throat of our national life. Everywhere Japanese citizens clashed with Koreans, always to the confusion and rout of the latter."[31] Tong-sik further comments, "Think of that foreign island race [Japanese], whom we once despised, suddenly becoming powerful, daily treating us with contempt and insult, even while professing to be our friends, denying us the consideration due a foe."[32]

[30] Arthur Judson Brown, *Report on a Second Visit to China, Japan and Korea 1909* (New York: Board and the Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, (1909), 17 and 28). See also Joseph M. Henning, *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American Japanese Relations* (New York: New York University Press, (2000), 163).

[31] *Ewa*, Noble (1906a, 219).

[32] Noble (1906a, Ibid., 223).

On the other hand, the overall condemnation of ~~the~~ Japanese aggression is balanced with the more humane aspect of Japan, when the Japanese treated wounded Koreans and Chinese during the War. The most vivid voice advocating a Japanese model of modernity ~~is~~ came from Tong-sik. He had gone to Japan to study the Japanese system of government. He was thoroughly impressed with the friendly and open-minded attitude of the Japanese in showing and sharing their knowledge and experience. In this recollection of his positive experience in Japan, Tong-sik makes a distinction between those he met in Japan and those who came to Korea to exploit. It is this distinction that makes Noble's approach to Japan more ethnographic than ideological.[33]

However, what underlies this matter-of-fact, ~~kind of~~ balanced view is that Japan made impressive progress in modernizing ~~it~~ by emulating western models.[34] Therefore, despite the fallout of modernization, it is inevitable that any country will follow the footsteps of ~~the~~ Western capitalist countries in order to maintain national strength. In this context, Noble hints at the "secret of success of the Western nations." In the voice of Tong-sik, Noble writes that despite the disrespectable record of westerners who "are here, professedly, for friendly trade, they show a passion for our exploitation and treat us with contempt… their national ideal is sacrifice and their heroes have lived it. It is this fact that has made them free and powerful."[35] In this, Noble calls for "sacrifice" in the construction of a new nation.

[33] His wife, Mattie Noble, kept a diary in which she also makes a clear distinction between Christian Japanese and non-Christian Japanese, the former being nice people and the latter cruel.

[34] Andre Schmid calls this prevailing ideology ~~as~~ capitalist modernity, which was shared by not only Japanese colonial power but also Korean nationalist intellectuals. See Schmid (~~his book, *Korea between Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press,~~ 2002).

[35] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 223).

Sacrifice for the Nation

———The main background of the story is the Sino-Japanese War, which was a defining moment in the Japanese colonial expansion to Korea. At the center of these turbulent political situations are ordinary individuals who personally experience and observe the catastrophic incidents. The Pyeongyang area figures prominently in the story, as the city was a critical battleground during the Sino-Japanese War. Noble was ~~himself~~ in the city when the war ~~had~~ broke~~n~~ out.[36] Representing the ways in which the war and subsequent crises affected Korean people, Noble tries to capture the changing political dynamics on the Korean peninsula and the desperate search for direction by Koreans.[37] Within this context, he draws on the Koreans' sense of fear, crisis, and hope and unfolds his discourse on nationalism.

The burgeoning sense of nationalism among the main characters is developed through their reaction to the declining power of China—formerly supreme power of the region—and the rising power of Japan—formerly the despised subordinate. When the war broke out in 1894, a Korean man said, "no one believed that an army of the great Central Kingdom [China] could suffer defeat…-. The Chinese must be more than a match for the Japanese. China was a great kingdom, while Japan was a small country and

[36] Mattie Noble's Diary, July 23, 1894. Mattie Noble wrote that her family left the city on August 28, 1894 and went to Kobe on September 6, 1894. See her diary entry for September 11, 1894. When the Sino-Japanese War reached its peak and Pyeongyang became a critical battleground, missionaries in the city had to be evacuated. See also Ryu ~~Daeyeong, *Gaehwagi Joseon kwa Miguk Seongyosa* [American Missionaries in Joseon during the Enlightenment Era] (Seoul: Han'guk Gidokkyo Yeoksa Yeonguso, (2004), 86); Naehan Seongyosa Chongnam, 1884-1984 [A Comprehensive Bibliography of Missionaries in Korea] (Seoul: Han'guk Gidokkyo Yeoksa Yeonguso,~~Kim and Bak (1994~~)~~, 399).

[37] ~~Key Hiuk~~ Kim~~, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, (1980).~~

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always much despised."[38] This unflattering description of Japan by Koreans changed with the growing fear of ~~the~~ Japanese power. The murder of Queen Min described in the story is one of the symptoms of the Japanese revolt ~~in~~ against the traditional power dynamics in East Asia. Queen Min's ruthlessly violated body signaled~~s~~ the end of Korean purity, tradition, and sovereignty. And thus there emerges a mandate to save the nation.

The essence of the nationalist discourse Noble seems to proffer is self-sacrifice for the nation. Emphasis on sacrifice is not new to nationalist discourse. Indeed, self-sacrifice or repression constitutes a core value of nationalism.[39] According to this logic, the nation, in crisis in the face of losing national sovereignty, demands sacrifice from individuals for the larger and common goal of the nation. Noble echoes this archetypical nationalist discourse. He finds the origin of "self-sacrifice" in the West, and seems to suggest that Koreans should learn this spirit of self-sacrifice in order to regain their sovereignty.[40]

Recognizing the ruthless pursuit of material interest by westerners, Noble distinguishes ~~the~~ selfish individuals from national leaders of the West whose spirit is characterized by self-sacrifice for the nation. Tong-sik, who is consistently portrayed as a man of vision and self-sacrifice for the nation, tries to persuade Sung-yo to go beyond personal gratification and think of a principle that is good for the nation. Tong-sik further comments, ~~that~~ "Renunciation, Sung-yo, is a doctrine of the ancient masters. Do you not remember the Christians' meeting? Did not the Westerner urge renunciation? They have improved upon our philosophy of self-repression and command devotion to the good of

[38] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 151).
[39] Craig ~~Calhoun, "Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Diversity and Self-determination," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Oxford: Blackwell,~~(~~-~~1994~~)~~, 314).
[40] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 223).

others. The needs of the times show their teachings true."[41] Suggesting that the ideal of self-sacrifice is found not only in "a doctrine of the ancient masters" of the East but also in the Western and Christian tradition, Noble emphasizes a shared basis of morality beyond the boundaries of nations.

However, if Korea had such a similar tradition of self-sacrifice, why didn't Korea become free and powerful like western countries? Noble notes that Korean values and tradition are fundamentally past-oriented rather than present- or future-oriented. He takes ancestor worship as the foremost signifier of Korean culture, which is decidedly past-oriented.[42] In addition, the societal expectation of the younger generation to obey their parents, seniors, and higher classes results in an irrational, ~~conforming~~conformist, and stagnant attitude. One representative case in point is the custom of arranged marriage. Following Korean tradition, Sung-yo is to marry a woman chosen by his parents when he was very young. Later, he finds out his bride-to-be is far from his ideal. Yet, he feels obliged to follow his parents' decision. Opposing Sung-yo's conformist~~ng~~ attitude, Tong-sik offers a long statement about how obedience has damaged national strength and character. He says:

> Obedience is the first law of the household, and therein I think we are not behind the best civilized nations of the world…Western nations are fond of saying that it is this spirit that has been the curse of our country. We have lacked, they say, the virile conception of what is right and readiness to suffer for it, and a willingness to enter the hurly-burly necessary for the reformation of our tyrannical customs. Our nation, they inform us with callous frankness, has become a byword among

[41] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 222-223).
[42] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 11).

> the nations of the world because we lack the courage to fight down the wrongs inflicted upon us by unjust laws and official oppression.[43]

Obedience, especially to unjust laws and customs, is a hindrance to a more competitive civilization that can stand firm with autonomy. In making a new Korea, Tong-sik emphasizes "the courage to fight down the wrongs inflicted upon us by unjust laws and official oppression." He suggests that even parental authority can be challenged, if necessary. The courage to challenge what has been taken for granted in the name of custom or tradition is a central characteristic of "great men" for the nation. Tong-sik dares to ask Sung-yo to disobey his parents' order to marry a woman for whom he feels nothing at all. The reason why Tong-sik argues for disobedience is not only because of the predictable unhappiness of the marriage but also for the devastating impact of such a marriage on the future role of Sung-yo in the building of the new nation. He further states:

> These are times of great events, national changes are at hand, great men are demanded, men who are ready to sacrifice….they may do something for their country. We must have representatives of the most powerful and influential families to form the nucleus of a reform party….If you marry this woman you will be forced by the combined influences of these two patrician families along the same lines. Her father has promised a large property; your father has promised political aid, which he cannot give. You are the binding link between the two, and you will be in the vortex of an endless family intrigue....the law of custom will order your life and you will be the facsimile of any one of the hordes of our people that follow the routine taught them by oppressive laws, customs, and belief.[44]

The courage to challenge outmoded customs, such as arranged marriage, which is nothing more than a calculated union between two families, leads the story to the encounter between Sung-yo and Ewa, signaling a new relationship, and by extension, a new custom.

[43] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 24-25).
[44] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 97-98).

The spirit of self-sacrifice culminates in the life and persona of Ewa. She is portrayed as a virtual martyr for religious and national causes.[45] When she rejoins her beloved Sung-yo and marries him after a series of turbulent events, she attains personal happiness~~,~~ and ~~she~~ could be happy for the rest of her life. However, she intentionally and consciously plunges herself back into bondage as a slave. There are two reasons for this decision. One is that she is afraid that her master, Mr. Yi, might think Christians to be deceptive if she were to run away for her own personal interest. She does not want to give Christianity a bad reputation but wants to demonstrate Christian faith and honesty by sacrificing her personal happiness. The other reason is to preserve Sung-yo's status. Since she is a slave, marrying her would automatically make~~s~~ Sung-yo a slave. She wants to prevent this from happening. Furthermore, she feels she would be a burden to him. She feels Sung-yo should live for a greater cause—national liberation.[46]

There is a significant similarity between the elements of Ewa's character—pure, enduring, self-sacrificing—and that of women in nationalist discourse in general. As Partha Chatterjee argues, women's bodies and their sphere are represented in nationalist discourse as the pure, sanctified, and unchanging site for national character in the midst of colonial oppression. The lost sovereignty in political and economic realms is compensated for by the stronghold of pure indigenous tradition. Women and their domestic sphere are imagined as the bearer of cultural and spiritual authenticity for the

[45] In his discussion of nationalism, Calhoun points out that "nationalisms have been overwhelmingly male ideologies~~,~~…in the way that national strength is defined so often as international potency and military power; men are treated as potential martyrs while women are mainly their mothers." From this general trait, it is interesting to note that Noble makes a case for Ewa, whose courage to prioritize her religion and national mandate over her own personal happiness becomes a model for Sung-yo and even Tong-sik. See ~~Calhoun,~~ Craig ~~, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,~~ (~~1997~~), 113-114).

[46] It might be argued that her sacrifice may also be influenced by the Christian idea of death and true reward in the spiritual world. See ~~Betty~~ Deberg ~~, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,~~ (~~1990~~), 47-48).

nation.[47] This type of discourse essentializes the nation as "the guardian of an unchanging truth it believes itself to embody."[48] In this discourse of the nation, women are imagined as the embodiment of the authenticity of the nation.[49]

In the final analysis, however, what distinguishes Noble's strategy of presenting Ewa as the ultimate figure of self-sacrifice for the nation from other nationalist discourse is that Ewa embodies not only "pure" authentic Korean tradition but also foreign spirit—Christian in this case. As I described above, her sacrifice has two main justifications and one of them is related to her Christian faith. She is close to a martyr for the foreign religion of Christianity. The strong Christian component Ewa represents is a direct reflection of Noble's missionary desire. But what is important to note is that neither the U.S. nor any other western Christian country was a colonizer in Korea, which presumably created much less resistance to western spirit among Koreans than sentiments provided by the colonial power of Japan. Thus, the apparent contradiction of Ewa as a bearer of the pure tradition of Korea on one hand and a convert to a foreign religion on the other is no longer anomalous in the discourse of nationalism in Noble's plot.

Noble's use of the symbol of the cross is an excellent example of how tradition and foreignness coexist for the purpose of nationalist drive. The cross in the story first represents a superstitious past. The owner of Ewa puts a tattoo of a cross on her wrist as a sign of her status as his slave. It symbolizes the oppressive, inhumane, and unequal society of old Korea. But because of its significance within Christianity, it also represents

[47] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
[48] Prasenjit Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China, in *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, edited by Kai-wing Chow, Kevin M. Doak, and Poshek Fu (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 359).
[49] Duara (2001, Prasenjit Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China," 359-385).

~~the~~a hopeful future. Ewa puts the same tattoo on Sung-yo's wrist as a sign of bonding—the~~–~~ bonding of two unlikely people from drastically different social classes made possible through Christian faith. The cross engraved in the bodies of Ewa and Sung-yo signals "the hope of Korea, and not her misery and ruin."[50] In this mixing of ~~the~~ old and ~~the~~ new, ~~the~~ East and ~~the~~ West, ~~the~~ crisis and ~~the~~ reform, one witnesses the unmaking and remaking of Korea. The last word Ewa speaks before her death is, "The cr—oss, S—Sung-yo."[51] Metaphorically and literally, the cross and Sung-yo represent the future of Korea, which "shall be made free." The cross, representing Christianity, becomes a marker of a better future. Sung-yo as the future of Korea gains a new life through Ewa's sacrifice of her own life.[52]

Korean Romance, New Womanhood

Noble's grandiose narrative of Korean nationalism is closely interwoven with the melodramatic romance of Ewa and Sung-yo. When Noble's book was reviewed by the journal, *Korea Mission Field*, one of the comments was ~~that~~ about "the love story [between Ewa and Sung-yo] as too highly drawn and as not true to the usual tenor of social life."[53] Indeed, there are plenty of words and descriptions that might allow a reader to mistake the missionary novel for a typical romance story of the West. Here is one example that displays a vivid and heightened emotional expression of love with implicit

[50] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 304).
[51] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 321).
[52] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 320-321).
[53] *The Korea Mission Field* 4.1 (January 1908): 15-16.

sexual connotations, right after Ewa and Sung-yo have found each other after a long period of searching. It reads:

> Ewa: "I am yours forever and ever. I am happy, happy," and tears stood out on her long lashes. A delirium of ecstasy swept through me, and somewhere down in the elemental regions of the soul, arose feelings that caressed with the voice where words were dumb; and all my years of struggle and pain were as if they had never been. The moonlight swept back the shadows of the mountain and I found her large dark eyes gazing into mine, and I said many things and she replied in words that I have long since hid away in the sanctuary of my memory. Nor will I do violence by entering there. In lonely hours I walk around its closed walls with gentle tread and dumbly feel its surface, and when I press my lips against the wall it glows and palpitates with dear words and looks that will never die.[54]

In this romance between Ewa and Sung-yo, Noble presents an interesting discourse on new womanhood that serves both nationalist and Christian ideals. As I discussed in the previous section, Noble's narrative shares the feature of Korean nationalist discourse that privileges the nation over individuals. A new vision for womanhood during the Korean enlightenment period at the turn of the twentieth century suggested that women should be equal to men, but the woman's role in society ~~is~~ was to become a good wife and wise mother for the future citizens.[55] Her place in the family is not simply to produce sons to continue the family lineage but also to educate them so that they become productive, useful, and important members of ~~the~~ modern society. In a similar context, women were expected to be supportive wives for their husbands so that these men could help the nation become strong. Ewa represents this new ideal—a wife who sacrifices for her man and the nation and demonstrates the wisdom, endurance, and faithfulness that mark a woman's proper behavior in traditional society.

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[54] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa,*~~ 294).

[55] ~~Yung Hee~~ Kim, ~~"Under the Mandate of Nationalism: Development of Feminist Enterprises in Modern Korea, 1860-1910,"~~ ~~*Journal of Women's History*, 7.4~~ (1995).

However, Noble carefully challenges male-dominant nationalist discourse by making a space for women to exercise their power as agents in making history and a new society. In the voice of Tong-sik, Noble discusses Korean womanhood as follows:

> …would you believe it… their [westerners'] women meet all visitors, talk with them, and they are treated more politely by the men than the men treat each other. It shocked me at first, and I thought there must be something terribly wrong with such a people, but here is a point that puzzles me. Confucius has done much for us, but he never made us equal, nor womanhood respected. Perhaps the foreigner is right, and they should be respected and put on a plane of equality with men…[56]

> I need not remind you…of the status of our women. Do we ever think enough of a girl to give her a name? ~~a~~A woman in our country has no more personality than a horse or an ox."…"The land is full of men that need to be bolstered up by women…there are many men who have little vigor than an oyster, and the vision of a strong woman would put them to flight.[57]

Critiquing the low status of women in traditional Korea, Noble intends to reveal the inequality between men and women and the unjust oppression of women by men.[58] Clearly aware of the traditional rule of the separation of genders (*namyeo yubyeol*), he presents a new model of gender interactions beyond the strict boundaries of traditional practices. Significantly, this new model is practiced by Christian converts. When Ewa and Sung-yo go to a church to marry, Sung-yo is surprised to see men and women mingling together without screens to separate them. Responding to Sung-yo's shock, a Korean pastor tells him, ~~that~~ "Christian communities live differently. We speak to the

[56] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa,*~~ 41).
[57] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 197).
[58] There are numerous commentaries by missionaries on the status of women, ranging from simplistic to well-thought-out observations. See Geo.W. Gilmore's article (논문 제목 알려주시기 바랍니다.) in the *Heathen Woman's Friend* 22-1, July 1890: 3-5; ~~George Heber~~ Jones, ~~"The Status of Woman in Korea," *Gospel in All Lands* (Oct.~~ (1896~~):~~, 458-462); ~~Mary~~ Scranton, ~~"Woman's Work in Korea," *The Korean Repository* (January~~ (1896~~):~~, 2-9); ~~Lillias H.~~ Underwood, ~~"Woman's Work in Korea," *The Korean Repository* (February~~ (1896~~):~~, 62-65).

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women, and they are not afraid of being greeted. We are all on a plane of equality… she is not beneath us in point of respect or privileges."[59]

The idea of equality between women and men is dramatized when Ewa takes the initiative in her relationship with Sung-yo. Although he is the one who pursues her doggedly despite all the upheavals, it is ultimately Ewa who moves their relationship forward at critical moments. Two important events show her defining role in their relationship. One is when she shows her "~~"cross-"" tattoo to him and puts the same symbol on his wrist as a sign of a "marriage contract."[60] The other is when Sung-yo, excited about the possibility that he and Ewa can "flee" to the north (meaning his hometown Pyeongyang), paints "in glowing colors the future." Ewa calmly suggests that they first marry at a church.[61] She says, "I am yours for your own dear sake, and if that will make your arm strong and your heart brave to dare I shall be content; but listen—fifty *li*[62] from here is a Christian chapel where, sometimes, is performed the marriage rite. I am a Christian. I was not born a slave. I am by right a free woman, and if I will, I may accompany you there."[63] Suggesting that their relationship must be formally recognized by the church, she wants to make the record clear before they "flee." The importance of the Christian marriage ritual is worth noting. Men of the upper class in old Korea used to take women of their liking as secondary wives (*cheop*) without formal rituals. There was

[59] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 298-299). George Gilmore makes an interesting observation on women's seclusion as follows: "It is to be noted that women, after becoming acquainted with us and our ways, have shown no reluctance to meeting gentlemen, and are fond of paying visit to the wives of such foreigners as they know, often manifesting not the slightest embarrassment at being seen even for the first time by strange gentlemen. But were a male Korean visitor to enter the room, his entrance would be the signal for their instant withdrawal." *Heathen Woman's Friend* 22.1 (July 1890): 4.

[60] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 170).

[61] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 295).

[62] "*Ri*" is a traditional measurement of distance in Korea.

[63] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 296).

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a formal ceremony only for marriage to the primary wife.[64] Given this tradition, Ewa's calmly reasoned attitude in this matter signals the enhanced power of women as agents in shaping their lives with their own will. This rational, self-composed, measured action by Ewa is an interesting contrast to Sung-yo's naïve, emotional, and passionate attitude. Rationality constitutes one of the core elements of modernity and is often associated with maleness, but Ewa's "rational" thinking and attitude contradicts a stereotypical gender-bound personality trait in which women are expected to be more emotional, irrational, and unstable than men.[65] In comparison, Sung-yo is driven by his uncontrollable emotion and passion. Thus, it is ultimately Ewa who defines and shapes their relationship. This reversal in gender roles subverts the typical hyper-masculine discourse of gender relations.

Another dramatic change seen in the plot is that Sung-yo, a son of the upper class, marries a slave woman. Although Ewa is originally from the upper class, having her status reduced to that of a slave at the present time is what matters most in the eyes of others. Theoretically and practically their marriage was not possible according to the customs of the late Joseon dynasty. However, Sung-yo is even ready to give up his status as *yangban* in order to be united with Ewa. He saysid to Ewa, "I gave up a life of ease to follow you. To serve as a slave at your side, though despised of men, would have been all I asked. Do not think I am not proud, but you were more than rank, wealth, and parents to

[64] Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (1992), 267-273).

[65] In a fascinating debate on the voting rights of married women missionaries in Korea, Annie Baird argues against the voting rights, using a traditional gender ideology. She says of women: "as a sex we seem to [be] credited with being ruled largely by our sensibilities, and being consequently unable to take a purely impersonal view of debated questions." See Annie Baird, "Votes or Not for Married Women in Station and Mission," *The Korea Mission Field* 8 (1913): 35-37.

me."[66] Noble's storyline, which emphasizes individual will and passion rather than their ascribed status, makes their union possible. Sung-yo's falling in love with Ewa signals an emergence of selfhood away from collective identity. One may think of this emphasis on individuality as a western view. Tong-sik actually says so:

> I never heard of a young man falling in love with a ~~-~~woman who was a stranger, much less a slave, and following her about, as a dog his master. They say in the western world, where they boast of their civilization, that such things are common.[67]

Emphasizing individuals' own feelings and desires, Tong-sik suggests a new practice of marriage, removed from the family-centered, status-oriented marriage system. Noble consistently suggests that the daring claims of the individual will constitute one of the core ideas necessary for a new modern Korea. Sung-yo's decision to reject his parents' choice of a bride is already unheard of. What adds a more dramatic turn is that he as a son of the upper class takes a slave woman as his *primary* wife. This entirely unconventional and scandalous development of love culminates in a western-style Christian wedding without family members, which is in itself an unconventional act by the standards of late nineteenth century Korea, if not by the standards of the Victorian era.

However, a close reading of the romance reveals that there is a greater expectation for male protagonists to play the central role in nation-building. The heroic woman embodied in Ewa helps her husband re-center his role in shaping a modern nation-state through her endurance and ultimate sacrifice. Metaphorically speaking, she helps to beget the nation through Sung-yo, but she is removed from the process of nation-building in the end as she is beaten to death by the cruel slave owner. She is firmly positioned in the

[66] Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 189).
[67] Noble (1906a, ~~Ibid.,~~ 198).

private sphere from which she is expected to provide men with strength and inspiration, but she has no "public" role. One can see a contrast in the way in which Sung-yo is informed by Tong-sik—an archetype for the new man of intelligence, rationality, and cutting-edge experience of the modern. Tong-sik signifies the new man, who takes center stage in building the nation by awakening men and women to their new roles. In comparison, Ewa takes a peripheral, private, and invisible role in the modern project of nation-building. Thus, a new nation and new womanhood informed by Korean enlightenment and Christianity in missionary fiction unwittingly continues to center on a patriarchal order of gender relations with a broadened but still subordinated role for women in the modern era.

Conclusion

In Noble's *Ewa*, one can certainly trace some features of a typical colonial discourse in which note is made of the Other's customs of superstitions, gambling, drinking or polygamy.[68] His portrayal of "dancing girls" (*gisaeng*), in particular, ~~echoes~~ evokes an image of the exotic, sexual, decadent Other.[69] However, uniquely located in a particular historical juncture of Korea, Noble engages in a complex discourse on civilization, gender, and nationhood that goes beyond the typical binary oppositional spectrum in locating the West as superior and the Other as inferior. His longstanding exposure to and

[68] Kim ~~Yunseong, "Protestant Missions as Cultural Imperialism in Early Modern Korea," *Korea Journal* 39.4 (Winter(~~-1999~~):~~, 205-233).

[69] For example, Noble portrays Korean dancing girls as follows: "B~~b~~ut the gaudy play-thing of the rich and idle—the professional dancing girl—remained. Grim war has no terrors for her, the fierce hand of hate grows soft and gracious in paint and silks, like gaudy butterflies, not to partake of the feast, but to nestle near with shy glances, giving the occasion a sense of voluptuousness and luxury." Noble (1906a, ~~*Ewa*,~~ 158-160).

intimate knowledge of Korean culture and society offers him an important platform from which he not only represents Koreans as he understands them but also recasts his own western culture and society through Korean tradition. Although the overall plot of the story ultimately moves into a singular narrative that privileges Christianity as the spiritual and cultural foundation of a new nation, the nature of Christian identity Noble envisions is reconstructed by local particularities. Furthermore, the delicate position of American missionaries in the politically -tangled situation in Korea facing Japanese imperialism significantly colors Noble's discourse on race. His strategic use of a first-person narrative representing Korean perspectives is suggestive of a sympathy with Koreans and allows him to avoid potential complications with the mission board, which urged missionaries to steer clear of any political involvement, particularly anti-Japanese activities. At the same time, the first-person narrative enables him to make the West unfamiliar. The dominant trend in pursuit of material modernization in the West is critically reflected upon through the portrayal of the traditional mode of life in Korea. In doing so, Noble acts as both insider and outsider from the viewpoints of Koreans or westerners.

A fascinating feature of Noble's novel is the way in which he weaves an intimate portrayal of modern romance with the grand themes of ~~in~~ nation and civilization. Noble uses the plot device of a modern romance set in Korea conflated with his own western subjectivity as a platform to critique the traditional gender relations of Korea. While Noble makes an attempt to represent the "positive" traditions of Korea, he offers an uncompromising critique of traditional gender relations that debased women as inferior. Noble's choice of the title of the book, *Ewa*, is suggestive of the central role of new woman in the modern era that fits into both nationalist and Christian ideals. The most

prominent public association with the name Ewa (Ewha) is *Ewha Hakdang* (Ewha Girls' School), founded in 1886 by Mary F. Scranton, a Methodist missionary from the United States. The Korean government awarded Scranton this name with the hope that the school would educate Korean girls to play a role in the national pursuit of modernization. Thus, while *Ewa* symbolizes purity and femininity and is linked to the traditional image of woman in Korea, it also conjures up a newly- sanctioned role for women beyond the domestic in building a modern nation-state. By using Ewa as the title character, Noble brings to the fore a woman's independence and agency in shaping not only her own destiny but also her nation. However, when this new type of gender norm is reframed by nationalist discourse, it tends to fall back to the overall patriarchal arrangement of society. Because on one hand, Ewa's resilience, persistence, and ultimate sacrifice in the face of her ordeal is a prerequisite to the birth of a modern man, Sung-yo, who is transformed from an effeminate, naïve *yangban* figure to a strong, determined, and resolute male citizen. On the other hand, her critical role subsides in the end as the new man takes central stage for the task of building a new Korean nation.

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