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Confessions and Dialogues of Colonial Intellectuals from Feminist Perspectives:
Im Sun-deuk's Short Stories during the Late Period of Japanese Colonial Rule

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Abstract

This paper examines Im Sun-deuk's two short stories, "Iryoil" (Sunday, 1937) and "Nazuke oya" (A Godmother, 1942). Im, an active participant in Korea's socialist movement in the 1930s, turned to literature as her career at a time when Japanese colonial authorities had tightened their control over Korea to further the Japanese empire's colonial expansion into China. In the process, the Japanese implemented an assimilation policy to mobilize the Korean people into the Japanese war effort. By employing the concept of confession in "Iryoil" and "Nazuke oya," Im projects an autobiographical self onto her protagonists, both of whom are modern women striving to preserve their identities as socially conscious intellectuals committed to nationalism, socialism, and feminism. By positioning her protagonists as confessors to other characters in the texts, Im's short stories portray intellectuals in colonial Korea as in conflict or harmony with her protagonists. Im's protagonists embody female subjects who find a new kind of womanhood under Japanese colonial rule. However, in "Nazuke oya," Im's protagonist displays a more flexible and open attitude toward Koreans with attitudes and beliefs different from her own. In this sense, the act of confession as presented in Im's texts is an attempt to build a bond and sense of community among the Korean people from a woman's perspective, and at a time when Korean identity risked becoming obsolete.

Keywords: Korea, literature, Japanese colonialism, modernity, nationalism, colonial intellectual, gender, feminism

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Introduction

When the Empire of Japan went to war against China in 1937, Korea—which had been a colony of Japan since 1910—became an outpost for Japanese expansion into China. As a result, the Korean people were mobilized into Japan's war effort. The cultural arena in which Korean intellectuals could discuss and circulate discourses of Korean national identity and culture was disappearing. Japanese authorities began to recognize Korean literary society in order to facilitate collaboration with the Japanese war effort through writing and public speech. As the Japanese colonial government strengthened censorship of publications by Korean writers and increased its surveillance of their social activities, writers were forced to write in Japanese and to reflect their support for Japanese colonial rule in Korea and for Japanese military expansion (Jang 2007, 164–167). Im Sun-deuk, who participated in the socialist movement in the 1930s, lost ground in her socialist activities as the Japanese colonial government cracked down ruthlessly on socialist organizations, arresting many of their members. At this time, Im turned from her student activism to literature, making her debut in 1937 with "Iryoil" (Sunday, 1937).

Im Sun-deuk and her literary works have been largely ignored in South Korean scholarship on Korean literature. In part, this tendency is because of some of Im's text she wrote in Japanese at the end of Japanese colonial rule, as well as her literary activity in North Korea in support of its government after Korea's liberation from Japan. Im has also received little attention from scholars in North Korea. Her work has not been examined in North Korean literary studies since Im disappeared from the literary scene after her last publication in 1957.[1] Kim (1997) considers Im as one of the representative North Korean female writers who continued to participate in Korea's literary movement before and after Korea's liberation. J. Seo (2001) names Im as the first Korean female literary critic. However, Lee Sun-ok (2002) classifies

1. Im published "Eoneu han yugajog-ui iyagi" (A Story of a Bereaved Family) in 1957 in *Joseon Munhak* (Korean Literature). Lee Sang-kyung (2009) has concluded that Im was purged due to the conflict between internal factions in North Korea around 1957.

Im's short story "Tsukiyo no katari" (A Moonlight Talk, 1943) as an example of pro-Japanese literature because the story was written in Japanese. Lee Sang-kyung (2009), the author of a monograph about Im, examines Im's life and writings in relation to their socio-historical context. Lee Sang-kyung (2009) places Im in a third generation of women writers during the Japanese colonial period who emerged in the late 1930s, elevating Im as one of the few writers who did not collaborate with Japanese colonial authority. Based on this assessment, Lee Sang-kyung (2009) addresses nationalist, socialist, and feminist consciousness in Im's writing. In particular, Lee Sang-kyung (2009) notes the spirit of resistance in defying colonial rule that is evident in Im's short stories. This view is in contrast to the affinity of Im's narratives with autobiographical novels by socialist writers who were active at the end of Japanese rule. At that time, many of these authors abandoned their activism and addressed the everyday lives of colonial intellectuals as the main theme in their writing. Among other scholars of Korean literature during Japanese colonial rule, Sin (2003) and Park and Kim (2009) mostly share Lee Sang-kyung's (2009) perspective.

Cheon (2010) examines Japanese colonial intellectuals through autobiographical representations in novels written in Japanese by Korean writers. Cheon (2010) highlights the ambivalence between collaborators and opponents of Japanese rule that is evident in Korean literature written at this time. Cheon (2010) highly values Im's "Nazuke oya" (A Godmother, 1942) for its discussion of the pursuit of identity through the traditional Korean process of choosing a name for a newborn child. Cheon (2010) also notes that an individual's search for identity transcends the collective recuperation of national identity. Instead, the search for identity is geared toward universal values of the individual and society. These values can be extracted from the core spirits of both Eastern and Western civilization and culture, neither of which could be restrained by the Japanese empire. Ham and Choi (2013) express some reservations about nationalistic interpretations of Im's writing. They argue that the purported discovery of Im as a nationalist and feminist writer during the Japanese colonial period actually amounts to the replication of nationalist literary discourse. In the process, Im's writings, including her Korean and Japanese works, are reframed as Korean nationalist

literature. S. Seo (2014) provides a new understanding of Im's literary works, contesting previous readings that were framed in terms of nationalism and resistance against Japanese colonial rule. S. Seo's (2014) research locates Im's short stories on the border between resistance and collaboration. In this interpretation, the theme of Im's literary works was not evidence of Im's collaboration with Japanese imperialism. Even so, S. Seo (2014) argues that Im's writing cannot be framed completely as resistance literature. S. Seo (2014) also points out that, in many cases, messages around the emancipation of women in colonial Korea—which Im depicts in many of her works—sat uncomfortably with Korean nationalism. This tendency is also evident in the short stories Im published in North Korea. Women's issues are an important theme in these stories. However, Im applies the theory of socialist literature that was promoted by the North Korean government at that time.

This paper will examine Im Sun-deuk's two short stories, "Iryoil" (Sunday, 1937) and "Nazuke oya" (A Godmother, 1942).[2] In both stories, Im examines the experience of a colonial intellectual from a feminist perspective. In the process, Im questions how Korean intellectuals can maintain lives of conscience and dignity during a time of political oppression. National identity and socialist conviction are important themes in Im's texts. However, rather than examining Im's texts from nationalist frames of resistance, this paper highlights how Korean intellectual women under colonial rule searched for an individual and collective female identity. In the process, these women sought to exist as conscientious and visionary intellectuals who were not limited by their gender roles in an environment—that is, colonial Korea—that proscribed that identity for women. These two literary works were selected for analysis in this paper because Im uses the confessions of colonial intellectuals as an important motif in both texts. In the process, Im reveals the interiorities of colonial intellectuals, developing narratives around these characters more fully than in her other short stories and essays. The two works intersect, while containing significant differences

2. "Iryoil" was published in February, 1937 in *Joseon Munhak* (Korean Literature). "Nazuke oya," written in Japanese, appeared in *Munhwa Joseon* (Korean Culture) in October, 1942. This paper used the versions of these two literary works that was reprinted in Lee Sang-kyung (2009).

that invite a nuanced comparison.

The confession is an important literary device in Im's writing. Im uses confession to express the voices and interiority of various Korean intellectuals. In Western literary studies, confession is associated with one of two trends. The first is Foucault's theory of power, discourse, and knowledge, which regards confession as the institutional means of power to produce knowledge and discourse as a way of regulating its subject (Gill 2006, 4–5). The second is Rousseau's romanticism, which celebrates the assertion and expression of the individual self over social constraints (Anderson 2001, 40–43). Im's two short stories position their protagonists as confessors who frame another character's confession within the narrative. Through interactions with other characters, Im uses her protagonists to search for a way of life in which a colonial intellectual can preserve a social consciousness. In the process, Im problematizes attempts by Japanese colonial rulers to eliminate the Korean identity.

A tension arises between the confessor and the confessant in Im's short stories, due to the characters' different values and commitments within their views of colonial Korean society. However, the protagonist's attitude in dealing with this tension is different in "Iryoil" compared to "Nazuke oya." Hyeyeong, the protagonist in "Iryoil," strives to preserve her political convictions, drawing a rigid demarcation between her political commitments and people whose views she does not share. In this narrative, the inner truth of intellectuals in colonial Korea is revealed—but not through dialogue. However, the protagonist in "Nazuke oya" conducts a dialogue with different confessants, rather than simply enforcing a specific level of commitment and value. Her interactions with different confessants not only shape her own identity, but also seek a collective Korean identity with her countrymen and women. The confessions in the text, in this sense, realize Bakhtin's concept of dialogic voices. Im presents both the protagonist and other characters who are in dialogue with one another, with the characters' contradictory and conflicting voices associated with their different worldviews (Bakhtin 1981). This approach reflects Im's personal and professional path during a time in which she had to write in Japanese in order to be published, and the expression of her true political convictions was impossible.

Portraits of Colonial Intellectuals' Interiority: "Iryoil"

In the short story "Iryoil," Im portrays the life of an intellectual woman, Hyeyeong. Hyeyeong is a single working woman who maintains her life as a typist at C newspaper, in the type of low-paying office job available to a woman with a modern education in colonial Korea. The story deals with a routine Sunday for Hyeyeong. Some colleagues visit Hyeyeong at home and ask her to go out with them and enjoy the beautiful weather, but Hyeyeong declines. The narrative develops through Hyeyeong's interiority, which shows why she cannot accept this seemingly simple offer from her visitors. Hyeyeong shapes her self-identity through continuous encounters with her colleagues, her older brother, and her lover. Through these characters, Im depicts Korean intellectuals facing Japanese colonial oppression with different attitudes and levels of commitment. By living mundane and subservient lives under Japanese colonial rule, some characters feel a sense of guilt and weariness, while others are complacent.

In "Iryoil," Im contextualizes the political setting of the time more specifically than in her later works. For this reason, it is important to examine how Hyeyeong perceives colonial Korea. Her perception is presented in the form of a stream of consciousness:

> A group of children flocks together with a noisy sound. But there are no children who sing. I murmur, as these are children without any heart to sing, because they feel the sense of national sorrow, although I wonder if it is my delusion, following me and clinging to me endlessly. (Lee Sang-kyung, 2009, 236)

In the passage above, Hyeyeong's awareness of political realities in colonial Korea is linked closely with her gloomy depiction of children in an alleyway in her city. Her perception is heavily subjective: she strives to discover Korea's "national sorrow" in children making noise and playing together, noting that the children in her district do not sing. Readers may question how Hyeyeong can be sure that the reason the children in this passage are not singing is Korea's status as a colony of Japan. However, in her subjective

perception, Hyeyeong regards the scene of the children playing as a marker of the social mood of the time. This depiction represents Hyeyeong's consciousness, constructing the collective sorrow of the nation based on her perception of her fellow Koreans. It also reflects her interpretation of social reality in the everyday lives of Korean people. On the surface, the children enjoy their playtime. Even so, Hyeyeong shows an acute social consciousness that Japanese colonial authority suppresses Korean society. It is her mandate that she should understand the colonial power that controls Korean people, an authority that remains hidden behind the seemingly peaceful daily lives of Koreans. Her social consciousness distinguishes her from her colleagues, who are trapped by their devotion to peace with their colonial rulers at any price.

What, then, is the basis of Im's protagonist's perception of Korea's national sorrow? Im's text does not present an explicit socio-historical context for the time. However, Im hints at this context through Hyeyeong's observation and evaluation of her colleagues, who are colonial intellectuals. Korea's colonial intellectuals were a group of educated elites who emerged with a modern colonial education and were given the role of maintaining a modern colonial infrastructure. Im had developed her nationalist and socialist consciousness through her activism in modern schools. Important institutions for both Korean nationalists and Japanese colonial authorities, schools were a place where Korean nationalists developed their shared consciousness (Shin and Robinson 1999, 12). Some Korean elites achieved professional success under Japanese colonial rule, such as scholars, social leaders, businessmen, and bureaucrats working for the Japanese colonial government. Even so, their status within the Japanese empire was problematic. On the one hand, they often acquired higher status and were more privileged than other Koreans due to their modern education. Ultimately, though, they were confined to second-class status as ethnic Koreans within the Japanese empire (Eckert 2000, 137–139). They experienced surveillance from Japanese colonial authorities, along with political suppression whenever their movements were considered to threaten Japanese colonial rule. Their beliefs and their embrace of the values of modernity, including the political, economic, and cultural system

they attained through their modern education, could not be materialized in reality. As Japan began to pursue its expansionist foreign policy in the 1930s, Korean intellectuals were silenced and forced to acquiesce to Japanese colonialism, even falling into the role of collaborators. In the last phase of colonial rule, many Korean socialists underwent so-called "conversions," publicly recanting their socialist convictions under pressure from the Japanese colonial government (Park 2009, 864–867).

Through encountering or recalling statements in which these intellectual characters express their interior landscapes, Hyeyeong distinguishes the characters whose views she supports from those whose views she disagrees with. She compares certain characters to water striders —small insects that can turn around only in stagnant water. This motif indicates a peaceful and stable life that exists despite water flowing around it—that is, the progression of life and society. This portrayal highlights the moral and spiritual stagnation of Korean intellectuals in colonial Japan. P and M, alumni of Hyeyeong's secondary school, who work as teachers at a kindergarten, typify the people Hyeyeong compares with water strider insects. P and M do not mention ideology or political commitments directly. However, in a roundabout way, their conversation displays the protagonist's skepticism about the two characters and their attitude of complacency in the face of colonialism. Hyeyeong notes P's comments about earthly values, and observes that "P confesses her inner thoughts in a calm manner, that it is meaningless to live a young life painfully, no matter what the reason is" (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 232). A former classmate of Hyeyeong's, P sympathizes with Hyeyeong more than M. However, P's statement alludes to her skepticism regarding Hyeyeong's political convictions. M also finds fault with Hyeyeong's commitment to her lover, Yunho, regarding the relationship as a sign of Hyeyeong's awkwardness and inflexibility. Observing that Hyeyeong is laundering the uniform Yunho must wear while he is in prison for his political activities, M derides Hyeyeong for spending time washing her lover's clothes on Sunday instead of using a laundry service. M's practical attitude of valuing convenience over true romantic attachments is entailed in her value judgment of Hyeyeong's attachment to Yunho as passé. Hyeyeong also recognizes that both P and M perceive her ongoing relationship with

Yunho as evidence of her obsession with ideology. In this sense, Hyeyeong's relationship with Yunho is more than a romantic relationship. Instead, it acquires the weight of a political conviction—one to which she remains deeply attached.

In addition to P and M, apolitical figures who are ignorant of social consciousness, the story also depicts the lives of former activists. H, along with Hyeyeong's older brother, has renounced his political convictions and is striving to conduct his daily life under colonial rule. However, the two men differ in their attitudes and approach in this respect: Hyeyeong's older brother experiences depression, while H exploits his status and enjoys operating within the colonial status quo. H, a colleague and friend of Yunho and editor at the weekly newspaper, is a paradigmatic colonial intellectual who finds his place under Japanese colonial rule after renouncing his political activism and changing his position to become a journalist in the cultural sphere. H's profession as an editor provides him with some power and authority as an intellectual leader and cultural nationalist under Japanese colonial rule. However, Hyeyeong portrays H as a turncoat who justifies his move away from political engagement as an inevitable decision forced upon him by Japanese colonial oppression. Hyeyeong depicts H's life as one that withdraws from "a sincere attitude to life" (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 237). In Hyeyeong's view, sincerity involves striving to live up to one's political convictions. H has abandoned his convictions and is engrossed in appreciating Western culture, which is newly available in colonial Korea. While visiting Hyeyeong, H attempts to flirt with her and induces her to see a film production of a play by Henrik Ibsen. Amid the oppression of Japanese colonial rule, H's indulgence in modern Western culture is nothing but extravagance.

Hyeyeong's older brother has also abandoned his political commitments to live under the Japanese colonial system. Even so, Hyeyeong continues to associate with her older brother, who shares her sense of shame, despair, and incompetence over life in colonial Korea, driven by his social conscience and the urge to reject a life of complacency. Hyeyeong's older brother is reminiscent of Im's own older brother, who was arrested by colonial police due to his socialist activism in 1934. He was released from prison in 1935

after writing a petition expressing his intention to submit to colonial rule (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 152–154). Hyeyeong's older brother is placed in a realm opposite from Hyeyeong's colleagues. Her brother lives a mediocre life, earning a living in a store that he operates in the countryside. What distinguishes Hyeyeong's older brother from H is that Hyeyeong's brother struggles to accept his new life, suffering from self-depreciation and pangs of guilt. Fragments of a letter from Hyeyeong's older brother presented in the text depict his gloomy interiority:

> Whenever the night comes, I am sitting inside a dull store and look with aimless eyes at a dark sky without any stars . . . Hyeyeong! Heine said that the dead shell that he places on his desk produces foam and moves an inch along the surface when the ocean waves come to the beach. Although it is Heine's poetic expression, don't you think that I, as a young man, am a lot less than a decorated object? Although no one points out that, whenever I look at the stygian darkness with aimless eyes, I happen to think in that way. (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 238)

Hyeyeong's brother struggles to focus mentally during his work managing his small store. His daily life can be summed up as gazing at a gloomy landscape aimlessly—a landscape in which he finds no vision or hope. His self-portrait is more acutely aware, in that he equates himself with an object that is lacking in vigor and is virtually dead. He degrades himself as an entity less than a dead object, such as a dead shell used for decoration, in a motif drawn from Heinrich Heine's writing. In this sense, Hyeyeong's older brother reproaches only himself, rather than using external factors to excuse his submission to colonial rule. Hyeyeong reminds herself of her brother's confession after the departure of her last guest, H. Through remembering and making a connection with her older brother, who once shared her social position and identity, Hyeyeong begins to shape her own self-identity, differentiating herself from her colleagues, who are content with the freedom and privilege afforded by Japanese colonial rule. The confession in Hyeyeong's brother's letter, which she had not contemplated seriously before, now touches her heart. His interiority, depicted in the letter, represents

precisely what she has felt. The letter is the portrait of a colonial intellectual who is deprived of any means of pursuing socio-political usefulness and commitment, and is forced to comply with a political system against which he once fought.

Hyeyeong shares her identity as a modern intellectual with other characters who visit her home. Her mundane life and her passion for modern culture are not completely different from theirs. Like her visitors, she maintains her life by working as a typist at C newspaper and acquiescing to the system of Japanese colonial rule. She shows a refined interest in Western culture, including art and literature. On a Sunday morning, she ponders the leisure activities available to her, such as reading a Western novel, painting a landscape of Seoul, and going to the bookstore to purchase books—activities facilitated by the modern cultural sphere of colonial rule. She feels anxiety about the fact that, like her colleagues, she lives in conformity with the Japanese colonial system. However, throughout the short story, Hyeyeong detaches herself from her colleagues and their proposal to spend their Sunday together. In doing this, Hyeyeong indicates her commitment to resisting compliance with an unjust reality. Her rejection of her colleagues' proposal to participate in weekend leisure activities symbolizes her conscience and self-respect. In this way, despite political circumstances that force her to conform to the colonial system, Hyeyeong desperately maintains a social consciousness. Hyeyeong's decision is linked inextricably with her sense of guilt at submitting to political oppression. Hyeyeong does not engage in a confrontation with her colleagues, from whom she has dissociated mentally. However, in silently rejecting their offers to participate in activities that suit her sense of refinement and cultural taste, Hyeyeong abandons her weakness and strengthens the identity she wishes to preserve. The whole story describes Hyeyeong's process of distinguishing herself from those she critiques and identifying more closely with her lover Yunho, who represents the enduring conscience of time, the spirit of resistance, and activism.

Hyeyeong's identification with Yunho in spite of his imprisonment indicates her sense of love and care for him. In addition, it serves as a barometer of her life as a socially conscious intellectual in a social

environment when all nationalist and socialist movements led by Korean intellectuals were suppressed brutally. While thinking of Yunho, Hyeyeong feels guilt over abandoning her political commitments and assimilating into Japanese rule. However, through her ties to Yunho, Hyeyeong strives not to lose her social consciousness. Her decision to spend her Sunday engaged in activities that support Yunho during his imprisonment demonstrates more than simply her care for her lover. Her choice also connects her to Yunho's iron will as Yunho continues to resist colonial authority. Through her dedication to Yunho, Hyeyeong survives and endures the oppression of colonialism without losing her identity as a socially engaged intellectual and independent woman. It is also worth noting that Hyeyeong claims an equal status with Yunho, stating that she can feel deeply for Yunho without any concern for herself because this does not downgrade her status as his equal. In this sense, she attempts to define her relationship with Yunho as one of comradeship based on their shared conviction. Her social consciousness is founded strongly on feminism.[3]

The Ethnic Community Emerged through Dialogues: "Nazuke oya"

In "Nazuke oya," the protagonist, who also narrates the story, draws confessions from her male cousin and her close friend, Ryeoa, into her narrative as a way of negotiating and contrasting her perspective with theirs. The predicaments expressed through these two confessions are linked closely with the social context of the time, such as the elimination of Korean identity under Japan's assimilation policy, the Korean intellectual's loss of vision and hope under Japanese colonial rule, and the gender inequality that prevented Korean women from pursuing their own autonomous lives. However, compared with "Iryoil," the predicament of political and ideological conviction does not surface in "Nazuke oya." Instead, themes of feminism

3. Lee Sang-kyung (2009, 111–112) regards Yunho as an entity that indicates Heyeong's social consciousness, rather than a mere lover whom she reveres and supports. Lee argues that Im recognized that gender inequality was rampant in Korea's socialist movement, with female activists positioned as supporters or apprentices patronized by male socialists.

and the socialist view of literature dominate the text. The conclusion of the text focuses more on the protagonist's search for the meaning of life through dialogue with confessants. In this way, the protagonist forms a community of Koreans who can share their collective pain and suffering.

In the form of a letter, the text configures the cousin's confession of his inner self after losing the path between his ideal life and reality. The cousin is losing his sense of purpose in life, identifying himself with a pessimistic musician who cannot find any meaning in his musical talent:

> I will start work at my new post as a music teacher in a middle school, but I do not find any meaning in my life with a wife. I had something that I cherished and wanted to accomplish in my life when I was young, but the next thing I knew it disappeared from my heart. As it feels like the absence of light, I now spend my days in a state of torpor with a regret that I cannot express. I try to revitalize my life by blaming myself for being a pessimist at the age of 24, but I cannot help it. The music that I still feel close to does not call on my strong artistic spirit to the extent that it makes me fully absorbed into it. (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 243–244)

The text does not address why the protagonist's cousin has fallen into this state of hopelessness. However, this interior world, despite its abstractness, reveals the gloomy inner landscape of a colonial intellectual, which is identical to that of Hyeyeong's older brother in "Iryoil." Im also accounts for this sense of despair in her essay "Oha ui among" (The Ignorant in the Kingdom of Wu, 1940), noting that "it is painful to just imagine a future in which there is no hope and one has nothing to live for, but it is more unbearable for those who want to live a life that is true to themselves" (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 453). Through her narratives and essays, Im defines colonial Korea as a setting that prevents her from attaining true self-actualization. As an intellectual in a time when Japanese colonial authorities placed limits on individual Koreans' freedom and space and put intellectuals under heavy surveillance, teaching music in a middle school and leading a normal life with a wife presents another option for the cousin of the protagonist in "Nazuke oya." However, the cousin's loss of his artistic passion

for music comes to dominate his life. In the passage depicting his inner state, the cousin mourns the loss of meaning and purpose in his life, describing this feeling as similar to losing a light. He retains enough conscience to condemn himself for losing his passion and vision for his life. However, in living through the end of Japanese colonial rule, he finds himself in a state of lethargy.

The protagonist in "Nazuke oya" faces circumstances similar to her cousin, in that she stands aside from worldly affairs. However, she still possesses a consciousness that searches for a positive identity and purpose in life. The protagonist depicts her daily life as "staring at the mountain in the south" (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 249). Lee (2009, 186–187) relates this description to a line from Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (356–427)[4] poem "Yin Jiu: Qi Wu" 飮酒其五 (Drinking Wine No 5).[5] The protagonist identifies her attitude to life with that of a renowned Chinese poet who determined to preserve his personality and commitment by giving up his post and dwelling in his retirement to express his disagreement with the corruption of the politics in Eastern Jin. In the process, the protagonist establishes her standpoint on Japanese colonial rule, distancing herself from worldly affairs to preserve her integrity and conscience. The protagonist in "Nazuke oya" adopts an attitude of maintaining her distance from troubled times, sharpening her own sense of identity, and pursuing meaning in her daily life. Daily life is given its significance as a space in which one finds a way to be true to oneself despite the negative outlook of the political arena. In this regard, the protagonist empathizes with her cousin, who is presented as a young colonial intellectual. Most of all, the protagonist hopes that her cousin will overcome the hardships of colonial rule by living his daily life with sincerity and focus. She believes that her cousin can attain this objective

4. Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (356–427) was a renowned Chinese poet who lived in a transitional time between the decline of Eastern Jin and the emergence of dynasties in northern and southern China. His poem lauds the contentment of a life of seclusion and poverty through the pursuit of personal integrity compared to a public and official life contaminated by human greed and lust for power. For more details of the life of Tao Yuanmin, see Xingpei (2014).

5. The line that Lee relates to the protagonist's utterance is 悠然見南山: "Leisurely and carefree, within sight of the Southern Mountains." The translation of this line from the poem is quoted from "Tao Yuanming: Drinking Wine No. 5" in Irelder (website).

by channeling his passion for music. In "Nazuke oya," this emphasis on being true to oneself replaces the attachment to political and ideological conviction in "Iryoil."

Im expands the pursuit of identity at the individual level to the collective identity that is circumscribed by Korean traditions. The theme of political conviction is less present in "Nazuke oya" than in "Iryoil." However, "Nazuke oya" claims a national consciousness through examining and emphasizing the significance of culture as the backbone of Korean national identity, in which Korean heritage and tradition occupy important roles. The protagonist's process of choosing a name for her pregnant cousin's baby implies the important theme of Im's short story: that is, searching for the cultural roots of Korean identity. In "Nazuke oya," the act of naming a baby becomes an attempt to attain collective meaning. The name of the protagonist's friend, Go Ryeoa, whom the protagonist consults about what name to give to her cousin's baby, also implies Korean identity. Go Ryeoa's name alludes to the names of historical Korean dynasties, Goguryeo and Goryeo, from which the term "Korea" originated (Park and Kim 2009, 314–316). Under the Japanese assimilation policy that forced Korean people to change their names into Japanese, the naming practice became emblematic of one's individual identity, tied to family and tradition. In this setting, one's given name is not an identification based on the individual preferences, tastes, and choices of a person's family. Rather, it is related to the collective identity that is given by a family based on their hopes, and conveys a blessing for the future of the individual. In this sense, the deprivation of the right to name a child in Korean signifies that Korea has lost the right to claim a collective identity. The meanings of both male and female names suggested by the protagonist and Go Ryeoa imply the Korean national consciousness. The girl's name they discuss (Hyewon) comprises the first syllable "Hye" 蕙 ('hui' in Chinese), a fragrant grass described in a poem by the Chinese poet Gurwon 屈原 ('Qu Yuan' in Chinese). The second syllable "won" 原 ('Yuan' in Chinese), from a poet's name. The boy's name they discuss (Sewon) is constructed by taking "se" from Moses in the Bible and "won" from the Chinese poet, Gurwon 屈原.[6] In

6. Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340–278 BC) was born and lived in the Chu Kingdom during the Warring

selecting these names for the baby of the protagonist's cousin, the protagonist and Go Ryeoa envision that the girl will share Gurwon's uncompromising integrity. The naming of the boy envisions the character of an agent of nationalistic discourse who will endeavor to emancipate his people from foreign oppression, just as Moses freed his people from the oppression of the Egyptians and lead them to the promised land.

Another important aspect of "Nazuke oya" is that the predicament faced by Korean intellectuals, as well as the national consciousness alluded to by Korean tradition and identity, are viewed from a feminist perspective. The letter the protagonist receives from her cousin, in which the cousin confesses his inner conflict, also positions the protagonist in a state of mixed feelings. In her worldview as a feminist, the protagonist distances herself from the predicament regarding her cousin's disharmony with his wife. His feelings about marriage—including his view of his wife as inferior to him in terms of personality and common sense—is a typical trope in modern Korean literature, portraying a modern male intellectual's marriage and family under colonial rule. In his letter, the protagonist's cousin depicts his wife as a materialistic woman, full of vanity and ignorant of the true value of art. Noting that his wife prefers an extravagant Western tea set to traditional Korean art, he states, "since my wife is the kind of woman who likes a Western tea set a lot more than a stone-rubbed scroll of the Avalokitesvara Statue, your gift is like a pearl before swine" (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 242). It is worth noting that the protagonist's cousin devalues his wife because of her ignorance of the value of traditional Korean art. His wife is familiar with modern culture—however, he regards her as having a superficial understanding of it. Most importantly, his wife is a person who has lost her own roots and identity. The protagonist questions why her cousin is so idealistic and serious that he cannot tolerate his wife's sincere desires and practical mind. The protagonist shares her cousin's values and thoughts in cherishing Korean traditions. Nonetheless, she cannot approve of her

States Period. A loyal vassal, capable politician, and a diplomat for the King of Chu, he was banished from the court due to slander by a treacherous subject. He eventually committed suicide. For detailed information about the poet and his poem mentioned in this paper, see Hawkes (1985).

cousin's disdain for his wife based on his wife's unrefined understanding of traditional Korean culture. From the protagonist's perspective, her cousin's attitude toward his wife results from his sense of superiority and his inability to treat his wife as an equal.

As much as the protagonist's search for a Korean name for her cousin's baby involves the shaping and preservation of a national identity, it also signifies a search for an ideal womanhood in colonial Korea from a feminist perspective. It is significant that traditional gender ideology is overturned through the naming process described in "Nazuke oya." At first, the protagonist's expression of her wish to name her cousin's future baby so soon after his wedding is seen as an indicator of the protagonist's progressive character. In expressing this wish, she places herself in an equal standing with men in her family, because in a Korean family, the elders—usually men—on the paternal side of the family choose a name for their descendants.[7] Considering that the protagonist is female and not of the older generation in her family, the cousin's asking for suggested names for his expected baby shows his special treatment and respect for the protagonist—something that is not appropriate within colonial Korea's patriarchal order.

In addition, contrary to many Korean families' preference for a son, the protagonist discusses possible girl's names first with Ryeoa (Park and Kim 2009, 326). The protagonist and Ryeoa also imply that finding a name for a possible baby boy is less important than finding a name for a possible baby girl. Both the protagonist and Ryeoa project the ideal type of man who would be a good match for the girl they have just named. They postulate the personhood of both a boy and a girl, and a possible romantic relationship between them, based on feminist viewpoints. They attach the condition that Sewon, who is an ideal partner for Hyewon, should have the good character of Moses but not be deified as Moses was. Furthermore, Sewon should be talented, like Gurwon, but not arrogant. In this way, the protagonist and Ryeoa remove patriarchal and masculine elements that might oppress women. They consider that the ideal partner for a modern Korean woman

7. "Nazuke oya" (名付親) means "a person who names a baby in Japanese." In Japanese custom, the maternal grandfather usually names a new baby (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 175).

should have a strong will and the ability to endure the gloomy days of colonial rule with spirit and a conscience. At the same time, he should not be a cult figure that Hyewon looks up to and follows unconditionally. Hyewon needs a partner who can cooperate and provide a space in which she can grow on her own terms. As an adult woman, the coming baby girl should transcend traditional expectations of Korean womanhood, including constraints such as colonial rule and the patriarchal system.[8]

The deliberation dedicated to the naming of a possible boy and girl and envisioning their lives in Korea expands to a dialogue between the protagonist and her friend, Ryeoa. The two women discuss their daily lives, their values, and literature. In this dialogue, their relationship is one of confessant and confessor, similar to the protagonist's relationship with her cousin. Ryeoa is positioned as a person who confesses her inner self. In contrast, the protagonist is positioned as the confessor, analyzing the psychological and inner state of the friend. The protagonist's cool-headed intellect and straightforwardness—based on her rigid commitment and value-laden comments—cause some friction in the relationship between the two women. As Ryeoa points out, the protagonist is too intellectual to complain about and share her predicament with others. This prevents her from compromising with anyone whose values or attitudes conflict with her own and makes it difficult for her to become a more generous confessor. As Ryeoa complains, the protagonist has become difficult for others to understand. Instead, she makes other people uncomfortable, coldly evaluating others' predicaments while ignoring her own.

The protagonist's worldview is not articulated clearly in the text. However, the two women's dialogue on literature alludes to the protagonist's commitment to socialism and feminism. These views bring her into conflict with Ryeoa. At first, the protagonist points out that the friend's indulgence in literature laden with romantic sentiment has no grounding in reality. The protagonist argues that her friend's literary tastes prove the stereotypes

8. Park and Kim (2009, 324) interpret Ryeoa's statement about characteristics of an environment that is detrimental to women as a comment on the double binding of Korean women by colonialism and the patriarchal family system.

projected onto female writers by a patriarchal society. For Ryeoa, life and literature are the same. Writing a novel by creating the lives of her characters is compared to an orgasmic consummation that gives meaning to her life. The conflict between the protagonist and Ryeoa in the story about a woman who loves a young philosopher illustrates their different attitudes about female love, gender, and literature.

> There is a woman who loves a man who loves Spinoza. Although she nearly forgot the concept of pantheism that her lover explained before, she still remembers what he said about Spinoza. "Spinoza cleaned the lens. He died on Sunday. He ordered his servant to kill a chicken for cooking." A young philosopher says this: "The life of Spinoza is like a blue sky in the fall season," while a woman peels off an apple. (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 253)

Ryeoa attributes this story to an unidentified woman. However, the story might be drawn from her own life, in that Ryeoa loves a romantic and naïve young man who studies philosophy. By depicting the dialogue between lovers, Ryeoa demonstrates that she longs for a romantic life—probably the romantic character of a man who idealizes Spinoza. However, the protagonist criticizes Ryeoa's romantic feelings harshly, pointing out that they are an unrealistic fantasy. She questions the romantic attitude of a woman who attaches herself to and idealizes a lover from her past instead of pursuing an independent and autonomous life with pride and confidence. For the protagonist, this sentiment distinguishes female writers from male writers. Whether this story is from Ryeoa's life or is the story of a heroine created by Ryeoa, the protagonist expresses her conviction that literature should be grounded in real life, and women writers should transcend the romantic sentiment that stereotypes them.

For the protagonist, writing literature in order to express one's desires and seek comfort is too comfortable for an intellectual under colonial rule. This stance on literature is identical to Im's view, which she expressed in her literary criticism. In "Changjak-gwa taedo-segyegwan-ui jaegeon-eul wihayeo" (Literary Creation and Attitude for Reconstruction of Ideology,

1937),[9] Im discusses a contemporary literary trend in which novels no longer deal with social reality. Instead, novelists withdraw into the landscape of everyday lives or remain in the realm of abstract inner psychology, with no ideological interpretation. In an indirect way, Im raises questions about the subservience and escapism of literary society in response to Japanese colonial oppression. Im's statement that "literature is a business that is worthy of one's complete devotion" (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 394) implies a more serious and political function for literature—a function contingent on socialist realism. Since a literary writer is placed in a specific socio-historical milieu, one's world-view—the embodiment of one's interpretation of history and society—cannot be separated from one's writing. According to Im, literature itself is ideology, in that it is created through the interaction between a writer's worldview and the act of writing. Literary realism that emphasizes the objective representation of people, society, and culture, and presents it as neutral in its ideology is unthinkable for Im.

In "Yeoryujakga-ui jiwi-teuki jakga ijeon-e daehayeo" (The Status of the Woman Writer: Focusing on Identity as a Woman Prior to Being a Writer, 1937),[10] Im rejects any critical view which puts gender boundaries on the literary capacity and subject matter of women writers' literary works. She tackles the use of the term "yeoryu" (women) to identify female writers. She believes that this term indicates the prejudice against women in Korea, and is related to a male-centered critical practice that does not regard a female writer's work as seriously as writing by a male author. In "Nazuke oya," the protagonist's harsh attack on Ryeoa's attitude and trends in both her literary writing and her life articulates the voice of an author who stands for social realism and feminism. Im's use of the term "woman writer" overlaps with the concept as she discussed it in her critical writing. With this argument, the protagonist of "Nazuke oya" elevates the status of women writers to that of agents who can devote themselves to literature by reflecting on a worldview, rather than dealing with feminine subjects and sentiments.

9. "Changjak-gwa taedo-segyegwan-ui jaegeon-eul wihayeo" was serialized in *Chosun Ilbo* from October 15–20, 1937. It is reprinted in Lee Sang-kyung (2009).
10. "Yeoryujakga-ui jiwi-teuki jakga ijeon-e daehayeo" was serialized in *Chosun Ilbo* from June 30 to July 5, 1937. It is also reprinted in Lee Sang-kyung (2009).

Ryeoa's complaint about the protagonist's rigidness in evaluating her attitudes toward life and literature raises the meaning of a confession that each friend values in a different way. In the story, the protagonist downgrades the value of confession, describing it as a form of masturbation that merely amuses the self. The protagonist views any words she says as a stream of complaining that culminates in a short-lived orgasm. She feels suffocated in her current life, but cannot engage in romantic sentiment and enjoy her spare time. For her, talking about the self must entail damage to her integrity, as well as an acknowledgement that her spirit and will are tamed by oppressive social circumstances. By reserving the self rather than regretting and complaining about her gloomy social reality, which prevents her from pursuing her identity as a Korean woman and intellectual, she hopes to preserve her dignity. However, Ryeoa insists that whining is an important part of life, through which one may confess one's own troubles and embrace others. For Ryeoa, writing a novel is an act of crying out and achieving a kind of orgasmic bond that maintains her life and gives her the motivation to move on. Moreover, she thinks that the protagonist's rigidness makes people around her uncomfortable and is an act of self-oppression.

The short story parallels the confessor's life with the lives of the two confessants, the protagonist's cousin and close friend. As intellectuals living under Japanese colonial rule, her cousin and friend are similar in many ways. However, their commitments and values collide as they each make their confession to the protagonist and listen to her response. Neither character reaches an easy conclusion. The protagonist's worldview is perpetuated in the text and can never be compromised. Yet, the text is open to two confessants' worldviews, in the sense that the protagonist never loses love and concern for either character. Through her interaction with Ryeoa, the protagonist acquires a more flexible attitude toward her confessants. After receiving a telegram from her cousin informing her that the expected baby girl has been delivered safely, the protagonist writes a long letter to her cousin. She has not responded to his letter until now because she disagrees with the dissatisfaction he feels toward his wife. However, she does not want to judge and criticize him from her feminist viewpoint. Instead, she wants to achieve a heartfelt understanding with her cousin, who she believes is

in the progress of becoming a legitimate musician. The protagonist also decides that she will visit Ryeoa soon and listen again to her story about the man who loves Spinoza. This indicates that the protagonist, despite her differences with her confessants in terms of commitments and values, hopes that they will continue to dream and envision their ideal lives in spite of the challenges of colonial rule.

In her other short story, "Aki no okuri mono" (A Gift from Autumn, 1942), Im displays her optimism amid Japanese colonial oppression. Im illustrates the daily lives of her narrator's family and children in her hometown at a time when women in the town were mobilized by Japanese colonial authorities as laborers on collective farms. The narrator's warm-heartedness and care expand to include her friends in other regions of Korea. One friend cherishes her daughters, stating boldly that she desires five more daughters when her husband shares his disappointment that their second child is a girl. Another friend spends her nights writing a novel while earning a living working as a public sector employee and tutoring. In "Iryoil," Im depicted Korea's national sorrow and the sharp demarcation between the proponents and opponents of her political convictions. In contrast, her later works, written in Japanese, depict the bonds with which the members of a community can support one another. This unity is based on a collective ethnic identity as Koreans. In "Aki no okuri mono," the narrator comments on her friend's novel: "I cannot appreciate any literary works which do not reflect the voice of my fellow Koreans" (Lee Sang-kyung 2009, 262). Im's later works express her unceasing support for the Korean people at a time, toward the end of Japanese colonial rule, in which Koreans were exploited in support of the Japanese war effort.

Conclusion

As a colonial intellectual, Im Sun-deuk devoted herself to her writing, the only means by which she could find her way through the last days of Japanese colonial rule. Im depicted herself through her protagonists, whom she situated in a social environment that forced them to submit to and

assimilate into the Japanese colonial system. In this way, Im's act of writing itself was an attempt to preserve herself as a socially conscious intellectual in general, as well as a feminist. Through confessions, protagonists in the texts are positioned as confessors who interact with colleagues as they face their predicament as intellectuals living under the colonial system. In "Iryoil," Im draws a clear demarcation between people with whom the protagonist Hyeyeong sides and those she opposes. The story ends with the confirmation of Hyeyeong's attachment to Yunho, who is in prison for his anti-Japanese political activities. The protagonist in "Nazuke oya" discloses a more open set of viewpoints. This growth and maturity on the part of the protagonist in "Nazuke oya" is related to the theme of the text that Im wants to articulate. That is, despite the importance of national and socialist consciousness as emphasized in "Iryoil," establishing a shared and communal Korean identity is more important than individual Koreans' different values and levels of commitment. Rather than focusing on asserting an alienated colonized subject, Im's narrative pursues intersubjectivity by integrating the other's voice into the text.

In both texts, Im pursues an examination of Korean intellectual life in the midst of a national and individual crisis. The protagonists in both texts retain their confidence as feminists in pursuit of their identity as women. Likewise, Im raises questions in both texts about women's status in colonial Korea, seeking a path of ideal womanhood that is shaped by complicated mechanisms through nationalism, modernism, and colonialism. The two protagonists uphold and cherish their national identity, but attempt not to lose their identity as feminists, which they cannot sacrifice under any pretext. In "Nazuke oya," Im reaches for the state as the stronghold of an inclusive nationalist and feminist consciousness that never excludes others from its ideological paradigm. In the process, Im attempts to establish a bond with other Koreans who had survived their darkest hour in their own way.

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