ASIAN MODERNITIES: THE HISTORICAL UNCONSCIOUS IN ASIAN AND ASIAN

AMERICAN LITERATURES

by

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Abstract

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The question of modernity has been widely debated in postcolonial studies, with scholars such as Enrique Dussel and Walter Mignolo arguing that the emergence of alternate modernities unsettles the West as a cultural metropole. Dussel and Mignolo argue that the dominant narrative of modernity is rooted in Western colonialism, which situates the West as a cultural center. Thus, dominant modern ideology associates the height of human progress with Eurocentric culture. Transmodernity, according to Dussel, is a theory that focuses on the emergence of other modernities in the waning of Western colonization or influence. However, studies in transmodernity have not adequately addressed the issue of East Asian modernities.

My dissertation addresses the issue of East Asian modernities with special attention to transmodernity. The notion of the translocal describes transmodern expressions of space and time. Transmodernity is characterized by cultural pluralism. Translocality, likewise, is characterized by temporal or spatial pluralisms. Dominant modern ideology conceives of time as strictly linear and of space in terms of a metropole (the West), the heart of civilization, and outlying colonies (the non-West), places to be civilized. Asian gothic literary expressions,

abundant in both Asian and Asian-American literatures, may be characterized as translocal because Asian gothic expressions pose the collapse of boundaries between two separate realms signifying separation between the world of the living and that of the dead. Asian gothic expressions often emerge as directives to absolve injustice suffered by departed ancestors.

Korea's colonial history informs these gothic qualities in Korean and Korean American literary texts. Due to the close relationship between coloniality in Asia and the contemporary character of the Asian gothic, I focus on literature of the Korean diaspora due to its insights into coloniality/modernity, finding the historical memory of Japan's colonization of Korea important to these texts. Literary flows and emerging analogous issues between Korea, Japan, and China attest to the longstanding history of literary exchange between these countries and shed further insight into the relationship between the Asian gothic and transmodernity outside of Korean diaspora literature.

In Chapter One, the spectral in Younghill Kang's *East Goes West* and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* demonstrates the resurgence of Asian cultural qualities repressed by modernity. In Chapter Two, Japanese and Korean gothic comics use Western history and culture as an imaginative space to reinvent qualities and identities existing prior to modernization. In Chapter Three, the presence of urban decay and waste in Korean short stories and Pingwa Jia's *Happy Dreams* defies a dominant modern narrative by affirming cyclical and/or spiritual presences in urban environments. Chapter Four demonstrates that collectivistic beliefs simmer just beneath the surface of a capitalist, rapidly urbanized society in Korean short stories and Kyung-sook Shin's *I'll Be Right There*. In the conclusion of the dissertation, I consider how the supernatural indicates emerging modernities in a contemporary Chinese drama series, *The Untamed*.

I argue that where there is "strangeness" in contemporary Asian and Asian-American literary texts—hauntings, moments out of time or place, all-consuming obsessive or compulsive desires—new ideas are being generated about modernity. These various expressions of the gothic in Asian and Asian American literary texts challenge the status quo of the dominant modernity. Ghostliness acknowledges conditions of otherness that represent evolving identities for those outside of the majority. These representations demonstrate alternative modernities capable of articulating racism and the struggle for self-acceptance for those classified as other by the mainstream. The strangeness of ghosts, shadows, or uncanniness in these texts suggests where new ideas about modernity are being generated. In other words, while the Asian gothic ultimately expresses the crossover or mingling between the distinct realms of the living and the dead, these realms are identified in contemporary texts in terms of the dominant modern worldview and that which has been excluded from the dominant modern worldview.

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Introduction

In this dissertation, I explore how Asian and Asian-American literary texts produced after 1900 describe alternative (non-Western) modernities. These texts express modernities centering collectivism and non-Western spiritualities perceived through a nexus of translocal and Asian gothic lenses. These qualities challenge dominant modern narratives—individualistic, Christian/atheist—and signal a renewal of Asian cultures suppressed by the dominant modernity. I argue that where there is "strangeness" in contemporary Asian and Asian-American literary texts—hauntings, moments out of time or place, all-consuming obsessive or compulsive desires—new ideas are being generated about modernity. In Chapter One, the spectral in Younghill Kang's *East Goes West* and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* demonstrates the resurgence of Asian cultural qualities suppressed by modernity. In Chapter Two, Japanese and Korean gothic comics use Western history and culture as an imaginative space to express emerging values and identities. In Chapter Three, the presence of urban decay and waste in Korean short stories and Pingwa Jia's *Happy Dreams* defies a dominant modern narrative by affirming cyclical and/or spiritual presences in urban environments. Chapter Four demonstrates that collectivistic beliefs simmer just beneath the surface of a capitalist, rapidly urbanized society in Korean short stories and Kyung-sook Shin's *I'll Be Right There*.

The concept of alternate modernities, explored by Enrique Dussel and Walter Mignolo, unsettles the West as a point of origin for world culture. The notion of the West as a global center is rooted in colonialism. In the Western colonial model, non-Western nations provide resources to a metropole. Dussel argues that the Western world-system, a narrative of history that directs the history of human civilization toward the West as the height of human progress, inhibits the recognition of non-Western modernities and fosters Western cultural dominance. Transmodernity, according to Dussel, is a theory that focuses on the emergence of other

modernities in the waning of Western colonization or influence. Mignolo argues that modern ideology creates a set of racial and social divisions yet poses itself as the solution to the problems generated by these divisions—poverty, racism, classism. Therefore, escalation of modern ideologies heightens these social problems. These decolonial theories underlie my analysis of literary texts.

In the chapters that follow, I turn to these and other decolonial perspectives that orient Asian histories and cultures in the larger world-system hypothesis. Travis Workman, Naoki Sakai, and Hyon Joo Yoo demonstrate how Japan's empire-building in the early 20th century and subsequent alliance with the United States fragmented long-standing East Asian relations. Nihal Perera, Wing-Shing Tang, and Sharon Hong consider how Asian urbanisms disrupt the center-periphery model that characterizes Western modernity through translocal expressions—that is, expressions of simultaneity between differing places and times. Janet Poole and Jini Kim Watson describe how Korean literary texts demonstrate Korea's replication of the Japanese colonial model instituted during Korea's modernization in the early 20th century.

The notion of the translocal describes trans-modern expressions of space and time. Transmodernity is characterized by cultural pluralism. Translocality, likewise, is characterized by temporal or spatial pluralisms. Dominant modern ideology conceives of time as strictly linear and of space in terms of a metropole (the West), the heart of civilization, and outlying colonies (the non-West), places to be civilized. While not every translocal literary expression may be characterized as gothic, per se, Asian gothic literary expressions, abundant in both Asian and Asian-American literatures, may be characterized as translocal. Asian gothic expressions pose the collapse of boundaries between two separate realms signifying separation between the world of the living and that of the dead. Asian gothic expressions often emerge as directives to absolve

injustice suffered by departed ancestors. In the texts examined in the next chapters, the Asian gothic expresses what has been excluded by the dominant narrative of modernity. In other words, while the Asian gothic ultimately expresses the crossover or mingling between the distinct realms of the living and the dead, these realms are identified in contemporary texts in terms of the dominant modern worldview and that which has been excluded from the dominant modern worldview. Often, these excluded qualities are of a historical nature, in line with Dussel's observation that trans-modernities signal "a return to the consciousness of the great majorities of humanity, of their excluded historical unconscious!" (236). These texts express the haunting nature of the repressed historical unconscious, conceiving of the division between the historical unconscious and dominant modernity as that of two separate realms.

Korea's colonial history informs these gothic qualities in Korean and Korean American literary texts. Due to the close relationship between coloniality in Asia and the contemporary character of the Asian gothic, I focus on literature of the Korean diaspora due to its insights into coloniality/modernity, finding the historical memory of Japan's colonization of Korea important to these texts. At the same time, coloniality's persistence as a dominant modernity in the twenty-first century impacts all non-Western countries, pressuring their conformity to Western standards. Literary flows and emerging analogous issues between Korea, Japan, and China attend to the longstanding history of literary exchange between these countries and shed further insight into the relationship between the Asian gothic and trans-modernity outside of Korean diaspora literature. Chapter Two considers the similar aesthetics between Korean and Japanese comics that reflect on nineteenth-century East Asian masculinities. Chapter Three considers urban decay and waste in both Korean and Chinese literary texts as analogous issues stemming from rapid

industrialization and the rise of megacities. While the issues stem from similar drives to modernize, I observe very different literary responses to the issues.

East Asian Modernities

Dussel advocates the acknowledgement of trans-modernity, modernity that emerges from nations whose own cultures have been repressed for two centuries by Western domination. Dussel finds that the centuries-old account of European centrality, which begins with the Spanish colonization of America, omits a key element in this history: China was a major player on the world stage. Dussel notes that Europe purchased Chinese goods with Spanish-American silver acquired through colonization of South America but did not have other products of interest to the Chinese, while the products of China were much in demand throughout the world (229). According to Dussel, Europe was peripheral on the world stage until the French Revolution. During the French Revolution, the beginning of the machine age in Europe, Europe began to dominate the global stage because China did not immediately incorporate new production technologies and philosophies.

By considering European centrality as only two hundred years old, rather than five hundred, it becomes feasible that local cultures may recover readily in a climate of waning Western power. Dussel reasons that two hundred years is not enough time for countries' own cultures, traditions, and lifeways to be thoroughly eradicated by the domination of Western culture. Therefore, the recent emergence of non-Western powers like China is to be expected for previously powerful nations that experienced repression for only a few generations. Dussel also reasons that trans-modernity expresses the contemporary world stage more competently than postmodernity, a Western-centered ideology that duplicates the Eurocentricity of modernity. Postmodernity seeks deconstruction and fragmentation to resolve the conflicts of modernity.

However, postmodernity, Dussel finds, does not acknowledge the agency of non-Western powers or cultures. Instead, the postmodern perspective assumes that modernization is inevitable.

One concept of note in Dussel's argument is that of the exterior of the world-system—the denial of the futures of all non-Western cultures. In the world-system model, only European culture is considered "civilized." Everything else is deemed "worthless in terms of the modern values and 'universal' criteria of civilization" (Dussel 232). Dussel finds that recognition of "exteriority" as a category of significance distinguishes a trans-modern analysis from a postmodern one by underscoring a culture's "positivity" (234). Exteriority, according to Dussel, has the potential to build cultural plurality—that is, the proliferation of non-Western cultures that will succeed modernity (234). In the following chapters in the dissertation, I consider the presence of the exteriority in Asian and Asian American literary texts. For instance, in Kang's *East Goes West* and Cha's *Dictee*, exteriority is signified in the text by spectral presences. Urban waste in Korean short stories and Jia's *Happy Dreams* is another representation of exteriority. Depictions of spirits crossing into the world of the living and the unsightliness of waste and its relationship to undesirable classes of people are instances of transgression against the dominant modern. Supernatural or uncanny encounters in these literary texts represent the presence of exteriorized cultures.

Mignolo argues that coloniality is the underlying logic of modernity. According to Mignolo, a nation moves along a course of linear progress defined by the West as modernity through the labor and natural resources acquired through colonizing another nation or territory or by exploiting a class within one's own nation. Perceiving the inseparability of modernity from coloniality, Mignolo describes decolonial thinking as "a relentless analytic effort to understand, in order to overcome, the logic of coloniality underneath the rhetoric of modernity" (Mignolo

10). Mignolo, like Dussel, thinks in terms of multiple modernities; however, for Mignolo, "if there cannot be modernity without coloniality, there cannot either be global modernities without global colonialities" (3). Therefore, it's necessary to perceive and address coloniality in an analysis of non-Western modernities, including those of nations not colonized directly by Western powers. Jini Kim Watson addresses this issue by considering how modernities in South Korea and Singapore reproduce colonial logic by controlling an internal labor force that produces for internal consumers rather than for a metropole.

Mignolo, like Dussel, argues for the acknowledgement of emerging non-Western modernities. Drawing from the research of Carl Schmitt, Mignolo conceives of history in terms of a first and second nomos. The first nomos, prior to 1500, before the era of intensified European ocean travel and exploration of non-European territories, is characterized by polycentric world powers, according to this scheme. Mignolo perceives that the advent of the second nomos, that of the West's rise of global power, did not result in the destruction of the first nomos. Instead, the first nomos "are re-emerging in the twentieth-first century in different guises: as religious and ancestral identities re-articulated in responses to and confrontation with Western global designs" (30). Contemporary Asian and Asian American literary texts re-express cultural values and spirituality that have been repressed by modern ideologies like Mignolo's observation of the re-emergence of the first nomos.

The acknowledgement of the spiritual in these literary texts is crucial in how non-Western spiritualities undermines Western modernity by deemphasizing the material and conceiving of non-capitalist schemes of ownership. Mignolo points out the intrinsic connection between indigenous spiritualities and land. Given that indigenous spiritualities may not be fully recoverable without close ties to land, renewal of these spiritualities will strengthen the viability

of non-capitalist alternatives and increase the variety of global modernities, anticipating a return of polycentric world powers and a turn from the dominance of Western capitalist ideology, which perpetuates the colonial model. Mignolo argues that the re-emerging indigenous spiritualities "desire to find ways of life beyond capitalism and its magic of modernity and development that keeps consumers caught in the promises of dreamworlds" (62). Through the re-expression of previously repressed ideologies about spirituality, Asian modernities have the power to challenge the dominant Western secular narrative of modernity centering capitalism and materialism. That said, Asian modernities are grounded in specific colonial histories subject to Western colonial logic as well as specific relationships between neighboring nations existing prior to modernization.

The rise of the Japanese empire, as described by Travis Workman, Naoki Sakai, and Hyon Joo Yoo is a turning point in the modern histories of Japan, Korea, and China. Workman argues that Japan centered an appropriated form of the Western philosophical concept of the genus-being into its colonial logic and that Korea, in turn, as the colonized nation, turned to humanist philosophy to solidify a distinct Korean cultural identity. The genus-being, a formal generality whose achievement enables unification and causes human differences to vanish, was adopted by Japan to create a society constrained by the value system of colonial Japan. This Japan-centered genus-being also worked to assimilate colonized individuals into the Japanese empire and lose their own national and cultural affiliations. Workman explains that in the concept of the genus being, the ideas of "genus" and "species" operate to regulate humanity around a particular ideal. This regulation results in a hierarchy which, in the West, organizes white individuals at the pinnacle. Ethnic Japanese citizens were organized at the pinnacle of this genus-being ideology. Japan's logic was incorporated in a discourse of inclusivity even as Japan

discouraged and eventually suppressed Korean cultural differences. Thus, a demarcation developed between "Culture," the colonizer's culture, which Koreans were persuaded to adopt to ensure their survival, and Korean "culture," used as an instrument to racialize Koreans as colonized subjects.

Sakai and Yoo argue that trans-pacific relations must be understood in terms of colonial activities in the twentieth century. The authors find that the categorical understanding of East Asia is derived from Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, an alliance Japan promoted among neighboring countries to stave off Western domination in Asia. In practice, this alliance functioned to expand the territory of the Japanese empire, which had already subsumed Korea. According to Sakai and Yoo, after World War II, the United States took control of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, reinforcing Japan's configuration of the region. The authors note the inequality of the post-World War II alliance between the United States and Japan due to the United States' substantial military presence in Japan which persists to this day. Thus, East Asian nations have not experienced Western colonialism and postcolonialism according to a dominant understanding of these terms.

The authors argue that rather than imposing an external culture on colonized nations, the United States fosters ethnic nationalisms, ensuring that nations remain distinct from one another while colonialism remains largely unseen on the surface of everyday life. Sakai and Yoo find that in this invisible form of colonialism, "[o]ne perceives multiple visions at the same time" such that "colonialism is finished and yet evident at the same time in East Asia" (5). The ambiguity between colonial and postcolonial status in East Asia is due to the identification of nationalism as a quality of a liberated nation in dominant understandings of nationalism. According to a nationalist narrative, a colonized people will become aware of their commonality

in a growing nationalist consciousness, then rise together against the colonial government (Sakai and Yoo 4). Once the people achieve independence, they install a national government (Sakai and Yoo 4). The authors point out that in this model, the colonizer is a foe of nationalism, so that the conditions of nationalism and colonialism are mutually exclusive.

This colonially reinforced nationalism promotes patriarchal power in Japan and its neighbors. Sakai and Yoo describe Japan's "victim fantasy" as an idea that Japan was forced to concede to certain post-war terms (8-9). Both Koreas and China exhibit "hypermasculine nationalism" in how they perceive a loss of masculinity as a nation through colonial forces (Sakai and Yoo 9). Sakai and Yoo advocate for particular attention toward the portrayals of women and their suffering, since the feminine subject contributes to the concept of a patriarchal nation.

Perera, Tang, and Hong consider how Asian urbanisms represent the disruption of Western modernity in Asian places and foster Asian modernities through translocal expressions. Rather than the center-periphery model that characterizes Western modernity, Asian modernities express simultaneities between differing places and times in their use of artifacts, memories, and emotions. According to Perera and Tang, the imaginative power of Asian cities has been underrepresented due to the prevailing colonialist ideology of metropole and colony, the former as developed, the latter undeveloped (2, 4). The authors argue that Asia "creatively combines local, Western, and global understandings and experience," while also promoting Asia's own globalization through its grounding in local spaces, practices, and cultures (3). This theoretical lens presents the presence of Western aesthetics and ideologies in Asian places as something other than an encroachment. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, thinking of the integration of foreign ideas from an African literary perspective, argues for the enrichment of African literatures by other

world literatures. Thiongo notes "[w]e never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages? How can we 'prey' on the rich humanist and democratic heritage in the struggles of other peoples in other times and other places to enrich our own?" (435). Like Thiongo's call to examine the possibilities of non-African ideologies for African literatures, I propose that Asian literatures, having perceived the possibilities for Western aesthetics and ideologies to express Asian modernities, have appropriated these qualities to express local imaginative spaces. By dislodging assumptions of center and periphery, translocality perceives the creative adaptation of Western qualities to Asian literatures.

My analysis of Bram Stoker's vampire, Dracula, Rococo aesthetics, and Christian imagery in Asian comics in Chapter Two is particularly relevant to this adaptation. I argue that Asian comics use these images as symbols or analogues for emerging Asian forms. Globalized popular culture provides a particularly rich space to examine the entangled values of capitalist growth, hegemonic power, and local imaginaries. John Storey argues that analyses of globalization must consider the power of the local in adapting foreign culture to local needs. Storey notes that "[g]lobalization can…help confirm and help undo local cultures" (114). In other words, confrontation with the foreign may provoke introspection or self-evaluation of a culture. The changes that result from encountering and processing Western culture do not necessarily mean a culture is becoming Westernized but, on the contrary, that the culture has achieved a position of strength from which to parody or appropriate aspects of Western culture.

The vampire figure in Western folklore, re-expressed in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, has no direct analogue in Japanese or Korean folklore. *Dracula* has shaped the modern vampire figure internationally as introspective and solitary, a reflection on the modern individual. Yoshitaka Inoue argues that the vampire represents the modern individual. Inoue notes that the rise of

vampire folklore coincides with the rise of the Western Enlightenment (84). Inoue finds that the vampire expresses the instability between modern divisions like "rationality and affect, humanity and nature, subjectivity and objectivity" (85). Inoue notes that the vampire Dracula is, by the late twentieth century, characterized by introspection and portrayed as sympathetic to the reader, rather than a monster to be destroyed, as is the case in folklore (90). Asian comics' adaptations of the Western vampire suggest analogous expressions of the alienated modern individual. These adaptations emerge alongside a gothic turn in Japanese youth culture around the turn of the twenty-first century, suggesting how Western gothic aesthetics and the trope of the vampire become relevant to youthful identities in Asia during a time of globalization and rapid economic growth in Japan and South Korea during this time.

The analysis in Chapter Two also finds that Western-oriented aesthetics and expressions may indicate nostalgic desire for Asia prior to the twentieth century. European settings and Western tropes are transformed through nostalgic desire to represent an imaginary like Susan Stewart's notion of a "future-past, a past which has only ideological reality" (23). Rebecca Suter argues that the use of European, particularly Christian, imagery in Asian comics presents the West as Other in the same way that Western works portray East Asia as Other. According to Suter, the West serves as an exoticized play-space for the reader's imagination in manga just as Western fantasies have appropriated imagery from East Asia to reflect their own fears and desire. Suter finds that this kind of contrast reverses the scheme of Orientalism described by Edward Said in how Japan romanticizes Europe as a "backward 'Other' against which to construct the image of a modern self" (551). The study of this reversal acknowledges the storytelling agencies of Asian countries that have reckoned with globalized Western influences over the twentieth century.

Sheng-mei Ma's theoretical lens of "Asian Diaspora Culture" suggests another, broader, way of describing Asian and Asian American literary texts in translocal terms. Ma describes an imaginary Asia as "Aerial Asia," derived from three "wisps of dream:" one, an "Asian America," from the Asian American imagination, which conjures an image of Asia which reinforces Asian American identity and empowerment; two, an Orientalist view of Asia conceived by Westerners; and three, an Orientalized Asia dreamed by Asians (1). Ma describes the Asia composed by these different threads as "inescapable escapist, a flight from itself, or self-alienation" (1). Ma argues that in terms of this imaginary of Asia, all Asian people belong to an "Asian Diaspora Culture" since for all concerned, the "'Parting Pacific (or Atlantic, Indian)' flashes through their mental or cinematic screen, a yearning that defamiliarizes their present existence" (5). This yearning is characterized, according to Ma, by a split between the imagined Asia left behind and the present reality (4). This Asian imaginary heightens the differences between the remembered or storied past, or the "traditional," and the "modern" present. This differentiation links to a colonial scheme of differentiation between the traditional, or obsolete, and the colonial ideology of the modern.

Ma's theory serves to link literary texts across Asian Diaspora Culture in the shared imaginative space Aerial Asia. According to Ma, Aerial Asia is characterized by deep contrasts between forms associated with the traditional and the modern. Modern ideology produces the notion of the "traditional" by defining itself against a past period. Mignolo's analysis of the colonial matrix of power further clarifies how this division between the modern and the non-modern is expressed in a scheme of world arts and cultures. Mignolo argues that European "literature and painting set the rules by which to judge and evaluate written expressions and visual figurations not only in Europe, but, above all, in the non-European world" (20). Mignolo

considers how European and non-European cultures are displayed in different kinds of museums. Non-European cultures are presented in terms of anthropological significance, while European materials after the Renaissance are characterized as art (Mignolo 20-21). Similar contrasts between the Asian "traditional" and Western "modern" characterizes the imaginary of Aerial Asia. In a sense, Ma's Aerial Asia is proposing that Asian imaginaries may, to some degree, collude with Western colonialism in characterizing familiar or historical cultures as "tradition" against a perception of a modern future. Along these lines, Ma finds that Asian Diaspora Culture is haunted by that which the dominant ideology has relegated to the past. The "traditional" takes on a dream-like, sublime quality that evokes strong feelings of nostalgia in Asian diaspora literatures.

Translocality is also significant to contemporary East Asian literary genres. Dominant notions of "genre" and "novel" have been standardized by the West in recent history, alongside other forms of art, according to Mignolo's characterization of the colonial matrix of power. Hunggyu Kim notes this issue in his history of Korean literary genres, finding that the

> three-genre method of classification commonly applied to modern Western literature,
> which emphasizes imagination, is ill-suited to the study of Korean literature
> because…literature of the Chinese character cultural zone…has traditionally placed
> greater emphasis on honest expression of the author's feelings than on creative
> imagination (53-54).

Kim advocates adding a fourth genre, didactic, onto the three conventionally associated with Western writing: lyric, narrative, and dramatic, to better accommodate the variety of nonfiction Korean literary works (54). The novel has a longstanding history as a form of commercial significance in Korea, China, and Japan. However, the Western novel influenced the literatures

of these countries as contact with the West heightened in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Relationships between China, Japan, and Korea predate and have evolved alongside the Western global rise to power. Prior to the twentieth century, classical Chinese was a shared literary language between China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam (Kim 11). In contemporary works, evidence of these longstanding genres and literary exchanges persists alongside that of relatively new innovations resulting from contact with Western forms.

Korean terminology does not distinguish between different lengths of narrative fiction. Kim notes that *sosol*, the world equivalent to "novel," refers to short stories and novellas as well as longer works (107). From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the heroic novel was an influential form. This form captures the tensions between Confucian values, which were weakening, and a pursuit of personal desires, often reifying the former (Kim 111). Often, novels were authored anonymously (Kim 114). However, this convention shifted significantly after the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, Korean booksellers began to distinguish the "classic novel" (anything written prior to the late-nineteenth or early twentieth century) from the "new novel," which attracted more commercial interest (Kim 115). The "new novel" is characterized by Chinese, Japanese, and Western literatures; although, Kim contends, it still retains the characteristics of the heroic form of the "classic novel" (115). Even so, the new novel became an important vehicle for transmitting modern ideologies to the Korean literati. Kim notes that "most new novels extolled the modernization of Korea through the importation of Western culture and technology, things that promised a better future and were viewed with sympathy and envy," and much of the literature might be deemed "shallow propaganda for modernization" (117). The form transitioned via an abrupt ideological shift to the modern novel, which problematized modern life, particularly under Japanese colonial rule.

Many qualities from the modern novel are evident in Korean literature throughout the twentieth century. While disillusioned with colonial life, characters of modern novels "could not turn their critical feelings into action and…were overwhelmed by sadness and a sense of helplessness" (Kim 121). Jungeun Hwang's observations echo this description nearly a century later as she notes that individuals, "witness[ing] their own and others' worthlessness" through official labor policies following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, are "overcome by a feeling of helplessness" (20). This mood of helplessness can be traced throughout literary texts for several decades as well as preoccupations with labor and class. Scholars characterize many twentieth-century Korean literary texts as social realist. This term must be understood in terms of both local and foreign contributing strands of influence: heroic novels that question or reify Confucian values, Japanese and Western literatures, and Marxism.

Sosol, fiction of varying lengths, is one genre I examine that is characterized by various localities, while *manhwa*, or Korean comics, is another. According to Yamanaka Chie, comics culture was imported to Korea from Japan during the colonial period (87). Chie argues that manhwa is highly influenced by the circulation of *manga*, or Japanese comics, beyond the colonial period, even after the banning of Japanese cultural products in Korea (87). Chie also attributes manhwa's stylistic similarities to manga to the prevalence of manga plagiarism in Korea throughout the twentieth century (87). Manga has a longstanding history in Japan, with early examples of comic art dating to the seventh century (Ito 458). Comics, often of a humorous or erotic nature, persisted in Japan prior to the first use of the term manga by Hokusai Katsushika, at the start of the nineteenth century (Ito 460). Western and Japanese arts influenced one another from the nineteenth century when Japan opened to the West. The boom of the United States comics industry in the early twentieth century drew manga artists to American

comics (Ito 463). While manga remains open to cross-cultural influences, its nature is bound up in what Kinko Ito refers to as Japan's "'high context culture,'" which favors "more implicit, unclear, and ambiguous messages whose meanings are found in the context, rather than explicit, clear, and straightforward messages" (457). In other words, manga has some of the same evocative qualities as other genres, like haiku, that require the reader's participation in the scene.

I come to manga from the United States, described by Ito as a "'low context culture.'" While I do not agree that the "low context" descriptor applies to all Americans, it is accurate regarding academic institutions, where communication practices are shaped by dominant Western ideology. Written communication in academia is usually in linear prose form, with occasional figures, like this dissertation. I find manga and manhwa difficult to summarize in prose form because of their participatory, haiku-like qualities. As Ito notes, Asian comics are grounded in a high context culture, which means that they can incorporate Western ideas or aesthetics without significant alterations to form.

In analyzing Asian modernities in Korean literary texts, I have tended to use texts and scholarship that focus on South Korea. However, North Korea is an important presence in East Asia. The Koreas continue to share a language and cultural history. Especially in reading Asian literary texts with Asian gothic and translocal lenses, it must be considered that the Koreas shadow each another, each representing an ideological extreme stemming from viewpoints developed in Korea's early decades of modernization under Japanese colonial rule. From a translocal and trans-modern perspective, North Korean modernities emerge alongside those of South Korea, the latter an active player in global culture, the former closed to outside influence.

While, overall, little is known about North Korean popular culture, Suk-Young Kim infers similarities between North and South Korean consumer interests based on the popularity

of cultural products smuggled into North Korea. Kim analyzes the influence of a South Korean television drama series, *Boys Over Flowers*, in North Korea. The series, adapted from a Japanese comic, is popular throughout Asia and has been translated and adapted in multiple countries. Kim attributes this general popularity of the drama to its narrative of consumerism, physical beauty, and the power of wealth. Kim ultimately surmises that North Korea grapples with these topics alongside the rest of Asia and thus may respond in sympathy with South Korea, and other parts of Asia, in response to the ideologies promoted by Western global power. Kim considers how the consumption of *Boys Over Flowers* in both Koreas demonstrates public interest in a particular narrative about the submission of a poor commoner to the rich and powerful and the struggle between moral integrity and mindless consumption. Kim notes that North Korean society may identify with the drama's portrayal of a "glass ceiling" (104). In *Boys Over Flowers*, the individual meritocracy carries only so far, and eventually individuals "are at the mercy of those who have the ultimate power to control them" (S. Kim 104). Similarly, according to Kim, North Korea idealizes a "utopia within limits, where every subject has to stay under the glass ceiling of the almighty leader" (104). In addition, Kim notes, the god-like portrayal of the conglomerate heir in *Boys Over Flowers* is like the personality cult that elevates North Korean leaders to a mythological status (S. Kim 97). Kim's analysis elucidates the sympathies between consumers in Asian capitalist nations while also suggesting their common experiences of authoritarianism and class inequalities.

Authoritarianism and class inequalities are two recurring topics in literary expressions of Asian modernities traceable to colonial presences in East Asia. Janet Poole and Jini Kim Watson describe how Korean urbanisms demonstrate Korea's replication of the Japanese colonial model instituted during Korea's modernization in the early 20th century. Sharon Hong, focusing on

layout, reads Korean urbanisms trans-temporally, arguing that Seoul's physical characteristics are grounded in Korean ideology and that foreign influence does not penetrate deeply. During the colonial period, Japan outfitted Korea with modern transportation routes and technology in service to the Japanese empire. Poole notes that Japan's development of Korea impacted Seoul with economic disparities between laborers, peasants now unable to sustain a rural living, and Japanese migrants (8). After the Korean War, both Koreas continued to industrialize and adapt practices from the West and from the legacy of Japanese colonization.

Watson reads a literary portrayal of Seoul in terms of the "New Asian City" (NAC)—a term that describes Asian cities that have undergone rapid development in a short period. Watson notes that such cities are often postcolonial in nature and duplicate the colonial regime with the installation of a military government, reproducing the colonial scheme of producer and consumer within the same country (212-13). Such is the case for Seoul which, following its liberation from a Japanese colonial government, and after years of political instability and civil war, was rapidly industrialized by the South Korean military government in the latter half of the twentieth century. According to Watson, NAC's have characteristics that set them apart from other urban centers such as immense heights and densities as well as ongoing construction (195). Watson notes that the NAC has "distinctive qualities of 'newness' and a modernity seemingly incongruous with Europe's" (195). Watson finds that the new regimes conserved the producer and consumer ideologies from the colonial era, an important distinction from prior scholarly assumptions about the division between producer and consumer cities (199). In the NAC model, the metropole and colony exist simultaneously in a shared space. NACs demonstrate coloniality as the underlying logic of modernity, as Mignolo argues. They also demonstrate modernities that

challenge dominant views on modernity and nationalism by conserving colonial and authoritarian ideologies as sovereign nations.

Like Watson, Hong advocates the study of Asian cities like Seoul as distinct in their expression of modernity from Western cities. Hong argues that despite Seoul's ultra-modern appearance, its centuries of history prior to modernization are crucial to understanding its evolution (20). Seoul's streets are laid out according to traditional *pungsu* values, "a fusion of natural and cultural considerations in the processes of land evaluation and development" that considers the natural formation of land and waterways (21). Seoul's design is optimized for "promoting military security and rice production" (Hong 21). Hong notes that Japanese urban planning measures, such as the erection of a large building in front of Gyeongbok Palace, resulted in citizens' view of modernization as an encroachment on their own culture, "something not Korean" (23). In the late 1990s, citizens became interested in the recovery of historical architectural styles, resulting in an increase of coexistence and hybridity between Westernized and historical structures. (Hong 26-27). Reading Seoul's spatial layout and architecture, Hong describes Seoul as transtemporal and translocal, emphasizing its conservation of values that center historical economies and conventions on natural resource optimization.

A transmodern lens requires that cultural expressions of modernity be read continuously, refusing the division between "traditional" and "modern" qualities upheld by dominant modern ideology. However, as scholars like Ma, Kim, and Hong have noted, Asian imaginaries sometimes reify divisions between the traditional and modern in perceiving the historical as the traditional. However, these imaginaries also express a preoccupation with this perceived division, troubling it with ambiguity. Nostalgia reifies the boundary but also signals a revival and reintegration of historical qualities in contribution to Asian modernities. Therefore, a

conversation about Asian modernities necessitates an acknowledgement of this boundary in Asian imaginaries. Hong's essay notes the revival of historical Korean architecture in the 1990s, particularly the rebuilding of hanok houses after the demolishment of hanok neighborhoods in decades prior. The nostalgia for the hanok dwelling acknowledges its discontinuity with the present and yet also reestablishes a place for it in Korean urbanism.

Modern Korean literature expresses this boundary between the perceived traditional and modern via the development and promotion of the "new novel." As Kim notes, the "new novel" is propagandistic in its promotion of the West and Japan as sources of modern culture to bring Korea from its perceived dark age into the light of modernity. While later coloring Korean culture with nostalgia, Korean thinkers identified local culture as outmoded and laden with ignorance and superstition in the early decades of the twentieth century. The growing interest in the historical in the 1990s reifies this division through nostalgia but also seeks to recover modes of culture from the earlier part of the century.

Nostalgia is significant to Asian modernities, not only in architecture and urban planning but also in literature and popular culture. Considering contemporary literature and popular culture through the lens of the Asian gothic is a means to perceive how nostalgic desire has produced icons that hearken to values and aesthetics that were hastily discarded during modernization. The integration of these icons into mainstream culture troubles this established dichotomy of the traditional and modern maintained by Western modernity. This nostalgia is also bound up with nationalism and mediated through cultural policies that control the representations of East Asian modernities both locally and internationally.

Asian Gothic Modernities

The term "gothic" is entangled with a dominant modern ideology. The Western gothic mode rose to prominence in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries alongside a widespread

adoption of "Reason," or a strictly rational, atheist perspective, after decades of destructive religious wars in Europe. Scholars often perceive the early Western gothic as a shadow of the rational self, an imaginative space for emotions, relegated to a lower order than reason, and for matters of religion, often conflated with superstition and corruption. As the Western gothic developed alongside modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it expressed via literature and culture forms of "otherness" that indicate identities rejected by a dominant white masculine, heteronormative identity. Thus, "gothic" is typically associated with expressions developed in Western contexts and its aesthetics are primarily determined by Western history, religion, and culture.

Using the word "gothic" to describe Asian literary texts risks imposing Western binaries, taboos, and preoccupations on Asian literature. Therefore, the analysis of a gothic presence in Asian literary texts must be approached carefully, keeping in mind the foreign nature of attributes incorporated from the Western gothic and distinguishing these from local and historical imaginaries that work to invest Asian texts with qualities of "strangeness." For example, archetypes like vampires imported from Western imaginaries into an Asian gothic text are often characterized by local spiritual traditions. The appearance of the strange in Asian literary texts does not carry the same sense of the inexplicable or irrational as it does in Western texts because the West's cultural denial of the spiritual is not analogous to local negotiations of spirituality and the modern. Instead, the strange, in forms of hauntings or monstrous beings, indicates imbalances or a lack of integrity, often regarding duty toward ancestors or homeland. Ghosts may serve to frighten but do not represent an annihilation of rational thought.

How do I decide that something in a text is intentionally strange? Coming from a Western cultural background, might I misinterpret a quality of the text unfamiliar to me as a

reader as intentionally strange? I acknowledge that my decision on whether a quality is strange is a subjective one. I also acknowledge that the risk for misinterpretation is there. There are two kinds of strangeness that I perceive in the literary texts described in the dissertation. One is the use of fantastical elements like vampires or magical systems that are characterized by dangerous or threatening qualities. These qualities often either borrow from Western gothic aesthetics or demonstrate aesthetics that stem from local traditions which Ng had described as "Asian gothic." The other kind of strangeness I perceive in the texts stems from misaligned social relations or a dysfunctional society that results in psychological horror and/or physical jeopardy. This kind of strangeness is characterized by a social enforcement of complicity that increases characters' helplessness in dangerous or unsustainable situations. In both cases, I have perceived eerie qualities around these sources of danger that I describe as "strange."

Paying close attention to qualities of strangeness provides an opportunity to perceive what new modernities are emerging. Strange expressions impart crucial information about Asian modernities by demonstrating confrontations with what is perceived to have been left behind in a decisive historical break and which foreign ideas are useful for adaptation to local expressions.

One recurring ghostly presence in the Asian gothic is the hungry ghost. The hungry ghost is a concept linked with religions including Buddhism and Taoism. Ancestor worship, an integral part of many religions and spiritual practices in East Asia, is considered a means to prevent an ancestor from becoming a hungry ghost. An ancestor who is not remembered properly or who does not receive adequate offerings may become a hungry ghost, trapped between realms and incapable of continuation in the karmic cycle. The notion of the hungry ghost is a part of many spiritual traditions in East Asia and does not engender the degree of doubt or skepticism that the topic of ghosts generally provokes among Western thinkers. The presence of a hungry ghost in a

literary text or other cultural expression indicates that all is not as it should be—often, that duty has been neglected or that an individual has a need that must be fulfilled before they can move forward in the karmic cycle. While the ghostly presence indicates a problem, it is not accompanied by the degree of horror it engenders in Western culture because it does not represent the annihilation of a rational order. On the contrary, the hungry ghost is an expected outcome of improper action or disorder.

Andrew Hock Soon Ng notes the importance of ghosts in Asian American literature in representing ancestral ties for individuals of a diaspora population. Ng notes that a ghostly presence in an Asian American literary text "intimates redemptive capacities and demonstrates how friendships and family ties do not cease with death, but continue in different dynamics into the afterlife" (6). The presence of ghostliness thus reinforces not only connections to ancestors but to a homeland of personal or communal recollection. Ghosts ensure that individuals hold a space for remembrance across time and distance. Ghosts generate alternative modernities that require orientation toward the past as well as future and value plurality of places and temporalities over a cultural center.

Other scholars, like Jane Chi Hyun Park, Anne Cheng, and Cynthia Sau-ling Wong, read ghosts as expressions of exclusion from a racial majority in Western society. Park argues that ghosts come to reflect aspects of diasporic identity because "[i]nvisibility and foreignness, traits used to characterise and often stereotype Asians in the West, are projected in spectral ways onto the archaic and the feminine in these texts, limning the ghosts of older colonial and precolonial histories that haunt the ongoing, uneven project of modernity" (106). Thus, for Park, ghosts are a sign of exclusion from the majority culture rather than a reinforcement of connections across space and time. Cheng and Wong read ghostliness in Asian American literary texts from a

Western psychoanalytic perspective. Cheng argues that melancholia is an essential part of the internalized racialization of minorities in America. Melancholia, according to Freud, as an alternative to mourning as a response of grief, differs from mourning in how mourning accepts a substitution for what has been lost, while melancholia is a pathological condition that resists substitution. Instead, the melancholic develops an ego identification with the lost object. Cheng argues that the dominant white identity in America retains non-white identities within the concept of nationality as a racial other. Non-white subjects internalize this othering as part of their identities. Wong's argument is similar in how she considers how literary expressions of the uncanny, such as the shadow, represent the othering of Asian American identity in Asian American subjects that have internalized the notion of white supremacy. Wong argues that the presence of the shadow or doppelganger in Asian American literature must be read in terms of mainstream assimilation, in which Asian Americans must reject a part of themselves to become acceptable to society. Undesirable feelings like self-hatred are projected onto a double in Asian American literary works.

These various expressions of the strange in Asian and Asian American literary texts challenge the status quo of the dominant modernity. Ghostliness acknowledges conditions of otherness that represent evolving identities for those outside of the majority. These representations demonstrate alternative modernities capable of articulating racism and the struggle for self-acceptance for those classified as other by the mainstream. The strangeness of ghosts, shadows, or uncanniness in these texts suggests where new ideas about modernity are being generated. In other words, while the Asian gothic ultimately expresses the crossover or mingling between the distinct realms of the living and the dead, these realms are identified in contemporary texts in terms of the dominant modern worldview and that which has been

excluded from the dominant modern worldview. Often, these excluded qualities are of a historical nature, in line with Dussel's observation that trans-modernities signal a return of the historical unconscious for excluded cultures (236). These texts express the haunting nature of the repressed historical unconscious, conceiving of the division between the historical unconscious and dominant modernity as that of two separate realms.

Chapter One, "Ghostliness in 20th-Century Korean Diaspora Literature," considers how spectral presences in Younghill Kang's *East Goes West* and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* intrude upon dominant modern ideology with demonstrations of Korean diasporic culture. These spectral presences reflect Dussel's notion of the "exteriority," non-Western cultural qualities that have been which has been excluded from the dominant modernity or world-system. dominant modernity. In *East Goes West*, Han experiences uncanny phenomena in Chinatown that mirror his inner conflict between the scholarly identity he has left behind in Korea and his dream of integrating fully into American society. Han also observes Asian cultural objects in the United States with a romantic antiquarian perspective stemming from Korean modernist thought. The unfolding of *Dictée*'s narrative reveals the increasing coherence of a spectral presence. This presence expresses a Korean narrative as well as a deepened commitment to ancestors. *Dictée*'s unstable prose generates spaces where conflicting truths may coexist, and outcomes denied by dominant modern thinking may emerge.

East Goes West, published in 1937, expresses modernist ideas and aesthetics that foreground an ultimately American cosmopolitan vision while incorporating qualities of ambiguity that acknowledge other, non-Western, forces in the narrative. Han's uncanny experiences in Chinatown reveal the repression of his own scholarly identity, which is rooted in Chinese universal culture. *East Goes West* poses Chinatown as a pluralist space where Western

technologies hybridize with Chinese culture. This portrayal suggests how, for Han, Chinese universalism is resilient to transplantation to a foreign country and strategically hybridizes with Western culture without being subsumed by it. While Han does not perceive an Asian American community as part of his future destiny, his moments in Chinatown portray how Chinese universalism provides a robust counter to American universalism. Han's repression of his identity as a scholar of Korean educational background is motivated by American assimilation ideology as well as Korean modernist ideology. Japanese colonial ideology relegated Korean identity as "tradition," demarcating the traditional from the modern. Thus, Korean cultural qualities are considered a part of the past that may not be carried into the future. Under this ideology, combined with the loss of territorial sovereignty, "Korea" became a cultural object, moving Korean modernist writers to write on Korean culture from a romantic antiquarian perspective.

   Dictée, published in 1982, is a postmodernist text that conjures the spectral with its use of cinematic technique, unstable syntax, surrealism, and compulsive repetition. The work traces a burgeoning consciousness that develops coherence throughout the text, beginning as eruptions in a French translation exercise already rendered strange, progressing into an elusive cinematic form who dramatizes women's subjugation to various patriarchal forces, and finding a stable form in the retelling of the Korean legend of princess Pari. In this retelling, a woman at the well dispenses medicine to a young girl for the girl's mother, demonstrating a restoration of Korean cultural and ancestral connections through women. *Dictée*'s conclusion does not necessarily imply that the narrator's desire for restoration has been fulfilled but that an imaginative space has been generated that foregrounds this restoration. Overall, the spectral in *Dictée* is more troubling

to the dominant modernity than in *East Goes West*. In *East Goes West*, these uncanny visions disturb but do not threaten to dislodge Han's American cosmopolitan outlook.

Chapter Two, "Outside the Flow of Time: Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Vampire in Asian Comics for Girls," examines how Japanese and Korean comics use elements from Western history and popular culture to create an imaginative space reflecting emerging Asian modernities. In this chapter, I observe how nostalgia surfaces in narratives at the turn of the twenty-first century in both Japan and Korea. These narratives incorporate elements from European, rather than Asian, histories and aesthetics for their nostalgic expressions. I relate the portrayal of the vampire in these comics to aesthetics from visual kei, a fashion style adopted by some Japanese alternative rock musicians that conveys vampire imagery, visual decadence and sensual excesses recalling a Western Rococo style. Sun Jung argues that pan-Asian soft masculinities have become popular due to women's expanded range of gender identities and desires. Reflecting on Jung's argument, I argue that this contemporary androgynous vampire identity is reimagined from East Asian literary tropes.

While the androgynous male character in Asian comics, known as bishōnen in Japanese comics and kkonminam in Korean comics, engages visual kei aesthetics on a surface level, the characteristics of soft masculinity of these characters idealize a seonbi, or "scholar-official," masculinity. The seonbi identity emphasizes the importance of virtue and morality in line with Confucian codes, as well as a devotion to study, all of which are the province of the Confucian male ideal. Thus, while this type is not necessarily subversive to Asian notions of heteronormative identities, it is subversive to the Western domination of Asian gender identities that began in the early twentieth century. Asian girls' comics provides a space for literary tropes like that of the Confucian scholar-official to mingle with the anxieties of modern life.

Thus, East Asian comics have incorporated Western culture as an aesthetic or as symbolism that stands in for local desires or expressions. Rather than queering identities in the Western sense of the term, East Asian masculinities move outside of the polarized gender types introduced by the West and suggest a re-expression of local East Asian gender types. In line with Dussel's thinking on trans-modernity, since only a couple of generations have passed since the circulation of literary romances featuring the seonbi, the expression of identities closely linked to East Asian notions of the beautiful or erotic in Asian comics heralds a renewal of local culture in the wake of waning Western influences in Japan and Korea.

Chapter Three, "The Ghosts of Nature: Yearning for Connection with Humans and the More-than-Human World in Contemporary Korean and Chinese Environmental Literatures," considers how twenty-first century Korean and Chinese fiction present an alternative picture of East Asian modernity through imagery of urban stagnation and waste products while also developing a distinct counter to Western ecocritical thought, which tends to dominate ecocritical literary discourse. In finding a position of appropriate action, Korean ecocritical literature must reckon with anthropocentric ideologies in Western literary discourse, which have circulated in East Asia since the early twentieth century. I underscore how East Asian ecocritical texts describe and critique modern societies and strive toward perspectives and solutions that counter Western philosophies.

The literary texts present various environmental problems of East Asian modernity concealed by official discourse in the context of East Asian ecocritical dialogues. Often, this ideological journey seems to involve nostalgia or reflection toward or reckoning with a pre-modern past, a desire to recover ideas and lifeways that were abruptly overthrown in the early twentieth century when Korea and China began to modernize. I use Rob Nixon's notion of slow

violence due to its emphasis on reflection and critique of strictly linear notions of time, ideas similarly explored in Korean ecocritical philosophy. Nixon works with an awareness of the limitation of modern perceptions, especially in how we are conditioned to notice problems on catastrophic levels, ignoring the slow creep of everyday life toward disaster. Korean short stories including Ae-ran Kim's "Prayer", Jungeun Hwang's "Raptors Upstream," and Seong-nan Ha's "Early Beans" and "Flowers of Mold" examine how the dimensions of everyday life serve as microcosms for larger disorders in modern society.

Waste has the potential to pose urban life as a cycle of growth, death, and renewal (or lack thereof), a viewpoint that clashes with a modern view of linear progress and that reaffirms an ecological understanding of life. Waste exposes the process of dehumanization, both through residents' encounters with waste as a desperate connection to others, as in the Korean short stories examined, and through urban waste management schemes, which in Pingwa Jia's *Happy Dreams* exposes a new labor class vulnerable to discrimination. All works examined in the chapter demonstrate that, under conditions of modernity, the human is simplified as a body without a spirit. These literary texts pose the need to develop connections between humans and between humans and the more-than-human world and to develop or recover spiritual understandings of the universe that bypass a modern perspective.

Chapter Four, "Strangeness in the City in 21st-Century Korean Literature," analyzes urban spaces in contemporary Korean literature with consideration of the decades leading up to South Korea's democratization and economic expansion. Watson, Perera, Tang, and Hong argue for an understanding of Asian cities like Seoul as rooted in a form of modernity distinct from Western cities that must be understood in terms of local beliefs and histories. Watson describes Seoul as a "New Asian City," a term that acknowledges Seoul's postcolonial characteristics of

rapid growth and industrialization as well as the reappropriation of colonial infrastructures that preserve colonial systems of production and consumption. The texts in this chapter portray how these industrializing forces shape lives and social relations across the 20th and 21st centuries.

Short stories like Seong-nan Ha's "Flag," Ko-eun Yun's "Sweet Escape," Ae-ran Kim's "Prayer" and "No Knocking in This House," and Hwa Gil Kang's "Room," reveal the constrained lives of workers, provoking their desire to escape reality as well as their tendencies toward neurotic obsessions, and the social alienation engendered by competition and cramped living conditions. *I'll Be Right There*, looking back at the 1980s-90s, provides a very different picture of social relations during South Korea's military regimes. Individuals form close bonds with those outside of their immediately family and demonstrate willingness to sacrifice themselves for a community.

One important issue examined in these texts is the tension between individual and communal values. Sociologists describe South Korea as a vertical collectivist society. However, *I'll Be Right There* demonstrating tendencies toward horizontal forms of collectivism, suggests how in a spirit of activism, the bonds of hierarchy and authority may be broken in search of a more egalitarian community. Contemporary texts demonstrate the effects of narrow social circles and limited trust, portraying socially isolated characters who struggle with obsession or paranoia. Some texts suggest how common causes will bind neighbors together temporarily, such as the "World Without Bedbugs" society posed in "Sweet Escape." Texts like "Sweet Escape" demonstrate a potential for a more horizontal collectivist culture when the mantle of authority is lifted, like the one envisioned in *I'll Be Right There*, in which citizens are bound to one another in cooperation and common sympathy.

I have also considered the presentation of han in contemporary literary texts. Han, a sense of accumulated suffering or mental anguish, often viewed as unique to Korean culture, is a dominant force in *I'll Be Right There*, as characters suffer the loss of loved ones and grow closer to one another through an identification with the other's suffering. Han is presented as a communal emotion that motivates citizens to act on behalf of one another through empathy. In *I'll Be Right There*, han is constructive, strengthening students' dedication to public demonstrations and motivating them to fight for each other in search of justice and freedom. Han manifests itself in the other texts examined through symptoms of obsession, paranoia, disappointment, or self-isolation because of accumulated suffering. These stories portray the more destructive nature of han, borne of the tensions between South Korea's national turn to economic growth and capitalist production and the cultural force of vertical collectivism.

In the **Conclusion** of the dissertation, I analyze moments of "strangeness" in *The Untamed*, a 2019 Chinese fantasy drama series. The drama is based on a novel, *Mo Dao Zu Shi* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, which features a same-sex love story between the main protagonists. *The Untamed* eliminates the overt romance elements from the novel due to state censorship requirements but makes the soulmate connection between the two male characters clear throughout the series. The series emerges at a moment of crackdown on homosexual or homoerotic elements in dramas, many of which are based on uncensored queer romance novels. At the same time, these dramas garner national and international popularity and are normally part of much larger franchises including *manhua* (Chinese comics), *donghua* (Chinese animation), video games, and merchandise. In the case of *The Untamed*, the two male leads also have careers as pop singers and brand ambassadors. *The Untamed* lies at the crux of China's state censorship of queer sexuality and participation in global popular culture. The series demonstrates China's

strategic navigation between efforts to enforce heteronormative masculinity through state-controlled media and to expand its economy through global soft power.

The story itself features frequent engagements with the supernatural through hauntings, possession, and zombies, all which stem from spirits seeking retribution, swords haunted by the souls of those who died unjustly, and various fragments of Yin Iron, an element teeming with dark, "resentful" energies that is a source of conflict between warring clans. This essay analyzes these aspects of "strangeness" in *The Untamed* with respect to my thesis: that is, that where "strangeness" is present in an Asian literary text, new ideas are being generated about modernity.

In this analysis of the Asian gothic, I use Ng's characterization of the Chinese gothic based on New Wave fiction, which responds to the heavy ideological crackdowns of the Cultural Revolution during the 1960s. Ng perceives New Wave fiction as a continuation from a pre-existing gothic tradition as well as an expression of the violence of the Cultural Revolution. This response to the Cultural Revolution is indicated, according to Ng, by the prominence of violence to physical bodies in literary works. Ng argues the body's resistance to mutilation in New Wave fiction represents the "retaliating bodies against attempts to circumscribe them within highly limited ideological confines" (10). This essay considers how the presence of the Chinese gothic tradition in *The Untamed* expresses new modernities under state censorship. As a compromise between two conflicting desires in the state, the series demonstrates Chinese popular culture as a source of soft power and global outreach as well as a challenge to existing heteronormative ideologies upheld by the state. The gothic mode of *The Untamed* represents an ambiguous space in which values like loyalty and justice are redirected toward victims of tyranny in connection with the gothic expressions of New Wave fiction and a historical Chinese gothic tradition.

Chapter One: Ghostliness in 20ᵗʰ-Century Korean Diaspora Literature

Two Korean American literary texts, Younghill Kang's *East Goes West* and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*, represent Korean American subjects' reckoning with Japanese colonization and Western assimilation with spectral imagery. Kang's *East Goes West* describes a Korean scholar's experiences in the American education system and labor force after his immigration to the United States in the 1920s. *East Goes West*'s portrayal of New York City's Chinatown engages classical Chinese universalist culture as a counter to Western universalism. Hunggyu Kim explains the relevance of Chinese universalism to Korea before modernization. Kim notes that prior to the twentieth century, Chinese language and literature were the tools of the Korean literary elite (20). In the novel, Chinatown rouses uncanny sensations in the protagonist, Han, mirroring his conflicted emotions about his dream of American cosmopolitanism and the scholarly identity he has left behind. In addition, Han's portrayal of Korean culture in the United States suggests a Korean modernist romantic antiquarian outlook. Cha's *Dictée*, focusing on Korean and Western female subjectivities and histories, incorporates a spectral presence into the narrative, reintegrating an identity oriented in Korean ancestry and folklore that modern culture has denied. *Dictée* generates spaces where conflicting truths may coexist and new outcomes denied by dualistic thinking may emerge.

Pierre Nora analyzes the significance of cultural objects to contemporary memory, arguing that *lieux de memoire*, or cultural objects to which memories are bound, are a modern phenomenon due to the shift from the value of memory to that of history. Memory is, according to Nora "a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present" while history consists of representing a past from which we are severed (8). Memory, expressed in "the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom" and "the repetition of the ancestral" is an obsolete practice (Nora 7). Western modernity characterizes elements of tradition, custom, and ancestry

as pre-modern or primitive. *East Goes West* and *Dictee* express consciousness of the dominant

modernity's designation of Korean culture as pre-modern or primitive. *East Goes West*,

published in 1937, describes the self-consciousness of a Korean American student in shedding

his ethnic identity, while *Dictee*, published in 1982, subverts history, recording, and the archive

to recover memory as it emanates from folklore. Both works engage various forms of the spectral

as phenomena interrupting the dominant narrative of modernity. Nora argues that "[h]istory is

perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it" (9). The

spectral, acting on behalf of memory, emerges despite or because of this act of suppression. This

suppression of memory connects to the suppression of world cultures by the dominant

modernity, while the spectral that emerges alongside this suppression connects to the notion of

the "exteriority" that describes suppressed cultures.

"Exteriority" is an essential concept in the analysis of trans-modernity. Trans-modernity,

as described by Enrique Dussel, emphasizes the emerging modernities of non-Western nations.

Dussel theorizes that because the West has reigned as a dominant global power for only two

centuries, non-Western nations have not become irreversibly dominated by the West. According

to Dussel, the cultural strategies that non-Western nations develop in the face of the sweeping

changes of modernity should be acknowledged as alternative modernities to expand the

definition of potential modernities. Dussel argues that the recognition of these alternative

modernities is important in accounting for and defining modernity since contemporary Western

concepts of modernity do not acknowledge non-Western modernities or critique Western

modernity from a non-Western perspective. *East Goes West* and *Dictée* engage, respectively,

with modernist and postmodernist thought from Korean diaspora perspectives. The engagement

of Korean diaspora perspectives in these literary discourses add significant threads by describing

and incorporating non-Western, "exterior," subjectivities into the imaginative spaces of the works.

The connection between the suppressed subject and the spectral is significant to the analysis of trans-modernity. Dussel notes that "postmodernity" as a critique of modernity does not reckon with modernity's Eurocentricity. Thus, when imagining the future through postmodernity, non-Western cultures remain excluded as before. Thus, "exteriority" is "a process that takes off, originates, and mobilizes itself from an 'other' place (one 'beyond' the 'world' and modernity's 'Being'…)" (Dussel 234). Alternative modernities emerge from a place of "exteriority" because they have no logical place in Western postmodernity. This notion of exteriority connects with the idea of the spectral in how both contest the status quo ordering of reality.

These *lieux de memoire*, or memory sites, described by Nora are expressed in both *East Goes West* and *Dictee*. Memory sites are, as Nora argues, an outcome of modernity as "a changing mode of perception returns the historian, almost against his will, to the traditional objects from which he had turned away" (Nora 18). Distanced from mythic memory, which has been replaced in the modern era with technologies of replication as well as the discipline of history, we imbue sites with mythic significance, although such sites are incapable of expressing communal memories as myths do. Both works engage with the question of demarcation between the "modern" and that which the dominant modernity has specified as "tradition." Both works suggest a circumvention of this demarcation with spectral imagery. *East Goes West* incorporates romantic antiquarian and orientalist perspectives toward Asian art and cultural objects complicated by the protagonist's sense of being haunted in Asian American-settled spaces. *Dictee* incorporates a variety of archival materials such as manuscripts, letters, school exercises,

and religious instruction whose communications are interrupted by an exterior voice that emerges and takes shape throughout the work. While situating memory at these sites suggests a dominant modern perspective, the haunted nature of these sites expresses the exteriority repressed by the dominant modernity, modifying the dominant modernity with the intrusion of the spectral.

While the spectral is usually associated with the past, Colin Davis considers how the spectral, particularly regarding modernity, is often future-oriented. Davis distinguishes the difference between the notion of "phantoms," who, according to Davis, "lie" about the past, from "spectres" which do not communicate information about the future but instead identify areas that are not yet understood. Davis draws the notion of the phantom from Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, who argue that the phantom signifies a disturbance in one's consciousness precipitated by unknown trauma to previous generations. Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, finds the spectre capable of "making established certainties vacillate" (Davis 376). This kind of haunting is different than the psychoanalytic concept of phantoms as indicating suppression because it is future-oriented, a phenomenon that "cannot not (yet) be articulated in the languages available to us" (379). This notion of spectrality suggests the creative nature of haunting. Rather than conserving or re-expressing notions from the past, haunting may also indicate that which is emerging and yet undefined by language. In *East Goes West* and *Dictee*, hauntings are future-oriented projects modifying the dominant modernity. These hauntings signify the re-expression of suppressed cultures in a transmodern perspective, indicating the exteriority that Dussel describes as foundational to emerging alternative modernities.

While *East Goes West* and *Dictée* are published nearly fifty years apart and express very different aesthetics, each deals significantly with the question of Korean diaspora identity in the

context of the Japanese colonization of Korea, and each is conspicuously engaged with a twentieth-century Western literary mode. Janet Poole argues that the conditions of Japanese colonialism in late 1930s Korea contributed to Korean modernist literary depictions of Korean culture as located in an antiquated past. Furthermore, Poole suggests how some Korean literary works contributed to Japanese fascism by embracing a Japan-centered East Asian sense of identity that eliminated Korean particularities. *East Goes West* and *Dictée* probe at the entrenchment of Western universalism in Western modernism and postmodernism by engaging subversively with these genres.

Poole characterizes Korean modernism as focusing on the past and small details of the present in a studied avoidance of questions of the future. Poole attributes Korean literature's emphasis on the past and present to the increasingly fascist Japanese colonial policy, which sought to eliminate Korean language and culture and resulted in a sense of a vanishing culture in Korea. Poole notes that contemporary analyses of colonial Korean perspectives are difficult because of Korea's liberation from Japan and its aftermath. Korean collaborators with Japan were punished severely after liberation, and literary qualities perceived to indicate collaboration with the Japanese colonial government, such as the use of the Japanese language, resulted in the exclusion of certain texts from the Korean literary canon. Korean modernism, not readily anticipating liberation from Japanese colonialism, expressed a different future for the Korean nation that in many ways, according to Poole, contributed to Japanese fascism. Poole finds that Korea's turn to nostalgia and antiquarianism in Korean culture during this time had an effect of reinforcing Korean culture as obsolete, which would be counter to a Korean nationalist effort. Poole speaks of Korean nostalgia in terms of how Korean modernists conceived of embracing a Japanese future. However, nostalgia for a pre-colonial Korea continues to be represented today

in Korean popular works and seems to lean toward a nationalist agenda, particularly in terms of the relationship between a Korean hands-on cultural policy and the Korean Wave of popular works after the turn of the twenty-first century.

Korean identity is a fraught topic in both *East Goes West* and *Dictée*. Both works portray through uncanny qualities a desire for a repressed object. I use theorizations of the Asian gothic and ghostliness, reading these works against the Western literary and ideological movements of modernism and postmodernism, to which *East Goes West* and *Dictée* respond, to consider how these works contest Western assumptions about modern identity. During Japan's colonization of Korea, Korean identity was relegated to a cultural space while Korean people were officially designated as Japanese citizens. *East Goes West* utilizes a romantic antiquarian perspective toward Korean identity that is in line with Korean modernists—that is, Korean identity is conceived through cultural artifacts that are rendered remote and obsolete by the prevalence of modern objects. Han's inability to situate his identity as a Korean American cosmopolitan citizen is intimately tied to the erasure of Korean national identity overseas, and his observations of Chinatown distinguish how Chinese Americans realize an alternative modernity in which he is ultimately unable to participate.

Chinatown as Heterotopia in *East Goes West*

The strands of Western modernism, Asian American modernism, and Korean modernism must be considered in analyzing the vision of modernity presented in *East Goes West*. Audrey Clark argues for the significance of Asian American modernism's engagement with Western modernism. Janet Poole accounts for romantic antiquarianism within Korean modernism. Kang's focus on Chinese immigrant communities in New York City engages with classical Chinese universal culture as a counter to a Eurocentric universalism in Western modernism. Dussel's argument for the acknowledgement of trans-modernity, the modern expressions of non-Western

cultures that are emerging after having been eclipsed by the dominant narrative of Eurocentric universalism, frames my analysis. Michel Foucault's description of heterotopias provides insight into how Kang's descriptions of Chinatown suggest the presence of a heterotopia with heterochronic properties. This model stems from a postmodernist perspective which, unlike translocality, is not informed by alternative modernities. Instead, the postmodern critiques the problems of the modern but remains Western-centered. A heterotopia is a site that exists in counter to a dominant site while also mirroring that site. While this postmodern model doesn't contest or counter a dominant modernity in the same way as translocality, it demonstrates how Chinatown appears to Han's Western-centric perspective.

Clark examines early twentieth-century Asian American literature's dialogue with Western modernism. Clark diverges from the social realist readings advocated by Frank Chin and other scholars during the Civil Rights era, finding this reading anachronistic for early Asian American texts, including *East Goes West*. Clark finds that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Asian American literary texts are more concerned with the means to become part of the American universal than with advocating for the rights of a panethnic coalition that did not develop before the Civil Rights era. Clark notes that Western modernist writers utilized the East as an imaginary, an Other to the Self. Asian American writers, Clark finds, also utilized this imaginary. However, Asian American writers wrote from a position of being Othered by Westerners, "without the option of a domestic, Western Self" (Clark 3). According to Clark, the period of Asian exclusion from American citizenship, 1882-1945, is a significant historical event overlapping with the modernist era (4). Asian American writers were preoccupied with visualizing themselves as American citizens under these circumstances, rather than differentiating themselves as Asian Americans to argue for civil rights. Clark finds that late

nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Asian American literary texts engage with American universalism to imagine this kind of citizenship.

East Goes West recounts the experiences of Han, a Korean American scholar, as he pursues his dream of an American cosmopolitan identity. However, Han, the narrator, at times seems skeptical of his younger self's single-minded pursuit of the American dream. At the end of the novel, the narrator cloaks Han's future success with ambiguity. A counter-narrative in the novel recognizes an alternative to American universalism in New York City's Chinatown. As Clark suggests, *East Goes West* explores modernism and Asian American identity in the context of early twentieth-century America, when Asian Americans were more interested in being included in the majority culture than in forming minority coalitions. While Han strives for inclusion throughout the work, the novel's overall commitment to inclusion is ambiguous. The portrayal of Chinatown suggests a revival of classical Chinese universal culture. Chinese universal culture in Chinatown allows Han to survive on his cultural connections to classical Chinese. Clark states that Asian American modernist writers like Kang self-orientalized in how they "…problematically reified the East and often rendered it static and timeless in their writings" (5). However, *East Goes West*'s ethnographic descriptions of Chinatown have a much more significant role in the work than Clark's statement implies in how they exemplify an alternative to American universalism. *East Goes West*, rather than seeking to assimilate Asian American subjectivities into an American universal, problematizes this notion by portraying the successful transplantation of Chinese universal culture to American soil as Chinatown, a heterotopic space paradoxical to its surroundings.

East Goes West, like Korean modernist fiction, grapples with the conditions of modernity and the reification of Korean "traditional" culture. In a transmodern reading, the "traditional" is

understood to have been created by dominant modern ideology. There are two strands to the modern Korean mindset, both of which are tied to Western coloniality. One is the fervor with which early nineteenth-century Korean thinkers promoted Western ideology to strengthen Korea, a fervor motivated by the looming threat of domination by Japan, which was also rapidly Westernizing. This enthusiasm is evident in the "new novel" of the early nineteenth century, described by Hunggyu Kim as "shallow propaganda for modernization" (117). The other strand is the rapid modernization of Korea under Japanese control following Japan's 1910 annexation of Korea. The ideology promoted by Japanese rule was borrowed from the West and adapted to center Japan as a metropole of culture and civilization. It is through these ideologies that Korean romantic antiquarianism develops, as objects become imbued with significance in their expression of a "traditional" culture inaccessible to modern individuals. This sense of inaccessibility evokes a nostalgic desire. Certain objects become the *lieux de memoire* described by Pierre Nora in his observations on the modern mindset that replaces the value of memory with that of history.

Poole notes the Korean nostalgic turn to antiquarianism in the 1930s (*When* 51). *East Goes West*, published in 1937, is set in the 1920s, when Kang immigrated to the United States, making it feasible that Kang would adopt a similar mindset toward Korean culture in writing from a modernist perspective. According to Poole, the narratives of Korean romantic antiquarianism describe a distant and inaccessible Korean tradition and reimagine a classical universal culture that flattens the particularities of Korea. In characterizing Korean romantic antiquarianism, Poole draws from Susan Stewart's discussion of European antiquarianism, finding it like Korean antiquarianism in how "[w]ork on antiquarianism in industrializing Europe has similarly suggested it arose from changing understandings of history and time associated

with Romanticism" (88). Stewart argues that "the antiquarian seeks to both distance and appropriate the past," which corresponds not only to Poole's view on Korean romantic antiquarianism but also to how Kang approaches the question of Korean identity in *East Goes West*.

Han characterizes Korea as "a small, provincial, old-fashioned Confucian nation, hopelessly trapped by a larger, expanding one" that is "called to get off the earth" (Kang 8). While Han describes his early preference for Western ways, instilled in mission schools in Korea and Japanese schools, his choice to migrate to the United States is based on the lack of future he perceives in Korea, rather than an idealization of American culture. He finds the idea of taking "vengeance against Japan in martyr's blood" an ineffective one and expresses his aversion to thoughts "of futility, the futility of the martyr, or the death-stifled scholar back home" (Kang 8). Thus, Han's concept of American cosmopolitan identity, which motivates his actions throughout the work, is primarily based on the denial of a future for Korea. While Han's objectification of Korean culture is like Western modernist tendencies toward appropriation and orientalization of Asian cultures, Han's perspective is rooted in a Korean modernist mindset that views Korean culture from a Japanese colonial perspective as well as an American cosmopolitan perspective.

According to Poole, Korean modernist writers describe antique objects as emblems of a lost Korean culture. Poole finds that the Korean literary turn toward antiquarianism risked collusion with Japanese colonialism in how it set boundaries around an antiquated Korean culture and made Japanese colonial ideology part of the present. While Western modernism also tended to draw a dividing line between the past and present, Korean modernism lacked a future vision. Korea's industrialization was interrelated with Japan's rule over the country; thus, the boundary between the perceived traditional and present takes on a different meaning than the

boundary between the old and new in Western modernism. Some Japanese modernists wrote against Western modernity, Poole notes, providing "the base for an alternative pan-Asian universalism that reinforced Japan's temporal hierarchy… and offered a center for Asian intellectuals' identification" (*When* 7). Korean writers participated in this pan-Asian universalism through romantic antiquarian literary expressions, consigning Korean culture to the past so that they could participate in the imperial present (*When* 7). Poole finds that "we can trace back to this period the 'origins' of so many of the aesthetic and cultural notions of 'Koreanness' that still thrive" (*When* 8). *East Goes West* engages with romantic antiquarianism as well as Chinese universal culture in a manner that suggests similar reasoning to the pan-Asian universalism promoted in the Japanese empire, in spirt of the protagonist's dedication to an American cosmopolitan identity. These conflicting strands in the narrative produce effects of ambiguity and irony that contribute to the work's modernist aesthetics.

The suggestive powers of Korean romantic antiquarianism are conveyed through To Wan Kim, a Korean American scholar who seems to represent a relic of traditional culture for Han. Han's initial meetings with Kim are colored with Han's melancholy attitude toward Korean traditional culture communicated via a focus on Kim's physical attributes that borders on homoeroticism. Throughout the narrative, Kim expresses an elusive mystique for Han as well as a seemingly inevitable trajectory toward a tragic end. Later, on encountering the Asian collections of Arthur Brown, an Anglo-American friend of Kim's, Han's remark ("'Isn't it fine!' I exclaimed. 'The West is meeting us halfway. As we Westernize, they orientalize!' (Kang 201)) suggests skepticism toward the Anglo's orientalist interests. Nonetheless, Han participates in Brown's social gatherings of scholarly-minded people. Through a friend at these gatherings, Han eventually meets Trip, a young woman who becomes closely identified with Han's cosmopolitan

ambitions. These various appearances of Korean antiquities in the narrative suggest how Han relegates Korean culture to a distant past and how it grows even more remote as Han's determination to take an American cosmopolitan identity intensifies at Brown's gatherings.

From the beginning of Han's acquaintance with Kim, Kim impresses Han with qualities Han compares to a traditional Korean scholar. Han notes that Kim's "graceful hand, a hand which, compared to the Western man's, looked more flowing, more supple, yet also more anciently formed as if whittled to the bone and seasoned before he was born" (Kang 150). Han's fascination with Kim's hands seems to be mingled with a desire to contrast them with his own, "broad and square, padded firmly and thick, the hands of some archaic generation close to the antique plough…my hands looked like those of a person of action, his far removed from any activity—except that of the lightning-stroked pen" (Kang 150). Despite his own classical education, Han seems anxious to identify himself as "a person of action" out of a desire to prove his compatibility with American values and relegate Kim's "anciently formed" physical characteristics to somewhere long-ago and far-away (Kang 150). Nonetheless, Kim seems to hold an aura of melancholy fascination for Han that repeatedly draws Han to him.

Kim represents qualities for Han that Han seems to deny as part of his own ancestry, despite his own fluency in Confucian classical culture, a shadow in the narrative to Han's determination to identify as a future-oriented man of action. This dynamic orientalizes Kim by feminizing him to highlight Han's own assumption of a Western-oriented masculinity. Later in the work, Han criticizes Kim for his lack of initiative in his relationship with Helen, placing more emphasis on Kim's failure to act than on the racist attitudes of Helen's parents, which make the marriage impossible. Han expresses both fascination and criticism toward Kim. The strength of his feelings is imbued with a homoeroticism shared by other modernist writers. The

dynamic offers an opportunity to uncover further connections between modernism and decadence in Asian American literature. In the introduction to *Decadence in the Age of Modernism*, Kate Hext and Alex Murray argue for a greater emphasis on decadent modernism that acknowledges the carryover of decadence from the previous generation of Western literary writers as well as how contemporary writers were inspired to emulate that decadence. Hext and Murray find this decadence to be "rooted in a commitment to sensuality for its own sake and the supremacy of the Romantic individual" (12). Both of these commitments noted by Hext and Murray are also conspicuous in Han, who refers frequently to British Romantic literature throughout the text as a touchstone and also conceives of his world in terms of aesthetics and materials. Han's focus on the physical characteristics of Kim is one instance of this kind of decadence.

The generational difference between Han and Kim seems to be keenly felt by Han, who has a closer relationship than Kim to the "decadent" Korean late modernists described by Poole as a "generation that wander without a particular object" (*When* 64). Poole notes that the late modernists

> have no firm base in the old world of native customs and were born too late to experience the hope and energy of the early enlightenment and revolutionary movements. They have no tradition, whether cultural or intellectual, to which they can turn other than with despair or distrust (*When* 64).

Similarly, Han's response to Kim expresses his sense in the futility of upholding Korean tradition and his reluctance to associate himself with a culture that he perceives as dead. Han reflects rather lengthily on the generational differences between himself and Kim, and how they have shaped their respective perspectives toward modernity, noting:

I had met in Kim a deep and reflective modernized mind, mature now, while mine was

just beginning to stretch—but in his art he was a rigid traditionalist, untouched by any

Western influence. He used the tools, the technique of a thousand years ago, in line with

those poet-painters who held that characters were paintings, and paintings the decorative

accompaniment to literature . . .He was in mood and outlook probably of the Oriental

generation just preceding mine, but even then the classics were being discarded (Kang

154).

Despite their differences in perspective, which Han takes care to note on multiple occasions, Han

is fascinated by Kim in a decadent manner, associating his physical characteristics with a dead

culture that stirs deep nostalgia in himself. One question to consider is: if Han is oriented in a

future that does not involve Korea, why does he become so close to Kim, who clearly represents

old Korea to Han, rather than his other Korean acquaintance George Jum, characterized as

Westernized and future-oriented? Poole observes that

the temporality of decadence is not as definitively backward-looking as it may at first

seem; what decadence, antiquarianism, and the urban avant-garde all shared in

common—despite their varying politics and temporal forms—was their perception of the

present and desire for renewal ("Late" 181).

Thus, Han's attraction to relics of traditional Korea may not signal so much a repressed desire to

escape modernity but instead a generational quality of decadence that characterizes Han's

experience of the modern and serves to distinguish his identity from other Koreans who

experienced Korean life before Westernization.

The novel's preoccupation with Asian antiques tends to conflate Korean, Japanese, and

Chinese cultures in a way that suggests a preoccupation with pan-Asian alliances. In Kim's

home, Han notes Kim's foyer, "painted in a clear Chinese red" and "an old bronze Chinese bowl and a vase of antique Korean pottery, the latter a considerable art treasure" (Kang 152). These objects seem to rest together comfortably, suggesting an inherent compatibility against the otherwise "modernistic" room (Kang 152). Han also notes "[t]hree pictures… hung on the light clear walls . . . all Oriental, but each… of a different culture. That one of cats was plainly Japanese . . . the black pine branch painted on silk was Korean, and the landscape triptych on bamboo—that was probably Chinese" (153). Kim's décor and Han's seeming acknowledgement of aesthetic compatibility between the three countries, despite the Japanese occupation of Korea, reveals a tendency in the work toward visualizing Asian universalisms. Han's description of the three distinct but connected art works reflect on Poole's observations of a modernist "shared Asian cultural imaginary" (*When* 95). Poole notes that "[Korean] [j]ournals of the early 1940s almost obsessively produced their special editions on the trio of Japan, China, and Korea, searching in the particularities of each for instantiations of a contestatory universalism located in the regional category of Asia" (*When* 95). It is significant that these images, as well as other implications of Asian universalism, emerge in *East Goes West*, a narrative that considers the problem of Western universalism at length as well as the degree to which the Asian American characters may belong to this category. Concerning Asian universalism, Poole finds that "[i]n such thinking Asia and Korea are mutually reinforcing categories, and in the process the geopolitical nature of their relationship—the colonial relation of unequal exchange—was hidden" (*When* 95). In other words, conceiving of Korea as a cultural entity embedded in a larger geopolitical region colludes with a Japanese colonial perspective that describes itself as unifying East Asia against Western power. In Asia, this kind of thinking risked collaborating with the Japanese colonizer which was, as Poole notes, conceivable for many Korean modernists

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educated in Japan—including *East Goes West*'s protagonist, Han—though Han characterizes Japan as an enemy in the narrative. The question to examine in the case of *East Goes West* is whether this uncanny resurgence of classical Chinese universal culture in New York City's Chinatown can serve as a mode of resistance to both Japan's Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere and the Western universal assumptions Han faces on American soil.

In *East Goes West*, it is a Chinese, rather than Japanese, cultural center that allows East Asian characters educated in the Confucian classics to communicate in the written Chinese language, which for Han, facilitates exchanges of goods and services allowing him to survive at a time when he is destitute. Initially, Kang's ethnographic descriptions of Chinatown may seem like orientalist renderings of Asia familiar to Western modernism, especially since *East Goes West* employs other motifs familiar to Western modernism such as a cynical and occasionally self-deprecating protagonist and his journeys through a defamiliarized cityscape. However, the descriptions recognize Chinese communities as heterotopias and sites of an alternative modernity that centers Chinese universal aesthetics and practices in New York City. This contrasts with Han's descriptions of Korean artifacts, which correspond to Korean modernism's view of Korean culture as lost, antiquated, and relegated to an inaccessible past. The uncanniness that Han experiences in Chinatown suggests how this place resurrect aspects of his identity he seeks to bury. This uncanniness is an indication that a part of the "traditional"—a repressed Chinese universalist history in Korea—is seeking life in the present in the heterotopia of New York City's Chinatown, which offers an alternative modernity.

In the heterotopic spaces of Chinatown, Han finds a helping hand after his attempts to find work are unsuccessful. Kang's descriptions of Chinatown suggest a pan-Asian vision that centers Chinese language and culture in New York City. This pan-Asian vision reverts to the

presence of Chinese language and literature, and an ideology of Chinese universalism, that circulated throughout East Asia prior to the twentieth century. Thus, in contrast to his longing to become part of the American universal, as Clark contends, Han is also articulating a Chinese universalism that reflects the effectiveness of East Asian "soft power" before the West's entrance into Asian affairs. Japan, at this time, positioned itself at the center of a pan-Asian alliance it designated the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, while expanding its empire into other Asian territories. Given the subjugation and discrimination Koreans experienced under Japanese imperial rule, it is understandable that Kang would search for alternatives to this kind of alliance in considering East Asia from a unified viewpoint.

Clark argues that Kang pursues a vision of cosmopolitan utopia throughout *East Goes West*. Clark finds that Han is seeking to become "a cosmopolitan New Yorker—'an Oriental yankee'" (100). I agree with Clark that Han seeks a cosmopolitan identity. However, Han's pursuit of this identity is troubled by contradictions and projections, which suggests that Kang is problematizing this pursuit rather than valorizing it. Han's ideal of a cosmopolitan America is vague and, in many ways, his own pursuit of this ideal duplicates the frenetic, single-minded thrust he criticizes in his first impressions of New York City. Prior scholars have noted how Han's romantic interest in Trip is entangled with his pursuit of an American identity. Clark notes that Han's "relationship and identification with Trip—whose very name refers to the maplike structure of his narrative—further depict his vision of America as a cosmopolitan utopia of universal inclusion" (118). Karen Kuo finds that "Han's desperation for Trip is an effort to counter racialized extinction, a fear uttered by Han's Korean brethren earlier" (93). While prior scholars have noted the close connection between Han's feelings for Trip and his utopian vision for America, I contend that Han's increasingly desperate behavior toward Trip indicates the

inherent problems in his vision, which is too like the American ideology around him oppressing him as an ethnic minority. Han has transferred his cosmopolitan American dream to Trip in a manner that is so single-minded that it almost guarantees his failure because it refuses to accept a flawed reality or consider alternatives that may prove equally satisfactory.

If Han's fear were racialized extinction, as Kuo contends, it seems he could have chosen a more likely target for a mate. For instance, Laura, the friend who ultimately introduces him to Trip, initially appears a promising match, particularly when the two get "on so well together" that other guests of their weekly party "often withdrew…leaving Laura and [Han] to sit by the fire and talk" (Kang 294). Another prospect surfaces in Marietta, who shows keen interest when Trip returns home with Han after an awkward date to the Chinese restaurant and shop. Marietta expresses enthusiasm and curiosity toward the food and wine that Han has brought from the shop in an unsuccessful, and self-exoticizing, effort to win Trip's interest. Marietta even "demand[s]" after the outing, "'Oh, Mr. Han, why didn't you take me along?'" (Kang 312). While little else is shared of Marietta, the scene conveys the irony of Han's determination to force the affections of a woman who is uninterested, while another prospect completely elides his notice. Han's increasingly ludicrous behavior toward Trip suggests his buried reluctance to relinquish his primary ideal of American life. The initial stirrings of Han's love at the fireside when Laura describes Trip as "poetic and impractical" are followed by "long lonely hours to… try to recapture the magic and mystery with which [he] had first dreamed America" (Kang 296-7). Han finds himself disillusioned by his re-readings of Carlyle and Ruskin, whose idealistic visions about work and life are unrelatable to Han's present state. With no fuel for his dream, Han decides to visit New York City and pressures Laura to introduce Han to her friends so that he can meet Trip. Thus, while Han never directly denies or disparages his initial, idealistic vision of

America in the narrative, the vision is transformed into Han's romantic interest in Trip, which remains unrequited after repeated attempts on Han's part to kindle her interest. Kang's indications of other options for Han, which Han ignores or overlooks, suggests how Han's idealism is one of the contributing factors to his failure to find his footing in New York City.

In contrast to Han's fleeting and elusive dreams of America, Han's narration of his experiences in Chinatown, particularly the details of his exchanges with Chinese immigrants, are grounded in a material reality. While Han dreams of a cosmopolitan America, it is the everyday practices of Chinatown that enable him to survive. His frequent returns to Chinatown suggest that its presence is necessary to his survival due to his difficulty finding suitable work. Clark notes "the invocation of the global and the local in the name 'Oriental yankee' appears to skip over the national component insofar as [Han] could have claimed himself to be an 'Oriental American,'" as well as Kang's emphasis on New York City throughout the work over other locations in North America (125). By focusing on New York City as a site for modernity, rather than a larger Eurocentric "America," Han reorganizes the location in both global and local terms, omitting the national component, as Clark observes. Clark finds that this quality of the work "attempts to bypass an ideology of American exceptionalism" (126). The inflexibility and increasing force of Han's cosmopolitan vision—qualities that make it too like the Western vision of modernity— render it flawed, while Han's descriptions of New York City's Chinatown pose an alternative modernity in which Asian Americans survive and thrive, practicing a Chinese rather than American universalism possible only for those familiar with Confucian values.

In my characterization of Kang's representation of New York City's Chinatown, I draw from Foucault's theorization of heterotopias. According to Foucault, heterotopias may be described as "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the

other sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 24). Foucault finds that the heterotopia is in relation with the utopia, an unreal space that is connected to a real society by an ideal. Using the idea of the mirror, Foucault finds that one's mirror image represents a utopia, the unreal, while the mirror itself represents a heterotopia, producing a contradictory situation in which the individual's reflection in the mirror is realized only by the individual looking at the mirror, rather than at the self. Thus, the heterotopia is a place that assembles contradictions within itself but, unlike a utopia, is physically present in society. The relationship between a utopia and a heterotopia are particularly important to my analysis in how Han is dedicated to a utopian vision of a cosmopolitan society, while his activities in Chinatown evoke a heterotopia with their assemblage of multiple and contradictory spaces firmly anchored in a real place in the city.

Other scholars have made similar connections between Chinatowns and the idea of heterotopias. Daniel Martin considers how Vancouver's Chinatown is a government-sanctioned multicultural space, arguing that this designation produces spectral activities in Sky Lee's novel *Disappearing Moon Café*, set in Vancouver's Chinatown, that represent the repressed actual histories of early Canadian citizens. Martin notes that this site exemplifies Foucault's notion of the heterotopia in how it simultaneously realizes multiple incompatible spaces—that is, the site of Chinese citizens' lived histories becomes simultaneous with a space fashioned to represent Canada's tolerance of diversity. Anne Witchard uses the concept of the heterotopia to inform her readings of Limehouse, London's Chinatown, in Thomas Burke's *Limehouse Nights* stories, at the start of the twentieth century. Witchard comments on how Limehouse becomes a space for the projection of white fantasies of dissolution and lawlessness under Britain's increasing strictures and growing concern about the loss of public morality, at the start of the twentieth

century. In *Limehouse Nights*, these fantasies center around white adolescent girls who commit miscegenation with Chinese immigrant men. The heterotopic aspects of Burke's Limehouse, according to Witchard's study, are in its inversion of British laws at the time of the work which punished unchaperoned girls with confinement in reformatory school and which withdrew citizenship from women who married Chinese immigrant men.

Like the heterotopic Chinatowns represented by Lee and Burke, Kang's Chinatown has an uncanny element. Han's experiences in Chinatown seem to take him outside of the flow of linear time as he feels a ghostly presence from the distant past approach him and later follows a shadowy illusion of a figure through the city. I find that Han's break from contemporary time and space in Chinatown evokes Chinatown as a heterotopia connected to Han's utopian vision of cosmopolitanism. This Chinatown, due to its ambiguous position in American society as well as Han's oblique relationship to Chinese culture, unsettles not only Western modernity but also Han's particular cosmopolitan vision. Thus, the "strange" or "peculiar" qualities Han notes in Chinatown question Han's idealism by emphasizing dimensions of material reality. This uncanny Chinatown reveals how Han's cosmopolitan vision insists on a particularly Western-oriented purity that prevents his seeing Chinatown as more than a stopping-place when he runs out of money or luck. The way Chinatown causes Han to slip into a distant past suggests, in terms of modernity, a resurgence of the Chinese universal, a system of Sinocentric culture that prevailed throughout East Asia prior to the rise of Western modernity. This resurgence of Chinese universalism is communicated in *East Goes West* in two ways: through Han's artistic exchanges with other Asian Americans, attesting to their shared knowledge of Confucian values, and Han's sensory experiences in Chinatown, which are imbued with an uncanniness suggesting the return of a repressed history.

Near the beginning of *East Goes West*, when Han fails to establish contact with a Korean acquaintance, Jum, his supply of funds vanishes quickly. After spending the night among New York's homeless, Han locates New York's Chinatown. His shared knowledge of Chinese language and culture with Chinese merchants permits him to secure food and board on credit until he can find work. In his wanderings throughout the city before locating Chinatown, Han notes that Americans don't value art or poetry; instead, their focus is limited to financial gain. Han finds that Western modernity lack a sense of history or continuity, contending that buildings "leaped like Athene from the mind synthetically; they spurned the earth" (Kang 6). Han, educated as a scholar, is well-versed in both Asian and Western humanities and moves smoothly between them in his ruminations, though ultimately it is the former knowledge, rather than the latter, that aids him in his struggle to find footing on American soil. Struggling without means to pay for a meal at a Chinese restaurant he has just consumed, Han writes a poem for the restaurant proprietor in Chinese characters of "the tired wanderer in a foreign wilderness who finds the remote kinsman home," making additional references in the poem to a Chinese classical poem lamenting one's poverty and difficulty obtaining food (Kang 24-25). Han refers to this as his "letter of introduction," stating, presumably for the Western reader's clarification, that "[s]o strongly is the Chinese classical culture ingrained in the East that the educated man is at once noted by the assurance and deftness of his strokes in writing. And the classical gentleman, says Confucius, is to be the 'measuring rod of Heaven and Earth'" (Kang 25). This description refers explicitly to the history of Chinese universal culture in East Asia, which serves as social currency for the educated class. The passage affirms how this culture at work in the present in New York City.

Dussel argues that the cultures of other nations have been repressed by Western industrialization and adoption of Western ways. Trans-modernity, to the author, is the resurgence of non-Western cultures, or a reversion to non-Western cultures established prior to the intrusion of the West. The authors argue that "[t]he emergence of other cultures, until now depreciated and unvalued, from beyond the horizon of European modernity is thus not a miracle arising from nothingness, but rather a return by these cultures to their status as actors in the history of the world-system" (224). Han's description of Sinocentric culture at work in Chinatown—namely, how his knowledge of this culture allows him to survive—poses an alternative to American capitalist values, which, as his narrative has shown earlier, results in wide economic disparities, and significant poverty and homelessness on New York City streets. Han's conversation with the restaurant owner reveals further details about a pre-existing pan-Asian alliance. Han earns the man's sympathies due to being Korean since "[t]he Chinese always regard Korea as a part of China, although the Koreans do not, for Korea has had a long, independent history before it was taken by Japan" (Kang 25). At the time of the work's publication, Japan's invasions of both Korea and China contributed to Japan's justification of itself as the center of a pan-Asian alliance against the West, known as the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japan's hard tactics contrast with the "soft power" China exercised in East Asia prior to the twentieth century.

Han's emphasis on classical Chinese culture continues to procure him meals; however, he is divided as to its importance, finding himself split between thinking in terms of the "old" and the "new." The irony is that restaurant servers are willing to share their meals with Han in exchange for his knowledge of language and literature, the specialization of his education— while he can find no means to use his literary background among white Americans. Han notes that "[t]hey had a psychology which would seem strange to American businessmen. A spiritual

treat for a material, a material for a spiritual—they saw no difference" (Kang 77). Although Han participates successfully in this kind of exchange, he does not stay in the heterotopia of Chinatown for long. Han's literary passions are divided between the East and West, and as a modernist thinker, he relegates the former to the past and the latter to the present. The heterotopia doesn't suffice for Han, even though it sustains him on many occasions, because he is devoted to his ideal of a cosmopolitan New York City, rooted in essentially Western values.

Han's introduction to Kim in Chinatown serves to escalate the narrative's melancholic tone toward Asian classical poetry and culture. Han notes that during their discussion of poetry "[t]he garish Chinese-American electrical lighting was the last possible extreme from an emperor's golden candelabra used to light poets home…We had harked back to a spiritual realm more remote from New York than the world of Horace or Catullus" (Kang 151). Kim, disliking the atmosphere of the place, invites Han back to his home for further discussion—a home that is enveloped in romantic antiquarian atmosphere. Crossing the threshold, Han notes "…an old bronze Chinese bowl and a vase of antique Korean pottery, the latter a considerable art treasure" (Kang 152). The mixture of Asian art with modern furnishings gives Han an impression of "a short of dreaminess, in hybrid adaptation to the strange creature it harbored" (Kang 152). Kim is "strange" to Han because Han associates him with a past generation of Korean scholars who were taught to value Korean culture, unlike Han, who views Korean culture as obsolete. Kim is also rendered strange because he embraces Korean and Western cultural traditions with equal enthusiasm, resulting in a persona Han views as self-conflicted and ultimately ineffectual.

Han's encounter with the otherworldly Kim, a self-described "'Korean ghost,'" coincides with Han's relegation of Korean arts and humanities to a timeless past, while his prior exchanges with Chinese Americans are grounded in a functional present (Kang 152). Kim's otherworldly

appearance in Chinatown seems like the manifestation of Han's visions, earlier in the story, of a traditional past that has similarities to Korean modernists' romantic antiquarian views of Korea. Kim, like Han, seems more adept at engaging the ideal than the real. Thus, while each seems to be able to find a temporary refuge in Chinatown, they do not linger there. It is Kim who draws Han away from Chinatown and into a circle of Western intellectuals, many of whom have an orientalist appreciation for Asian cultures. Han seems to take pleasure in these gatherings to further distance himself from a Korean identity and practice a cosmopolitan persona, especially in his close observations of Kim at the gatherings, whom he critiques for his shy and indirect courtship of Helen.

This increasingly hazy idea of Korean identity is entangled with Han's uncanny impressions of Chinatown. Finding that "it was a ghostly world to be lost in, this town that was neither in America nor in China," Han perceives that "Chinatown is less American and more segregate than any other foreign colony in New York" (Kang 26). Han further notes that "[t]he Chinese elect their own mayor, administer their own justice, and their houses and their homes are to the outsider impenetrable" (Kang 26). This idea of Chinatown as a separate society with an independent justice system is explored more thoroughly in Louis Chu's 1961 novel *Eat a Bowl of Tea*; however, Kang's earlier work reveals how Chinatown serves as a hub not only for Chinese circulating between the United States and East Asian nations but also other East Asians. Han attributes this degree of independence both to the large number of Chinese Americans as well as their way of living "in one great organism" (Kang 26). Han's observations on Chinatown's independence from mainstream American culture are like Foucault's theory of heterotopias, which "always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" (7). This mechanism, in the Chinatown described in *East Goes*

West, appears to be the demonstration of Confucian values. Due to China's cultural influence over Korea prior to the twentieth century, Han can demonstrate such values, drawing him into a Chinese universal culture part of a past that predates his generation and that has also survived a transition to American soil. As a "ghostly" world, Chinatown represents the return of a unified East Asian past, prior to the rise of the Japanese empire. The "return" of Chinese universalism to the present and its translocation to American soil suggest ideas like those of Dussel, who argues that expressions of alternative modernities are merely expressions of cultures that have been repressed for several generations but not long enough to be extinguished. While Han was born into a Japan-occupied Korea, the prior hold of Chinese universal culture is still familiar to him, and he recognizes its resurgence in the United States.

While Han often identifies the West with the modern and centers it in his own future, there are moments when the narrator's re-telling characterizes Chinatown less as a heterotopia, a site existing in contradiction to the so-called "modern" aspects of New York City, and more as a translocal space. Han expands on the sensory experiences of his walks through Chinatown, suggesting that Chinatown's vitality as a community is communicated through its tangible reality and defying the idea that New York City is a Western-centric place. The sights, smells, and sounds of Chinatown identify it as translocal and, at times, subvert Eurocentric definitions of America. Speaking of a story he heard, Han relates that a Chinese immigrant

> knew no English, but on his return three months later, reported in the most glowing terms that he had not needed it. Americans spoke Chinese. It seems, on landing, he hailed a taxicab and said "Chinston," which really means, in Chinese, town of the Chinese, and being driven promptly to Chinatown, he had no difficulty there in conversing fluently in the Canton dialect (Kang 26).

Han's observations imply that Chinese is a functional language in New York City, contesting the prevailing assumption that English is the language of Americans. Han's own ability to speak Chinese due to his classical education allows him to survive his newfound poverty by negotiating meals in Chinatown. Han also describes an aura of Chinatown that reaches across its borders, observing that

[b]efore you approach Chinatown, you can smell it—the incense, the rice cakes, the Oriental perfumes, the cold, earthy smells of giant turnips and strange green vegetables, the teas, the musty smell of sawdust out of China, and through all a peculiar kind of dirt, more discrete than Western dirt, fainter, less frank, yet there (Kang 27).

Han's description suggests that not only Chinese people but "strange green vegetables" and "a peculiar kind of dirt" settle the spaces of Chinatown (Kang 27). Overall, his vision is not one of assimilation but transplantation. Han's description implies that there is something about China strong enough to continue intact overseas. Still, Han describes these elements of transplanted Chinese life as "strange" or "peculiar," distancing himself from them. Han is, overall, reluctant to identify with the culture or settle in Chinatown, and the uncanniness these sights evoke suggest how his orientation toward American cosmopolitanism necessitates the repression of his Korean identity, which Chinatown's insular culture affirms. Because this identity is repressed, these affirmations result in uncanny impressions and experiences in Chinatown spaces.

This experience culminates into Han's sighting of an apparition as he wanders Chinatown's streets. He believes he glimpses an old friend, Kim (not, by any indication, the same Kim he later befriends in the narrative) and, following the apparition up a staircase, ends up in a room thoroughly grounded in the material world of Chinatown. His experience of this ethereal presence contrasts with the signs of a hybridized Chinatown, "some silent images about,

a smell of incense, and Chinese ink permeating all, a Chinese record going on the Western victrola—and two young Chinese men discussing football" (28). Initially, the apparition Han sights bears a resemblance to the shadow or double often associated with the gothic, overtly revealed when Han observes that this figure "was always to shadow for me old realms of thought even as he guided me into the new" (28). This figure anticipates Han's introduction to Kim, another Korean immigrant Han has not met before but who, like the shadowy figure, bears an aura of the past and seems to offer a pathway to a cosmopolitan identity. This scene suggests how Han's Korean identity has been relegated to a shadowy, unreal space conjured by the vaguely familiar culture of Chinatown. The reality of Chinatown, however, jars Han from his fancy. The signs of material life in Chinatown seem to dissatisfy Han. In particular, he takes special note of the hybridized elements of the space: the Victrola, a sign of Western technology, and the conversation topic of football, which suggest ways Chinese culture has accommodated modernity and American culture overseas. Han seems unwilling to imagine a similarly hybridized Korean culture, but instead to contain it as a phantasmic space that cannot be connected to or changed by anything in his present reality.

Han's descriptions of Chinatown evoke a site of alternative modernity that is transnational in nature, a representation of a hybrid Chinese and Western culture that functions according to a Chinese, rather than American, universalism. It is noteworthy that both Han and Kim seem to have an aversion from lingering long in this hybrid space, as though they are unable to concede to a hybridized culture, as the Chinese diaspora population has. If Han is searching for a way to find footing in America, why does he so readily turn down the opportunities Chinatown holds? Even though his reasons for leaving Korea are based in perceiving a hopeless situation under Japanese rule, rather than a straightforward desire to be an American, why does

Han cling so readily to this desire, at the sacrifice of other opportunities around him? Irony permeates *East Goes West*'s narrative, suggesting how the older-and-wiser Han perceives his younger self's single-minded pursuit of American cosmopolitanism. Further, Han's experience of uncanniness in Chinatown suggests the opportunities and identifications he willfully represses in service of this pursuit. Han refuses to permit any noted "Korean" qualities to incorporate into his ideal modern identity. As a result, his abjected "Korean" identity is suggested via decadent characterizations of To Wan Kim and his antiquities and via Chinatown, through uncanny sensations.

Thus far in the chapter, I have focused on how Han's suppression of Korean identity emerges in his experiences of romantic antiquarianism and his immersion in New York City's Chinatown. Chinatown is uncanny for Han—home-like, due to his conversance with Chinese universal culture—but alien—not Korean—and strangely adept in its transplantation of Chinese culture. Han's increasingly obsessive behavior toward Trip suggests that his determination to find roots in a cosmopolitan America that will accept him as a Korean American poet is another symptom of his suppressed Korean identity overseas. *East Goes West* utilizes the modernist quality of ambiguity in a text full of irony and self-contradiction: Han might attain his desired goal if not for his self-defeating qualities, or not, constrained by American racism; or Han might find another future in Chinatown if he embraced his own connection to Chinese universal culture. The spectral that intercedes in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* is more future-oriented, unhinged from the narrative of history, positioned to interrupt the colonial and assimilating forces more decisively in the text. In what follows, I argue that *Dictée* aims to haunt the reader's experience of the text with a trans-modernity that emerges obliquely to the Korean diaspora subject's experience of repression.

Dictée compiles photographs, poems, letters, and diagrams without captions or metacommentary, like archival materials. I read this compilation against Pierre Nora's theory of modern memory as *lieux de memoire*, sites detached from and replacing former values of communal memory. Nora argues that modernity demarcates the "past" from the "present." Practices of communal memory, such as myths, make past events meaningful to the present and participate in forming group identities. The practice of memory is supplanted by the practice of history, a narrative constructed from past materials. By presenting these artifacts, *Dictee* participates in the reconstruction of the past from the archive. However, this participation is self-conscious in how archival materials are "contaminated" with a spectral voice, expressing something new emerging from these materials that cannot be defined by the boundaries of history. *Dictee* ends with a folktale, suggesting the recovery of memory from elsewhere despite the archive's weight and the historical narrative conceived by modernity.

Hyo Kim, Anne Cheng, and Mayumo Inoue have perceived *Dictée*'s narrator as elusive, absent, or polyvocal. Kim has noted the text's moments of resistance to the English language in the insertion of Korean words with no accurate English equivalent. Cheng has argued for a reading of *Dictée* as resistant to official records of history through an experimental style of writing that seems to refuse a straightforward or comprehensive historical narrative. Inoue reads the polyvocal mode to "welcome numerous ghosts of history and inaugurate their recipients, both of whom constantly undergo transformations and, therefore, resist all forms of capillary subjectivation" (64-65). Inoue's reading focuses on how ghostliness of *Dictée* acknowledges Korean colonial history without becoming explicitly anticolonial nationalist (79). My analysis argues that spectral moments in *Dictée* are a sign of the future, in line with Colin Davis's distinction between past-oriented "phantoms" and future-oriented "specters." Davis argues that

the spectral is often future-oriented, particularly regarding modernity, in acknowledging what "cannot not (yet) be articulated in the languages available to us" (379). The spectral in the text disrupts its religious and colonial teachings as well as a logical arrangement of counterargument against these subjects, producing a third way into the future.

The spectral in *Dictée* describes an alternative modernity by emphasizing a place beyond the dominant modernity that has yet to be articulated. These moments of spectrality connect to Dussel's description of exteriority, the qualities of other cultures that have been suppressed by the dominant modernity. This spectrality is future-oriented, rather than past-oriented, because the "past" in the work, the speaker's memories of her mother, the Korean War, and her recollections of her mother's experience as a colonial subject, are recorded in the archival presentation of the text itself. The spectrality of *Dictee*, rather than mourning the past, generates something new from cultural exteriority that cannot be articulated in language. This inability is underscored by the text's recurring theme of a struggle to speak.

Dictée's archival presentation is laden with the weight of history. Scholars, observing this weightiness in *Dictée*, have looked to psychoanalytic theory, taking positions on whether the work is melancholic or mourning in nature. Frances Restuccia argues the work as mourning, because an object of mourning, the mother, is described and mourned throughout the text. Restuccia argues for an interpretation of *Dictée* through continental philosophy, particularly Julia Kristeva's theory of psychoanalysis as a secular (as opposed to religious) forgiveness that bestows meaning. Cheng describes the work as melancholic, noting that "Cha's uncaptioned photographs effect, for the reader, a relation to the world that is melancholic: a trace of something lost that cannot be *named*" (147). Restuccia disagrees with Cheng's interpretation of *Dictée* as melancholic, finding that the stranded objects Cha presents are a sign of mourning

rather than melancholia. According to Restuccia, *Dictée* mourns the destruction of the Korean nation, noting that "[w]hereas melancholia would be to cling nostalgically to an ideal image of a unified Korea, *Dictée* makes intelligible the division, acknowledging the gap" (410). While I agree with Restuccia that *Dictée* mourns the division of the Koreas, this mourning is limited to the archival presentation of the text. The spectral presence emerging in the text is not one of mourning or melancholia but of future possibilities outside the scope of language. This view of the text moves away from an analysis based in Western continental philosophy and psychoanalysis, which further anchors the text in the dominant modern perspective it seeks to resist.

     Dictée haunts the reader personally through startling interjections in the prose and illusory presences in cinematic sequences. Inoue notes that these moments "resituate [Cha's] exploration of colonial history from the realm of ontology to one of 'hauntology' whereby the spectral is seen as constitutively resisting the 'welcoming power' of appropriative subjects such as the state, nation, culture, family, and the self" (78). Drawing from Inoue's view on Cha's logic toward using a mode of haunting, as well as Davis's definition of the future-oriented spectral, I argue that these moments in the text represent an exteriority that acknowledges trans-modernity. Dussel argues that "'trans'-modernity affirms 'from without' the essential components of modernity's own excluded cultures in order to develop a new civilization for the twenty-first century" (224). *Dictée* suggests how the spectral subject emerges from somewhere beyond the material world in stating "[h]er portrait is not represented in a still photograph, nor in a painting. All along, you see her without actually seeing, actually having seen her. You do not see her yet. For the moment, you see only her traces" (99). *Dictée* inundates the reader with repetition and reproduction in keeping with modern notions of history and the archive but emphasizes that there

is something yet to be seen, making it impossible to develop a cohesive narrative from the materials presented.

The materials presented in *Dictee* focus on both Korean and Western history and culture. *Dictée*'s chapters are named for nine Greek muses, structuring the work from a Eurocentric perspective. The historical contents of the work focus on the Japanese colonization of Korea, Yu Guan Soon, a Korean martyr, and two Western women, Therese of Lisieux and Joan of Arc, mediated through Therese of Lisieux's and other performances. The fragmented story that is told through this Western-oriented structure is interrupted by a spectral voice, indicating a presence that has been excluded from a Western orientation of space and time.

Like *East Goes West*, Dictee incorporates and reckons with a dominant Western perspective. While not the only mode in the text, its scope, as with *East Goes West*, is significant to the structure and telling of the text. The text's religious quality is complicated but not entirely disavowed, signifying that this quality is a part of the narrator's identity. Numerous elements in *Dictée* connect it to the Western gothic: uncanniness produced by an unstable text, compulsive repetition, a preoccupation with religious—specifically Catholic—imagery, rituals and legends, women subjugated by patriarchal institutions, the blurring of reality with a fictive space, and a preoccupation with maidenly purity, among others. Like *Dictée*, the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Western gothic was concerned with exposing the underside of religion and inventing a new order out of the ambiguity permitted by shadowed, nonrational spaces. However, what was "gothic" in the eighteenth century has been, according to Darryl Caterine, reprised as the "paranormal" in the context of postmodern works. Caterine notes the paranormal is "a tertium quid, or third way, in between science and religion" (3). Caterine finds that proliferation of pseudoscience and increasing interest in parapsychology in the twentieth century

to be manifestations of a paranormal impulse that reflects the fears and desires of a postmodern society distrustful of both religion and science. Caterine notes that

> [i]f religion is both a model of and a model for cultural systems, then the present-day explosion of interest in the paranormal can be read as reflecting and reinforcing the uncertainty, the rootlessness, and sometimes the bewilderment of the postmodern condition. Here we might consider that the paranormal is the domain of the archetype trickster: it is a state of perpetual liminality wherein stable structures of meaning are dissolved and certainties forever recede into the distance (6).

Caterine's note of the "explosion of interest in the paranormal" refers specifically to the role of the paranormal in popular culture. As a self-consciously literary work, *Dictée* does not necessarily seek to engage broad public interest in the same way as a popular cultural production. However, while *Dictée* employs a postmodern mode, it is also challenging the mode's otherwise Western orientation in the same way that popular interest in the paranormal challenges contemporary secular institutions of power in its use of the spectral.

Dictée focuses on several women who relate to each other and the narrator/Cha by name, by blood, by race, or by faith. Cheng finds that "[t]here is no subject without 'the others in place of her,'" and therefore, "[w]e have not been allowed…to imagine we might know a time before dictation…" (162). Cheng's point is toward resistance to the colonizer's notion of the "native," an identity developed through the colonization process. Not only does the subject become coherent in a Eurocentric society when there are "others in place of her" but this phrasing evokes a spiritual possession and the displacement and reorientation of bodies and spirits that haunt *Dictée* as a whole. Cheng's observation suggests one explanation for *Dictée*'s willful progression from the coherent, or colonized, to the incoherent, or potentially free.

In the universe of *Dictée*, there is no detectable original because the work is a compilation of reproduced scraps and fragments. Handwritten letters and drafts with marks of editing imply a striving toward authenticity. However, the text's prevailing instability and ambiguity suggests otherwise. For instance, a part of a prose passage following comments on Yu Guan Soon, a young woman considered a Korean revolutionary martyr, on pp. 37-38 is reproduced in handwritten, edited form on pp. 40-41. The passage itself seems loosely related to earlier comments on Yu in stating,

> Some will not know age. Some not age. Time stops. Time will stop for some. For them especially. Eternal time. No age. Time fixes for some. Their image, the memory of them is not given to deterioration, unlike the captured image that extracts from the soul precisely by reproducing, multiplying itself (Cha 38).

The passage could refer to Cha's strategy in relaying information about Yu and other historical women through oblique fragments, avoiding a linear format that would orient them in a cohesive history. The "captured image" seems to refer to appropriation of personal histories for national or cultural means, since "reproducing, multiplying itself" implies an entity seeking to grow in power (Cha 38). Nevertheless, the entities that stand outside of linear time, in an "[e]ternal time" and "not given to deterioration" are like ghosts who, likewise, do not experience the passage of time or the deterioration of self. Thus, by transferring vulnerable histories into a spectral form compatible with the postmodern mode of the work, Cha renders them invulnerable to nationalist appropriations.

Dictée's spectral nature is feminist as well as anticolonial, a shadowy other to the observances of female submission in the Christian church and in marriage. Amy Ling's theorization of the "between world" status offers insight into the forces acting on *Dictée*'s female

subjectivities. Ling argues that Chinese American women experience a triple oppression of Western assimilation, Chinese patriarchal culture, and white patriarchal culture. While the subject of *Dictée* is Korean American, logic like Ling's may be applied to this work to the extent that the subject engages with Korean patriarchal culture in the novel. One instance of this engagement with multiple forms of oppression is in *Dictée*'s account of Korean nationalist and martyr Yu Guan Soon who led the March First Independence Movement against Japanese colonizers in 1919. Yu Guan Soon has, in mainstream Korean histories, been described as self-sacrificial, if mentioned in connection to the movement. According to Karen Lee, these histories emphasize "stereotypical feminine virtues of submission and self-sacrifice," which shapes Yu's contribution in terms of patriarchal values (63). Lee notes that when a nationalist spirit is present in stories of "women warriors" like that of Yu's, a woman hero "may embody the revolutionary values of an oppressed people" and "explicitly serve the ideologies of patriarchal systems" (64). However, Lee finds, the transposition of Yu's story to an Asian American novel may work "to represent the potential for female agency" (64). This transposition of Yu's story also serves to characterize the shadow of *Dictée*'s melancholic subject. While patriarchal forces act on Korean diaspora female subjects in both Korea and the United States, the transposition of Yu's story to an Asian American context expands the range of possible meanings that may be derived from the retelling.

Ling's theorization of the "between worlds" status explains how, as an Asian American woman, the subject's gendered and colonial portrayals are inseparable. Throughout *Dictée*, women are portrayed as empty vessels to be filled by others in situations that include learning a foreign language, a Catholic mass ritual, and a consummation of marriage. For instance, in taking on the foreign language, the speaker comments that the subject "allows others. In place of

her. Admits others to make full" (3). The section portrays the process of the subject's

subjugation to language, as "[s]he allows herself caught in their threading, anonymously in their

thick motion in the weight of their utterance" (4). The speaker's description carries overtones

that imply sexual intercourse or violation. For instance, the language entering the subject's mind

is described as "[i]*nside her voids. It does not contain further. Rising from the empty below,*

pebble lumps of gas. Moisture. Begin to flood her. Dissolving her. Slow, slowed to deliberation.

Slow and thick" (5). The conclusion of the section suggests the subject's full reconciliation to the

foreign language, as "[s]he takes…The delivery. She takes it. Slow. The invoking. All the time

now…Always. And all times. The pause. Uttering. Hers now. Hers bare. The utter" (5). *Dictée*'s

prose makes a point to emphasize the subject's submission to colonial and gender normativity,

deconstructing the activities to such a degree that their underlying similarities are revealed.

While this emphasis on the subject's submission is significant in terms of this deconstruction, it

also heightens the counterpoint between the submissive subject and the overall haunted nature of

the work.

While, overall, Lee reads Yu Guan Soon's story in *Dictée* as the "woman warrior"

reappropriated for Asian American feminism, Lee's note that Yu's story "[resists] simplified

notions of 'old world' or 'Oriental' patriarchal nationalism and 'new world' American

feminism" suggests how *Dictée* expresses a system that elides neat categorizations of "East,"

"West," or "feminist" (73). In this system, the subject is complicit with heteropatriarchal and

colonial forces amid a compilation of prose, photographs, and correspondence. The spectral

presence emerges in counterpoint to the suppressed subject. The spectral does not signify

suppressed histories, because histories significant to the text are expressed as a narrative. Instead,

the spectral signifies the unarticulated exteriority.

Dussel notes that "postmodernity" as a critique of modernity does not acknowledge modernity's Eurocentric lineage. Thus, non-Western cultures are excluded when imagining the future through postmodernity. The concept of exteriority is useful in theorizing non-Eurocentric modernities, as "a process that takes off, originates, and mobilizes itself from an 'other' place (one 'beyond' the 'world' and modernity's 'Being'…)" (234). Dussel argues that alternative modernities emerge from a perceived exteriority because they are excluded from Western postmodernity. This theory of exteriority connects with the spectral in how both emerge from an "elsewhere," from beyond the conventionally accepted boundaries of the material world. The spectral interruptions in *Dictée* have no direct connection to other topics in the work because they emerge from a place other than the already articulated past.

Kim's analysis finds that *Dictée* maintains an "absent presence" of its author (142). Utilizing Sarah Ahmed's theorization of embodied writing, or "emotions as lexical effects rather than self-contained personal and/or social content," Kim argues that *Dictée* blurs the distinction between the individual and the collective by occupying a position between the two. Kim finds this quality of the work to be haunting, even ghostly, when observing that "*Dictée* theorizes a form of knowing-feeling that is emergent but embodied, a form of knowing that can be likened to being haunted" (140). In a similar vein to Cheng's argument, Kim finds that the work's absent presence works to resist rationalizing histories, noting that "*Dictée*'s search for 'ghostword[s]' calls attention to what is missed by objectivist and empirical accounts of the past, as historicism works to neutralize the past from the living present by precisely suppressing the ambiguities that threaten the unfolding of the past" (137). Kim's idea of a "disembodied [configuration] of the self" characterizes *Dictée*'s spectral, emergent subject (128). *Dictée*'s turn to the spectral works to increase what is possible in the work's universe. *Dictée*'s blurring of the spectral and the

cinematic expresses a communal experience of haunting by minimizing differences between audience and actor, as well as individual and collective.

Cheng finds that the novel resists the autobiographical genre because it does not have a cohesive narrator or system of ordering events (139). Cheng's attention is focused on the work's use of fragments of images and letters and interprets the narrative as polyvocal due to the multiple characters that emerge through these fragments. She is concerned with resolving the work's use of postmodern aesthetics with a cultural studies critical lens as well as how to understand the work as art beyond its ethnic representation. Cheng point to the limits of Asian American literary criticism: namely, that because Asian American texts are often interpreted in terms of their resistance to mainstream American ideology, their utilization of Western modalities, like postmodernism, can be difficult to resolve with a cultural studies lens. *Dictée*, as part of a larger body of Korean diaspora literature that contributes to alternative notions of modernity, utilizes postmodernist qualities to dialogue within and beyond mainstream American culture. Cheng argues that *Dictée* critiques "the desire for documentation," resisting ethnicization and historicization through its assembly of loosely associated fragments devoid of metacommentary (142). I agree with Cheng to a point, specifically with her assertion that the text resists visibility, taking an "oblique relation…toward itself as an object of revelation" (142). I do not, however, find that the text "speaks through multiple, disembodied voices;" rather, I argue that spectrality emerges in various ways throughout the text in counterpoint to the work's subject, whose submission to Western colonial and religious teachings is deconstructed throughout the work. Like Cheng, I find that the work resists the autobiographical genre, because, as Cheng observes, of the absence of a cohesive voice or order. In lacking cohesion, the work dismantles a colonized identity. An exterior spectral presence interrupts the text in the

work's opening pages. Following a dramatization of one's struggle to speak, a voice emerging from elsewhere interrupts the pages of a French lesson.

Within the "Translate into French" section, the interruption emerges in the English passages presented for the activity, which have in themselves are already rendered strange. The first three passages seem to refer to Catholic teachings, and the fourth to France. While the activities follow a semblance of punctuation and sentence structure, they are defamiliarized, as though they have been absorbed and reprocessed through one's subjective thoughts. For instance, the first paragraph to translate states that the "Blessed Virgin…would be sinless would be pure would be chaste in her heart. She would be silent. Often. Most of the time. Most often than not. Far too often" (Cha 14). Positioned as an assignment for a student, instead of a student's output, the activities produce an uncanny effect by destabilizing the authoritative voice. The ruminations on the silence of the "Blessed Virgin" take a stream of consciousness mode in striving to express the mind's natural flow, as though coming from the perspective of someone tasked with the activity; however, the words come *to* rather than *from* the subject-student, suggesting how the lesson has been corrupted from elsewhere.

The fifth paragraph dispenses with capitalization and punctuation in a series of disembodied phrases that slip from a stream of consciousness mode to a Surrealist automatist mode which, rather than meaning to imitate the flow of one's conscious mind, develops from subconscious associations between words and phrases. The passage begins with a few conjugations of the verb "to call," before becoming preoccupied with a subjective experience of trying to communicate with another person:

> …she accept pages sent care of never to be seen never to be read never to be known if
> name if name be known if name only seen heard spoken read cannot be never she hide all

essential words words link subject verb she writes hidden the essential words must be

pretended invented she try on different images essential invisible (Cha 15).

Automatism, as a Surrealist mode, means to reveal the activities of the subconscious in a manner

like automatic writing, a practice of channeling a message from the spirit world, associated with

parapsychology. Reading the passages with respect to these twentieth-century literary devices

provides a secular, surface-only interpretation that misses the passage's implication of a decisive

split between the student-subject and a free and conscious will. Reading the passages in terms of

the postmodern paranormal, however, reveals the spiritual "exteriority" more clearly. The

uncanniness of the interfering voice gives it a spiritual force that evades the rationalizations of a

secular postmodern lens. The interrupting voice seems to seek to explain its presence and

activities throughout the work in commenting that "essential words" are "hidden" and "she try on

different images" (Cha 15). The passage implies that what is "essential" has become "invisible,"

while the spectral subject assumes "different images" in seeking self-expression (Cha 15). After

this disruption, the passage picks up in a mode like the earlier passages in describing a journey

from London to Paris in a relatively impersonal mode, as though the interceding voice has

abruptly withdrawn from the text. The uncanny interruptions in passages already rendered

strange implicate the text as haunted on multiple scales, immersing the reader into an experience

where the "normal" is already rendered strange and in a process of becoming stranger.

Bruce Lincoln and Martha Lincoln's writings on hauntology distinguish different

occasions of haunting applicable to the nature of the haunting occurring in *Dictée*. Lincoln and

Lincoln distinguish between primary and secondary haunting, stating that primary haunting

afflicts an individual or small group, like a family, and often involves a ghost maneuvering the

living to settle an affair of the past, so that the ghost can be at peace. Secondary haunting occurs

at a more communal, moral level in how a large group of people is made conscious of past wrongdoing by the ghost, and the ghost does not seek a specific outcome to put it to rest. Between the two, *Dictée* is closer to this idea of secondary haunting because it is the reader, rather than the docile subject, who experiences the emergence of the ghostly presence throughout the work. While the subject has curated these various materials, the reader alone has the experience of the ghostly presence leaping from the assemblage. Lincoln and Lincoln focus their analysis on spectral phenomena in East Asia, which they contend have been shaped by Confucian and Buddhist traditions. The authors describe the idea of "'bare afterlife'" as the spectral presence that emerges after a "'bad death,'" which can result from a death "abrupt or unexpected…away from home and family, when one is young and childless, and/or dying in such a way that the body is mutilated or incomplete" (198). According to the authors, these ghosts "inhabit an interstitial space between life and death, inspiring dread and guilt in those to whom they are socially proximate" (198). As stated in the earlier pages of the novel, the subject "allows others. In place of her. Admits others to make full," resulting in the displacement of her own selfhood to this kind of interstitial space (3). The subject's displaced selfhood haunts the reader, posing an essential social connection between reader and subject like that of Lincoln and Lincoln's notion of secondary haunting. Unlike the ghosts in Vietnam described by Lincoln and Lincoln, the spirit of *Dictée* does not necessarily belong to a dead person. The thematic connections between spirit and knowledge of the subject imply that it is the subject's presence emerging in oblique, indirect fashion in the text, rather than that of the dead.

The reader's presence in the haunted space is indicated by *Dictée*'s second-person narrator. The reader must participate in the subject's experiences, first as a "viewer and guest," then as the subject herself, as the boundaries between reader and subject dissolve (Cha 98). The

remark that the subject is a vessel who "allows others. In place of her" may also be interpreted to imply that the reader is required to enter and explore the subject's psychic space (Cha 3). In the first of several film-like sequences, a scene is staged in which "you, as a viewer and guest, enter the house" of someone expected "to be beautiful," as though with the aura of a movie star (Cha 98). The scene wavers between a material and filmic nature as initially, "[w]ith the music on the sound track you are prepared for her entrance," then, finding that "[h]er portrait is seen through her things, that are hers" the reader observes objects as though on a film set (98). The slip in syntax makes it possible for the reader to be a viewer of the film and a guest of the film set simultaneously. On the movie-like nature of the scene, Inoue notes that "cinema introduces an image that constantly surprises the viewer and retains its potential to constitute an ensemble of such viewers who are struck by the image's unpredictable intrusion into the cinematic present" (70). Inoue's comments clarify how viewing a movie can be a haunted experience. The narrative defies even the more fluid boundaries of representation allowed by cinema in its implication that the subject the reader/watcher wishes to view is contained not only in the objects of the scene but also in the motions of the camera, "[h]er movements…already punctuated by the movement of the camera, her pace, her time, her rhythm" before the scene turns back to view the objects of her room (Cha 100). The speaker concludes that "[a]ll along, you see her without actually seeing, actually having seen her. You do not see her yet. For the moment, you see only her traces" (100). The second-person narrator of the scene and the reference to soundtrack and camera give the scene a sense of a screenplay, as though the reader has entered a film set rather than the space of the actual subject. The scene characterizes the viewer/guest as suspensefully awaiting a glimpse of the elusive woman, while missing the way her presence is constructed by the entire cinematic scene, including the camera angles. In this way, the presence the scene conveys is spectral, rather

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than embodied—perceptible only through this liminal space that exists halfway between viewing a film and being physically present on the film set. This sense of roleplay engages and stretches the possibilities of film to express an alternative world requiring audience participation.

Dictée uses a film motif to shape qualities of a spectral, on-screen presence which, like photography and film media, has no true original. Unique works of art, Walter Benjamin finds, possess an "aura" that is linked to a ritual process. Benjamin notes that art was originally designed by humans for ritual purposes, and that the aura is composed of the work's history, authenticity, and uniqueness, a cult value that generates an exclusive quality about the work. The products of photography and film do not have an aura because they may be reproduced indefinitely and do not come from a true "original" article or have a clear point of origin due to their means of composition. Benjamin notes that film invokes the participation of the audience in the work by eliding a central figure or point of empathy. *Dictée*'s use of a cinematic mode in certain scenes expresses connections between the notions of original/ritual/"aura" and reproduction-without-an-original/anti-religious/publicly-accessible. *Dictée*'s film mode and second-person perspective contest the notion of exclusiveness associated with religious or ritual art by juxtaposing scenes of a film/viewing a film with religious subjects such as a Catholic mass or the Catholic Saint Therese of Lisieux. However, the film scenes in *Dictée* enact a different kind of ritual—that of viewing a film with other members of the public. The deconstructive prose of the scenes of viewing a movie makes them appear as a ritual act and the cinema a sacred space. For instance, in one scene, the narrator states that "[s]he is entering now. Between the two white columns. White and stone. Abrasive to the touch. Abrasive. Worn. With the right hand, she pulls the two doors, brass bars that open towards her" (Cha 94). There is little to distinguish the details of the movie house from that of a church. The parallel is heightened when, entering the

theater, "[t]he whiteness of the screen takes her back wards almost half a step" (Cha 94). The "whiteness of the screen" suggests that the film viewer has entered a space with something either divine and/or eternal—or a frightening void (Cha 94). The air of passivity in the woman's routine attendance of the movie theater parallels the docile subject's attendance of church. However, the drama that emerges in scenes interspersed with these descriptions suggest that the woman is drawn to look at a film that reflects and dramatizes her own feelings of repression.

The tension throughout the work is not one of resolving a ghost's unquiet slumber but of the reader's task to resolve the spectral presence with the materials of reality from which it emanates. This momentum is aimed at shaping the future in a different direction, rather than restoring or maintaining peace. Benjamin's comment that the reproduction lacks "the mark of the history to which the work has been subject" is relevant to how the ghostly presence results from the displacement of the subject's own personal history with schooling in French and the Catholic religion (1053). *Dictée* uses postmodern modes to explore alternatives to conformity for diasporic populations. Fuminobu Murakami argues that postmodernism is a useful antidote to totalitarian modernist ideology in Japanese intellectual culture. Murakami finds that the detachment and passivity portrayed in postmodern literature may be read as a theorization of a world without violence. Murakami finds that "what underlies postmodernism is a political, economic and social egalitarianism…But…in order to achieve this, two basic desires – evolution and romantic empathic love must be discarded" (42). In *Dictée*, postmodern aesthetics surround the passive subject while blankness or neutrality characterizes the spectral presence. I read this quality of passivity in *Dictée* in terms of Murakami's theorization of postmodernism as an anti-violent strategy against a Japanese totalitarian modernism, finding that *Dictée*'s response to the violence of history is one of detachment rather than a reprisal of violence from a different source.

Thus, rather than becoming a fight to gain power over oppressors, *Dictée* expresses an alternative modernity of nonviolence through detachment from the outer world and an exploration of inner space.

The stories of women that emerge between and around the cinematic sequences suggest a progression from force to passivity. The "women warriors" mentioned in *Dictée*, Joan of Arc and Yu Guan Soon, are succeeded by Therese of Lisieux and the narrator herself. Joan of Arc is portrayed as a predecessor to Yu alongside Korean independence activist Ahn Joong Kun when Yu "calls the name Jeanne d'Arc three times. She calls the name Ahn Joong Kun five times" (Cha 28). In a photograph, Therese of Lisieux poses as Joan of Arc in a play she wrote about the saint, serving as an instance in *Dictée*'s overall motif of photographic and filmic reproductions. By emphasizing this work of Therese of Lisieux, *Dictée* considers the transformative power of film on the context of modernity. The uncaptioned photograph of Therese of Lisieux in costume at the start of the "Erato Love Poetry" section suggests a woman that is neither Therese of Lisieux nor Joan of Arc. The decontextualized image contributes to *Dictée*'s overall theorization of film's capabilities of producing spectral figures that stand outside of their historical or cultural contexts. *Dictée* also quotes Therese of Lisieux's characterization of herself as a weak individual, furthering *Dictée*'s progression toward passivity in stating, "'…the *Law of Love* has succeeded to the law of fear, and *Love* has chosen me as a holocaust, me, a weak and imperfect creature'" (Cha 111). As one contesting Western practices of language, religion, and assimilation in *Dictée*, the narrator adopts a passive mode, suggesting how, through postmodern practices of art, like film, which in terms of Benjamin's analysis has no true original being composed of multiple scenes and perspectives, a spectral presence emerges from elsewhere, outside the boundaries of rational order. Just as Murakami contends that Japanese postmodernist literature

portrays passive characters to express detachment that counters the forcefulness of Japanese modernist ideology, Cha's work seems to avoid replicating the energies of an oppressive regime. However, one distinguishing feature between Cha's work and that of Western or Japanese postmodernism is an unironic contemplation of the spiritual. While *Dictée* critiques the oppressive nature of church patriarchy, it positions Christian martyrs as spiritual predecessors, as though in consideration of how to detach spiritual women from the patriarchal institutions that have appropriated their narratives.

Just as Yu Guan Soon, Joan of Arc, and Therese of Lisieux float detached from more familiar, appropriative contexts in *Dictée*, another, unnamed woman appears in cinematic scenes. Her presence has been anticipated in earlier scenes, such as when the viewer/guest watches the film/enters the set only to find that they "see only her traces" (Cha 100). The drama unfolds over several pages, passages detached from their surroundings by whitespace. The story appears on the left-hand pages of the "Erato Love Poetry" section, while content related to Therese of Lisieux appears on the right-hand page. The stories, side by side, seem to compare the unnamed woman's marriage to "the Wedding of Sister Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face" (Cha 101). The motif of ambiguity between a watching a film sequence and experiencing the physical dimensions of the scene continues as the viewer/guest traces the woman's unhappiness in marriage, noting

> You find her for the first time as he enters the room calling her. You only hear him taunting and humiliating her…She falls to the floor, your eyes move to the garden where water is dripping into the stone well from the bark of a tree. And you need not see her cry" (Cha 102, 104).

The prose describes the cinematic scene with respect to how the viewer will see and hear the scene and how the camera directs the viewer's gaze. The speaker characterizes the viewer/guest as sympathetic to the woman, a condition that appears to draw them into the physical dimensions of the scene, to explore and contemplate the space where the woman's drama plays out. The viewer/guest inhabits the experiences of the woman as well as "the live-in student" before focusing on the silences and spaces that fill the room between the man and woman as he plays a piano. The scene seems to call upon some memory within the second-person narrator, who thinks

> you have seen this before. Somewhere else. In *Gertrude*. It is her, with her elbows on the
> piano. It is you seeing her suspended, in a white mist, in white layers of memory. In
> layers of forgetting, increasing the density of mist, the opaque light fading it to absence,
> the object of memory. You look through the window and the music fills and breaks the
> entire screen from somewhere. Else. From else where" (Cha 108).

Like the interjections in the French translation exercises, the cinematic scene, whose boundaries are already surreal, is interrupted by the narrator's vision of a female figure. The vision is described in spectral terms in how the woman is "suspended, in a white mist" and "the music fills and breaks the entire screen from somewhere," implying an uncanny intrusion (Cha 108). The spectral character is closely conflated with the female character the narrator is watching on-screen, but she appears, then disappears, within the space of the film itself. The narrator struggles to keep sight of her but is "made to follow the waiter inside while he prepares tea made to wait with him and when you return with him you find her gone" (Cha 114). Unlike the scenes of uncanny intrusion onto the French lesson, in which no emotions are projected onto the witness, these scenes are characterized by a narrator who expresses loss and longing for the elusive figure.

The characterization of the ghostly figure as an object of desire rather than of dread may be read with the ghost tradition in Asian American literature to imply a longing for connection with ancestors. In the Western tradition, ghosts signal a disruption of a narrative of a cohesive family or community, "transform[ing] such romances into tales of unrest" (Ng 6). However, according to Andrew Ng, in Asian American literature, ghosts are "helpmeets and guardians which assist the liminal subject in her transition across the difficult hyphen. Haunting is not something to be dreaded but, placed in an Asian perspective, represents filial piety, familial attachment, continuity and reparation" (8). Ng's comments on haunting in the Asian American literary tradition shed insight into the second-person narrator's yearning for the female apparition that the cinematic scene seems to conjure for the narrator. The cinematic apparition implies that the connection between the narrator and the narrator's ancestral history has not been broken by migration and assimilation in new cultural contexts. Nieves Soler notes regarding ancestral hauntings, "[i]n Confucian belief, the ancestral debt can never fully be paid because it would mean a cessation of self and history (or an oblivion), so intricately is the self tied to his or her past" (105). The way the apparition is both anticipated and searched for by the narrator in the cinematic scenes suggests the narrator's desire to affirm this connection. The apparition's appearance suggests how cultural traditions persist across a diaspora community, even in the face of assimilation to a foreign culture.

Another spectral woman emerges toward the end of the work. However, this time, the woman is embedded in the contexts of mythology, suggesting a further strengthening of the ancestral bond. In the story, a young girl goes to a well, where she finds a young woman who is dressed similarly. The young woman gives her cool water to drink and pouches of medicine for her mother. The story is more straightforward than others in the work, suggesting that the

fragmentation of previous passages is resolving toward clarity and cohesion. Hertha Wong notes that this passage "retells 'the Korean myth of princess Pali'…the young girl who ventures out on a quest to save her mother, overcomes the hardships of the long and arduous journey, and encounters a wise woman guide…" (Wong 165). The inclusion of this passage toward the end of the work suggests how *Dictée*'s overall framework of Greek mythology, suggested by chapter headings and in-text references, has been replaced with a Korean mythology by the persistent return of a spectral presence. It is important to note that this passage can scarcely be termed "spectral" in the same sense as the others, since it is not imbued with uncanniness. Freud clarifies the differences between the uncanny and the fairy tale, stating that in fairy tales "the world of reality is left behind from the very start, and the animistic system of beliefs is frankly adopted. Wish-fulfillments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, animation of lifeless objects, all the elements so common in fairy-stories, can exert no uncanny influence here" (18). The lack of uncanniness does not mean that the work has been abandoned by the spectral, but that the spectral is now fully familiar to the work. The integration of Korean mythology represents a spiritual return. The wish-fulfillment aspect of the scene suggests that a connection with ancestors has been secured and that the narrator's unfulfilled desire for this connection sated. Wong notes the significance of the fact that "the girl, like Cha, never really returns home. Rather, she remains on the threshold, on the outside of her home, looking into the paper screen door, ever poised to enter. Perhaps standing on the threshold emphasizes artistic, if not literal, entry" (165-166). Cha's use of uncanny phantoms as well as a fairy-tale figure to communicate a desired and realized reconnection with Korean history overseas dramatizes how a diaspora subject may experience the return of identity from "outside" of the sphere of Western colonial power.

Conclusion

Dussel notes that the postponed futures of non-Western cultures are relegated to the "exterior." Both Kang's and Cha's works portray a spectral exterior presence emerging from narratives of Korean diaspora subjects. In *East Goes West*, Asian identities and objects are imbued with spectral qualities because Han regards his home culture from a Western modern perspective, relegating what is "traditional" to a dead-end past to embrace what he deems to be an appropriately American mindset. This relegation of what is deemed Asian to an exterior or periphery results in Han's feeling haunted by places and objects that reflect repressed parts of himself. In *Dictée*, the speaker's desire for ancestral connection is fulfilled with a retelling of a Korean myth, suggesting how the spiritual has been anchored to reality with a cohesive narrative. The textual and syntactic stability in this final portion to the work, compared with previous sections, underscores the cohesion and sustainability of an imaginative space that expresses the narrator's connection to Korean spirituality and culture. Both *East Goes West* and *Dictée* shed insight into the question of ancestral connections in a Korean diaspora population by characterizing these connections with spectral qualities.

East Goes West, as a modernist text, simultaneously desires a cosmopolitan outcome while expressing the quality of ambiguity common to modernist literature. The ambiguous nature of the text leaves room for more to enter the scope of the story—namely, the suggestion of repressed Asian identity via spectral imagery—but the text does not go so far as to affirm a native cultural tradition or seek a place for it in an American future. This perspective on Korean culture is informed not only by American assimilation ideology but also by Korean modernist ideology which, in colonial Korea, tended to relegate Korean identity as "tradition," demarcating the traditional from the modern in accordance with Japanese colonial ideology. Under this ideology, "Korea" became a cultural object; Korean modernist writers wrote on Korean culture

from a romantic antiquarian perspective. In contrast with this view on Korean culture, *East Goes West* poses Chinatown as a pluralist space where Western technologies hybridize with Chinese culture. This portrayal suggests how, for Han, Chinese universalism is resilient to transplantation to a foreign country and strategically hybridizes with Western culture without being subsumed by it. While Han does not perceive an Asian American community as part of his future destiny, his moments in Chinatown portray how Chinese universalism provides a robust counter to American universalism.

Dictée is a postmodernist text that conjures the spectral with its use of cinematic technique, unstable syntax, surrealism, and compulsive repetition. The work traces a burgeoning consciousness that develops coherence throughout the text, beginning as eruptions in a French translation exercise already rendered strange, progressing into an elusive cinematic spectral form who dramatizes subjugation by patriarchal forces, till finding a coherent form in the retelling of the Korean legend of princess Pari. In this retelling, a woman at the well dispenses medicine to a young girl that will heal her mother, portraying a restoration of Korean cultural and ancestral connections mediated by women. As Wong notes, the work's conclusion does not necessarily imply that the narrator's desire has been fulfilled in a physical sense but that an imaginative space has been generated that fulfills the narrator's desire for ancestral connection. Overall, the spectral is more troubling to the overall trajectory of the narrative in *East Goes West* that writes into or alongside Western modernisms. Cha's apparitions are less intrusive and more cooperative with the overall aim of the work in destabilizing modernist notions of identity, relationships, and nationalism.

Chapter Two: Outside the Flow of Time: Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Vampire in Asian Comics for Girls

Kouyu Shurei's manga *Alichino* (1998-2001) is filled with lavish visual detail, recalling the illustrations of Victorian fairy tales. Many aspects of the story resemble those of fairy tales, particularly tales of a darker nature: a girl transforms into an owl; supernatural creatures prey on the wishes of humans; a beauty has been placed under a spell of sleep, to be awakened by a hero. Despite these similarities to Western fairy tales, *Alichino* is riddled with the disorienting and the paradoxical. In a fold-out illustration at the beginning of volume 1, shown in figure 1, Myobi, a child-like Alichino, poses with Ryoko, a man with whom she shares a bond composed of both love and hatred. The couple is surrounded by swords; a fairy-like Alichino perches on the tip of Myobi's dagger. Myobi's long dress has elements of nineteenth-century Western style, while her hair ornaments seem inspired by nineteenth-century Japanese hairstyles. Ryoko's garments recall the court dress of samurai in the nineteenth century.

Alichino's blending of Eastern and Western historical details provokes questions: why has *Alichino* borrowed these historical details from Western history? To what extent does Western culture participate in *Alichino*'s narrative? Delving further into the work, more questions emerge. Myobi is an Alichino whose human form is that of a young girl. However, the relationship between Myobi and Ryoko has, at times, a suggestion of sexual undertones. What boundaries does *Alichino* seek to transgress, and to what end? As a popular comic at the turn of the twenty-first century, what does *Alichino* suggest about the ideas afloat in Japanese youth

Figure 1. Source: Shurei, Kouyu. Alichino*, Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 1, n.p.*

culture? To answer these questions about *Alichino*, it's necessary to delve more into the popular culture with which *Alichino* engages.

Near the turn of the twenty-first century, visual kei, a Japanese fashion style among rock musicians became popular. Visual kei is a transgressive style, blending characteristics of nineteenth-century Western clothing with elements from Japanese history with a gothic or post-apocalyptic edge. Some male visual kei musicians, like Mana or Kaya, are well-known for wearing elaborate gowns in a style referred to as gothic lolita, another fashion closely associated with the visual kei scene. *Alichino*'s Myobi wears gothic lolita style, a style women adopted incorporating Western eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fashions and often assuming a child-like or doll-like appearance. While this fashion is usually not overtly provocative, the term "lolita" is associated with Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* and the notion of a "lolita complex," or desire for adolescent girls. Myobi's relationship with Ryoko relates to this idea in how Myobi, an Alichino, assumes the human form of an adolescent girl to attempt to seduce Ryoko. This element is one of many instances in which *Alichino* transgresses or blurs boundaries, heightening a sense of ambiguity in the work in a manner like that of the gothic novel.

In this chapter, I consider how gothic manga (Japanese comics) and manhwa (Korean comics) reflect ideas of transgression, nationalism, and gender identity as aspects of Japanese and South Korean modernities. I focus on comics aimed at girls or women, described as shōjo in Japan and sunjeong in Korea, genres that have been understudied by scholars in comparison to works aimed at boys or men. I analyze how Kouyu Shurei's *Alichino* (1998-2001), So Young Lee's *Model* (1999-2002), and Sooyeon Woo's *The Devil's Trill* (1998) adapt Western gothic tropes to express modern identity and nostalgic desire against contemporary contexts of globalizing Japanese and Korean popular cultures. Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, one of the most influential vampire narratives, has shaped the modern vampire figure internationally as introspective and solitary, a reflection on the modern individual. Scholarship such as Steve Pile's "Perpetual Returns: Vampires and the Ever-Colonized City" and Yoshitaka Inoue's "Contemporary Consciousness as Reflected in Images of the Vampire" shed light on the vampire as liminal, postcolonial, urban, and transnational. I read *Alichino*, *Model*, and *The Devil's Trill* comparatively with scholarship considering Stoker's narrative and Japanese and Korean portrayals of modernity and nostalgic desire. I analyze *Alichino* and *Model* with other Japanese adaptations of Western culture like visual kei and gothic lolita, subcultures that reflect aspects of Japanese culture that have become less visible in modern society.

I consider how *Alichino*, *Model,* and *The Devil's Trill* use elements from Western history and popular culture in a fantasy space that reflects Japanese and Korean modernities. In the previous chapter, I examined Korean modernism's preoccupation with romantic antiquarianism, particularly writers' fixation on Korean cultural objects relegated to a space outside of modern life and time under the conditions of Japanese colonialism. In this chapter, I examine how nostalgic desire surfaces in narratives at the turn of the twenty-first century in both Japan and

Korea, turning to elements of European rather than Asian histories for their expressions. Next, the gender and sexuality of the modern vampire will be explored alongside the Japanese and Korean tropes of the "beautiful boy" trope, or the beautiful, androgynous male, known respectively as bishōnen and kkonminam. The aesthetics in these vampire tropes engage significantly with aesthetics from visual kei, a fashion style adopted by some Japanese alternative rock musicians that conveys vampire imagery, visual decadence and sensual excesses recalling a Western Rococo style. In addition to their relationship with visual kei, the soft masculinities in these comics also connect to the Confucian seonbi, or "scholar-official," masculinity. The reiteration of this identity in contemporary girls' comics is evaluated alongside Enrique Dussel's notion of trans-modernity, or the argument to recognize the growing prominence of non-Western modernities that re-express aspects of local cultures in modern contexts. Asian girls' comics provides a space for the tropes of nineteenth-century Chinese novels, like that of the Confucian scholar-official, to mingle with the anxieties of modern life. One product of this mingling, the "beautiful boy" vampire character, will be analyzed in what follows.

The Modern Vampire in Asian Comics

Model is dominated by the aura of the aristocratic, sulky, vain, and self-indulgent vampire Michael. A friend deposits Michael on Jae's doorstep, having found him unconscious in a bar. While apprehensive of the stranger, Jae gives him shelter. When Jae, an art student, discovers Michael is a vampire who has drunk her blood, she strikes a deal with him: her blood in exchange for his willingness to sit as her model. Michael's looks fascinate Jae at first sight, though his behavior is arrogant and insulting at every turn. Jae is a passionate, outspoken character, like many manhwa heroines. Why, then, does Jae not only put up with but also feel so attracted to someone who exudes narcissism and insults her at every turn—to the degree of

risking all to capture his image on canvas? In figure 2, as Jae struggles to adequately capture Michael, he likens her to "artistic hacks who swing a brush with the finesse of a garden hoe" and suggests that such talentless individuals are better off committing suicide or supplying him with blood. Like *Alichino*, *Model* is less concerned with logic and coherence and more with cultivating an atmosphere of ambiguity, transgression, and forbidden desire—elements common to the gothic. Thus, it's more productive to understand *Model* through the emotional effects it aims to achieve as a work of manhwa rather than the events of its plot.

Figure 2. Source: Lee, So-Young. Model*, Tokyopop, Inc., 2004, vol. 1, p. 32.*

In the scene depicted in figure 2, Michael is unapologetically self-interested and insensitive, amusing himself by provoking Jae even as he basks in her attention. Michael shares similarities with late twentieth-century Western vampires such as Anne Rice's Lestat de Lioncourt. Like Lestat, Michael is aristocratic and vain with an androgynous beauty. However, an even closer analogue to Michael is the vampire persona created by visual kei musicians. *Model*, like many gothic Asian comics at the turn of the twenty-first century, has connections with visual kei such as the blend of Eastern and Western aesthetics, the celebration of self-indulgence and transgressive desires, and sadism and masochism. While clearly inspired by Western historical and popular culture, the visual kei vampire persona fuels and is fueled by Japanese youth culture. Thus, to gain a better understanding of such a character in manhwa, it's

necessary to understand how manhwa's relationship with its Japanese counterpart, manga, and a larger overview of Japanese and Korean popular cultures.

In English-language scholarly discourses about Asian comics, there is an abundance of material on manga and a notable absence on manhwa. Over the past ten years, with the advent of digital technology, print manhwa, once published in now-defunct print magazines, has been marginalized in favor of webtoons, digitized comics meant to be read on smartphone apps. Therefore, much of the scholarship on Korean comics, with the recent rise of scholarly interest in Korean popular culture, focuses on webtoons, a genre with different characteristics than print manhwa. Webtoons are intended to be read on a scrolling digital reader and feature color, while print manhwa utilize a format like manga with black and white illustrations on discrete pages. Print manhwa in global circulation includes a relatively small array of titles in comparison to manga. However, manhwa's global rise in popularity in the late 1990s and early 2000s, prior to the detrimental effects of digital technology on the genre, is linked to both the rise in Japanese popular culture during this time as well as the first iteration of the Korean Wave, or *Hallyu* 1.0 (approximately 1997-2007) (Jin 4). As Dal Yong Jin notes, the international rise of Korean popular culture was surprising for some, since "transnational popular culture in Asia had often been associated with the United States, Japan, or Hong Kong" (4). Scholars of the Korean Wave often associate *Hallyu* 1.0 with TV dramas and film (Jin 5). Therefore, print manhwa has managed to evade scholarly conversations on both Asian comics and the Korean Wave, despite the extensive publication on both topics. In this chapter, I clarify the points of similarity and difference between manga and manhwa with respect to both visuals and narrative to borrow from existing scholarship on manga and Asian subcultures.

Early twenty-first century popular culture in Japan and Korea corresponds with a new cultural policy in Korea following the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. According to Beng Huat Chua and Koichi Iwabuchi, Japanese television dramas, popular throughout Asia in the 1990s, captivated audiences with their expressions of "capitalist-consumerist modernity" via designer clothing and upscale surroundings (2). The Asian Financial Crisis sparked South Korea's efforts to export and promote their popular culture globally (Chua and Iwabuchi 4). This effort was successful throughout most of East Asia, partly since Korean programming was cheaper than Japanese (Chua and Iwabuchi 4). Due to Japan's colonization of Korea in the first part of the twentieth century, from 1945 to 1998, Japanese cultural products were banned in Korea (Chua and Iwabuchi 4-5). Noting the stylistic similarities between manga and manhwa, Yamanaka Chie finds that even prior to the lifting of this ban, manga circulated in Korea and was, in many cases, plagiarized by Korean artists (87). Visual connections between manga and manhwa are elided in Korean discourse about popular culture because, according to Chie, Koreans began to position themselves as originators of culture during the Korean Wave (92). While it is true that manga and manhwa share physical characteristics due to the cultural flows between Japan and Korea in the twentieth century, the comics in both nations also reflect experiences that have been shared between the two nations throughout the twentieth century. Chie notes that Korea has deliberately repressed the historical roots of manhwa in Japan due to a Korean nationalism that defines itself through anti-Japanese sentiment (88-89). Further, according to Chie, manhwa has become part of a larger scheme of Korean "brand nationalism," which problematically "fixates culture within a national framework" (95). Chie observes that this scheme reproduces the kind of hegemony that Korea has sought to eliminate. The promotion of Korea's national power means that "existent disparities within Asia may be preserved by means of centering the notion of 'Korea', and to

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guarantee this position, western orientalism may be reproduced and reinforced" (Chie 95). Since, as Chie observes, Korea's escalation of cultural exports is attached to notions of nationalism and globalization, it is worth considering how the culture is reflected in comics in the years soon after the Asian Financial Crisis, particularly in how the local conceives of itself in relation to the global. One element shared between manga and manhwa during this time is a vampire or a vampire-like figure that has aesthetic similarities to Japanese visual kei, an alternative music style that became popular in global alternative fan communities in the 1990s and early 2000s. Scholars have associated the vampire trope with modernity, globalization, and xenophobia.

In "Contemporary Consciousness as Reflected in Images of the Vampire," Yoshitaka Inoue argues that the vampire is a modern individual. Inoue notes that the rise of vampire folklore coincides with the rise of the Western Enlightenment (84). Inoue finds that the vampire is relevant to the modern conception of division between "rationality and affect, humanity and nature, subjectivity and objectivity," but that ultimately, these categories do not remain stable in the real world (85). Thus, fantasies emerge from the subconscious that reflect this instability. One example is the vampire, who resembles in certain ways the modern individual, who suffers from isolation from others and from the natural world. Inoue also notes that the subconscious, an idea closely linked to the vampire, is characterized by timelessness, including "not only the historical realities and fantasies of an individual life, but also, much more generally, the experiences, events, and happenings of that individual's cultural history, which stretch back long before the individual's physical birth" (86). This point is particularly important in analyzing modernities in East Asian popular culture tropes, since it allows for consideration of how national histories and anxieties related to such histories are expressed through the vampire image. Inoue notes that the vampire Dracula is, by the late twentieth century, characterized by

introspection and portrayed as sympathetic to the reader, rather than a monster to be destroyed (90). Likewise, in the Asian comics examined in this chapter, the vampire is a physically and emotionally fragile being requiring protection from a rationalist aggressor or his own suicidal tendencies. In these comics, the vampire characters, usually male, are styled in a feminine way, suggesting how female readers are intended to identify sympathetically with the characters. Vampires in comics also present a position from which to view the problems of modern life. The vampire's infinite lifespan is often reckoned as a curse, barring him from participation in a human world he finds desirable. The vampire in Asian comics is highly conscious of his differences from humanity and is marked by a desire to obtain contact with humans by consuming human blood. In late-90s Asian comics, this behavior is accompanied by physical and material decadence, suggesting how the vampire image has been refashioned to express the insatiable desires stoked by late capitalism for material objects and the pursuit of pleasure.

In "Perpetual Returns: Vampires and the Ever-Colonized City," Steve Pile considers the close associations between the vampire and the effects of globalization, including the mixing of blood (or races) and the unpredictable leaps in spaces and time that characterize both vampires and globalization. Pile notes that "[f]ollowing the vampire…can reveal exactly how the city becomes global by showing what exactly arrives from afar and how it arrives, and what it does when it gets there" (283). Pile considers London and New Orleans as important sites in *Dracula* and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, respectively. In London, Dracula himself is a foreigner from the "East" who threatens to corrupt locals, particularly women, while in New Orleans, the vampires Louis and Lestat are at home amidst both frequent death (due to epidemics) and the mixing of blood (or races). In Shurei's *Alichino*, the vampire-like Alichinos are, like Dracula, Louis, and Lestat, urban—seemingly anywhere or everywhere at once,

jumping locales easily. However, in the Korean works examined, Lee's *Model* and Woo's *The Devil's Trill*, the fateful meetings between vampires and humans are figured somewhat differently. In *Model*, after an initial urban encounter, the female protagonist follows the vampire to his lair, a sprawling Rococo mansion in the European countryside. Similarly, in *The Devil's Trill*, which opens in early nineteenth-century Germany, the female protagonist confronts the vampire on his magnificent estate, where he has languished for what seems an eternity. In these manhwa works, it is the protagonist who is the traveler—in the case of *Model*, the foreigner— while the vampire has occupied his territory for centuries, waiting for her to stumble upon his lair. Is it significant that *Alichino* maps more readily onto the Euro-American modern narrative of the vampire, given Japan's practice of Western philosophies and expansion of empire in the early twentieth century? Is it significant that in the Korean iterations of the vampire tale, the vampire is stationary, withstanding the evolution of life and territories around him? What insights do these two different narratives shed on the topic of globalization in the twentieth century?

In Inoue's reading of the modern vampire, the modern reader identifies with the vampire's sense of isolation and brooding, borne of the modern divisions between humans and the natural world, and each other. In exploring the literature on consciousness, Inoue notes that prior to modernity, "human beings lived in a mythological world and could not interpret experience as objective observers," while at the time of the Enlightenment, rationalism reigns, and the human faith in mythology is destroyed in favor of "the light of knowledge" (86-87). Inoue notes that the mythologized outside is internalized in the "unconscious" in the late nineteenth century, which means that today, ideas or emotions are perceived as coming from

within us, because boundaries between inside and outside are observed (87). Due to these conditions, Inoue finds,

> "[m]any modern individuals suffer from deep isolation and internal conflicts, and, as a result, they carry an enormous burden…We have lost a traditional community that is bound together and awareness of the mythological world and transcendent forms of being. Without this knowledge, we cannot contact the collective consciousness and unconscious in this age" (88).

Inoue's remarks highlight commonalities between modern societies that are often overlooked in postcolonial readings of literary discourses in Japan and Korea, which instead highlight colonial resistance to the West. However, to realize a more accurate picture of Asian modernities, it is necessary to account for the way Western tropes are used to express certain aspects of Asian experiences and identities in Asian popular cultures. An urban, capitalist environment separates individuals from nature, ancestors, and cultural mythologies and promotes a secular, materialistic life in Asia as well as the West. At the same time, Japan and Korea's respective adoptions of modern practices have been accompanied by very different factors than those experienced by Western nations; thus, one should not assume that the logics underpinning these urban environments are the same. Nonetheless, the prevalence of Western-oriented vampire tropes and eighteenth-century European settings in Asian comics suggests various identifications with these aspects of Western culture.

John Storey argues that analyses of globalization must consider the power of the local in adapting foreign culture to local needs. According to Storey, globalization cannot be read merely in terms of Americanization. Much like Dussel on the notion of trans-modernity, Storey describes a cosmopolitan future that evades a monoculture while valuing "plurality…in which

diversity and difference exist in horizontal relations, equally valued as legitimate" (120).

Japanese and Korean popular cultures reflect many ideas from Western popular culture,

including that of the vampire. Japanese and Korean comics also often use historical European

backgrounds. It would be a discredit to the adaptive strategies of these cultures to assume these

elements are a sign that Japan and Korea have adopted Western history as their own, or that

Japan and Korea are more interested in figures from European folklore than their own, since

there is ample evidence to the contrary in manga and manhwa.

What, then, does it mean when Western tropes and European aesthetics appear in Asian

comics? Storey finds that local cultures may use the foreign to destabilize established local

hierarchies. Storey notes that "[g]lobalization can…help confirm and help undo local cultures"

(114). In other words, confrontation with the foreign may provoke introspection or self-

evaluation of a culture. The changes that result from encountering and processing Western

culture do not necessarily mean a culture is becoming Westernized but, on the contrary, that the

culture has achieved a position of strength from which to parody or appropriate aspects of

Western culture. Scholars have noted how successfully Japanese and Korean popular cultures

have crossed national boundaries as well as the considerable amount of soft power and revenue

these popular cultures have gathered for the nations. Thus, it follows that Japanese and Korean

cultures engage in dialogue with Western tropes that represent aspects of modernity with which

these cultures may identify.

In the comics analyzed in this chapter, these Western-oriented representations often

indicate nostalgic desire for Asian cultures prior to modernization through conservative or

nationalistic expressions, resulting in cultural products that represent alternative modernities.

Historical European settings and Western tropes are transformed through nostalgic desire to

represent an imaginary like Susan Stewart's notion of a "future-past, a past which has only ideological reality" (23). This nostalgic desire in the manhwa *Model* and *The Devil's Trill* has different characteristics than that of the manga *Alichino*. In the Korean works examined, this future-past, realized primarily through the setting, registers much more clearly as utopian, while in *Alichino*, the Westernized setting seems more dystopian.

The different routes to modernity experienced by Japan and Korea shed light on these differences in their nostalgic desire. For Japan, the acquisition of modern technologies and ideologies was a means to power and empire. In the early twentieth century, Japanese modernists mourned the loss of culture amid the country's Westernization. However, a perceived traditional culture was also a nationalist tool behind which the Japanese government rallied in its determination to expand its empire and hold its own against the West. Koreans, on the other hand, were forced to relinquish their culture under Japanese rule in the early twentieth century. Korean modernist writers reified a so-called Korean traditional culture during this time. However, it was relegated to the past and colored with nostalgia. In the aftermath of World War II and the Korean War, South Korea strove to industrialize to bolster its economy, tearing down neighborhoods of hanok-style homes, a form of housing used prior to modernization, and encouraging residents to move into high-rise apartment buildings. This movement sparked a nostalgia in Koreans toward Korean-style architecture and a revival of forms prior to modernization in the later decades of the twentieth century. The manhwa works examined represent the isolated locale of the vampire's mansion as a much more idealized space, "an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin" that "wears a distinctly utopian face," like Stewart's description of the dimensions of nostalgia (23). While the manhwa works represent this historic imaginary in a more idealized way, both manga and manhwa, by

incorporating the figure of the vampire, represent the conflict of the modern individual's separation from the mythological world amid a larger-than-life space that inspires awe and wonder.

Representations of Time and Space in Gothic Manhwa

One notable use of Western Enlightenment-era aesthetics in contemporary East Asian popular culture is in visual kei musical performances. Visual kei performers in the late 1990s and early 2000s were typically male but sometimes wore clothing styled after Western women's historical clothing. Visual kei performances of the time also featured homoeroticism in the form of sexual behavior between male performers on stage, who dressed in men's or women's clothing. This behavior is "fan service," a means of "mirroring back audience desires" common in Japanese popular culture (Larsen). Fan service often includes elements extraneous to the performance that are included to please or titillate fans. The presentation of vampirism and vampire-like imagery is also a prominent part of visual kei. Gackt, a lead vocalist for the visual kei band Malice Mizer, "claimed to be a vampire born in the 1500s, a backstory he defended in various interviews" (Larsen). Some visual kei videos, such as Malice Mizer's "Illuminati," are intended to be controversial or shocking for viewers. For instance, "Illuminati" features the band members "feasting" on the shackled, nude bodies of white women while styled as vampires in European historical garb. The video, filmed in a chaotic, frenetic style, intersperses these more sexualized scenes with scenes of the vampire-like characters at the mercy of scientific experimentation. The video's imagery is ambiguous, and a plot is difficult to decode; however, it seems deliberately unclear whether the vampires are the perpetrators or victims of violence. This portrayal corresponds to other global modern incarnations of the vampire with this theme of uncertainty about the vampire's status as perpetrator or victim. However, the use of Western aesthetics in visual kei, and especially the use of white women in music videos like Malice

Mizer's "Illuminati" introduces a racial element to this narrative that suggests tensions between East Asia and the West that first surfaced in Japanese literary works at the turn of the twentieth century.

The decadent aspect to visual kei, both in its emphasis on aesthetics in the form of costumes or video production as well as the presentations of sensuality between male performers, hearkens back to Japan's engagement with Western modernism nearly a century prior. Japanese modernism, like Western modernism, is characterized by preoccupations with aesthetics and materiality as well as how to conserve traditional Japanese culture in the face of increasing Western power. It also, at times, leans toward the homoerotic. Junichiro Tanizaki's "In Praise of Shadows" (1933), for instance, reflects on the sensuality of male Noh performers even as he laments the marginalization of traditional Japanese culture due to its incompatibility with modern technologies. Although visual kei performances utilize Western elements in their aesthetics, the emphasis on costume and effect and the blurring of gender boundaries hearken back to the traditional Japanese theater performances on which Tanizaki reflected. For instance, Kaya, one visual kei performer, despite dressing in women's attire, does not identify as a drag queen but instead "uses the terms *onnagata* and *josō*—suggesting a possible link back to the kabuki tradition" (Johnson). Visual kei is an important starting-point to consider late twentieth-century gothic Asian comics because its aesthetics were clearly influential to both manga and manhwa at its height, suggesting a larger transnational fan culture that identified with this characterization of a Western fantasy space in both the music scene as well as in popular literature of the time.

According to Storey, fan culture is a space of youth identity formation that includes elements of a collective memory. Storey notes that "[o]bjects of fandom become a part of our sense of identity; they become embedded in the roots of memory and the routes of desire" (89).

Thus, fan culture is a way to reckon with both individual and collective pasts. Storey also asserts that fan cultures can empower youth. This may be perceived by characterizing the power and exchanges of power within the fan culture. These aspects of fan culture, their means of articulating responses to collective memory and their means of empowering consumers, are pertinent to the analysis of the visual kei as a prominent Asian subculture around the turn of the twenty-first century. Along with its re-expression of the onnagata persona through male performers in gothic lolita and other reinterpretations of historical European clothing, visual kei may express frustrations with modern archetypes of Japanese masculinity and femininity. Visual kei aesthetics suggest deviant behaviors and desires, particularly those of gaining power over others through exploitative means. The identification of Japanese youth with these desires around the turn of the twenty-first century suggests how certain characteristics of visual kei may have provided an antidote to a sense of powerlessness or victimization. Rebecca Suter's perspective on the objectification of Western aesthetics in manga, in reverse orientalization, provides further insight into this question, particularly regarding visual kei imagery like the Malice Mizer "Illuminati" music video, which eroticizes a display of power over a Western Other.

Suter argues that the use of European, particularly Christian, imagery in Boys Love comics (shōjo manga that feature homoeroticism or same-sex love between males) presents the West as Other in the same way that Western works portray East Asia as Other. According to Suter, the West serves as an exoticized play-space for the reader's imagination in manga just as Western fantasies have appropriated imagery from East Asia to reflect their own fears and desire. Of note to my argument is Suter's emphasis on the Western Other as bearing traditional qualities (546). In my analysis, I find that Korean comics use imagery from historical Europe to craft a

space that is both exotic and nostalgic, reflecting an interest in a world prior to modernization. Suter notes that aesthetics is a central point in this kind of analysis in how in Japanese works "Europe was idealised for its appreciation of beauty, and contrasted with the utilitarianism that prevailed in contemporary Japan as a result of modernization" (551). Suter finds that this kind of contrast reverses the scheme of Orientalism described by Edward Said in how Japan is romanticizing Europe as a "backward 'Other' against which to construct the image of a modern self" (551). Suter's analysis of European spaces in manga suggests how they are divested of their original meanings to represent a shadow to certain aspects of Japanese modern identities. I agree with Suter that European elements in Japanese popular culture are appropriated to delineate modern Japanese identities and values; however, some qualities of the Asian comics examined in this essay suggest that Europe does represent a foreign—particularly Western—threat in the imaginary space. Commenting on manga's use of European elements for their beauty, Suter notes that "[t]hrough this aestheticising approach, the comics reproduce and invert a mechanism characteristic of Orientalist narratives about Japan, which portrayed it as similarly aestheticised and objectified" (556). Suter's clarification is important in how it acknowledges the storytelling agencies of nations that have been oppressed by Western power and interference in East Asia over the twentieth century. Suter's analysis also brings to light the risks in interpreting East Asian literature as postcolonial. A strictly postcolonial viewpoint on the dynamic between East Asia and the West risks mistaking this kind of reverse orientalization for an assumption of the foreign culture's identities and values, resulting in a double consciousness.

The manga *Alichino* (1998-2001) and manhwa *Model* (1999-2002) incorporate aesthetics or tropes from an Enlightenment European tradition as well as a pre-modern Japanese tradition much like visual kei performances. Just as visual kei aesthetics often seem to overshadow the

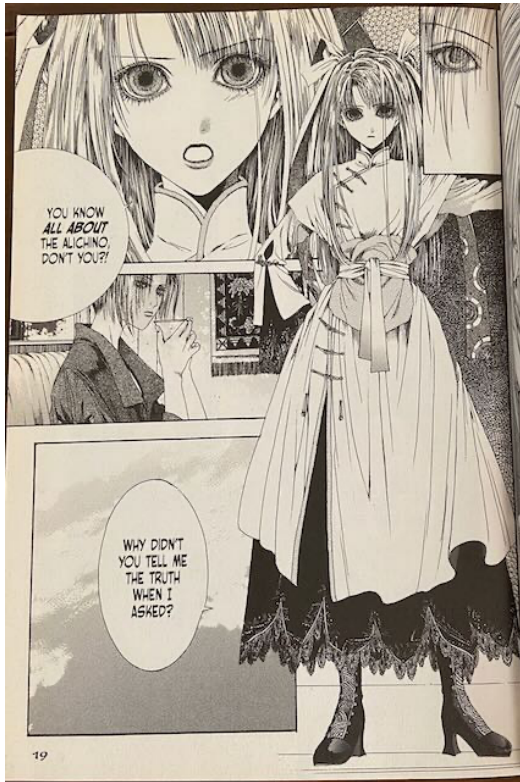importance of the music itself during performances, the gothic aesthetics in *Alichino* and *Model* often seem more conspicuous or noteworthy than the narratives themselves. *Alichino* features vampire-like characters who are drawn to humans who hold a fervent wish or desire. An Alichino agrees to grant the human's desire for a price, normally taking the human's life in exchange. The name of the creature comes from that of a specific devil from Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. However, given that the Alichino, styled as morally ambiguous, prey on those who emit emotional distress due their strong desires, desire itself may be taken as the evil in the story, suggesting the Buddhist philosophy toward non-attachment.

Figure 3. Source: Shurei, Kouyu. Alichino, *Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 1, n.p.*

Just as the narrative itself draws from both Eastern and Western elements, *Alichino*'s imagery features detailed costumes and settings which, though stylized or fantastical, hearken to both historical Eastern and Western aesthetics. In figure 3, an unnamed girl approaches Tsugiri, seeking information about the Alichino in her quest to save her brother's life. Her nineteenth century-inspired clothing layers details from multiple cultures, an obi-style belt over a dress with details suggesting Chinese Qing women's dress, and a black lace skirt and boots that resemble Western Victorian women's dress.

While a particular setting is never established, buildings and natural surroundings also refer to a wide variety of architectures and terrains across the globe, suggesting a hybridized

space that lies outside of a specific nation or historical period. Figure 4 shows an interior with Victorian furnishings and an Asian-styled circular window embedded in the door. *Model* also blends Eastern and Western aesthetics, though its official setting is established as contemporary Europe. As with *Alichino*, *Model* features costumes that hybridize styles from both Eastern and Western historical clothing. In figure 5, Ken wears a floor-length robe that resembles Chinese Qing-era clothing but is much more form-fitting. The garment's characteristics lend both cultural and sexual ambiguity to Ken's identity in the scene in line with visual kei style. Both *Alichino* and *Model* feature, in addition to hybridized Eastern and Western styles, a deconstructed and at times post-apocalyptic aesthetic that is also found in many visual kei performances or costumes.

Figure 4. Source: Shurei, Kouyu. Alichino, *Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 1, p. 26.*

In *Diaspora Literature and Visual Culture: Asia in Flight*, Sheng-mei Ma considers how, for Asian culture, "modernity exacts a flight to a new self westward, while remaining intensely nostalgic for the old self" (5). This condition of division between the new-foreign and old-indigenous can be perceived, according to Ma, in striking boundaries between North and South Korea or the differences Tanizaki notes between a modernized Tokyo and traditional Kyoto (5). Aside from territorial divisions, modernity in Asia is also expressed through the concept of "the shadow of a shadow," which Ma describes as a destabilization of "the relationship between person and shadow, shifting away from the supremacy of personhood" (13,12). One example Ma provides of this condition is cosmetic surgical procedures in East Asia

that alter one's body to reflect "an essentialized Caucasian facial feature and physique, which is but a shadow of actual Caucasianness" (13). This kind of departure from conventional notions of identity is also visible in visual kei performances, which obscure or differently construct gender, race, and other aspects of identity in a new kind of aesthetic that represents a reflection of an ideal or, as Ma phrases it, a "shadow of a shadow" (13). Returning to the postcolonial notion of double consciousness, Ma's example illustrates the complicated relationship in East Asian consciousness between appropriation and mimicry. Essentialized Caucasian features are also visible in manga and manhwa, while hair and eye colors vary within the range of natural human possibilities, including those uncommon in East Asia, and some unnatural possibilities.

Figure 5. Source: Lee, So-Young. Model*, Tokyopop, Inc., 2004, vol. 1, p. 202.*

As a result, Asian gothic comics, like visual kei, become a deterritorialized fantasy space which, while often seeming to refer to the West, more accurately express the modern Asian identity in its dichotomy between nostalgic desire, Western appropriation, and some degree of mimicry toward a colonial power.

Scholars have described more broadly how anime and manga works often problematize the notion of a stable identity as well as the relative importance of humans in the universe. Bill Ellis fairy tale mode. Ellis considers how, as with fairy tales, anime characters may express the condition of being "multiply conflicted in identity, their bodies morphing fluidly into beastly or celestial variants of themselves…" which further

expresses "the characters' quest for a stable psychosexual identity" (392). Transformations are common in the vampire tale as well. In *Alichino*, the Alichino character Myobi transforms into an owl at will, while *Model* and *The Devil's Trill* both confront the issue of a vampire transforming a human into a vampire. In the latter kind of transformation, a heavy price is to be exacted—eternal suffering and/or the loss of the human's soul—which in *The Devil's Trill* gives the vampire cause before committing such a deed. Such a transformation, accompanied by suffering or remorse, suggests the weight of social resistance against moving outside of social categories. Many transformation tales in anime and manga involve a child or teen protagonist and portray an effortless or even involuntary transformation. Gothic Asian comics, on the other hand, such as *Alichino*, *Model*, and *The Devil's Trill*, portray adult protagonists, suggesting the limited possibilities for adult identities in modern society. Ma notes that the anime work *Ghost in the Shell* calls human individuality into question with its title, choosing the word "ghost" in reference to the human soul, which also supposes a "duplicitous" nature, "a spin-off of the self, yet a non-self as well" (16). Ma further notes that "[s]uch Eastern tendency to challenge the supremacy of humanity via shadows recurs in classics as well as in modern texts" (16). Ma's observation reveals how something essential to Asian philosophy surfaces in contemporary East Asian popular culture to call modern schemes of existence into question. These comments suggest how the Western façade and Western tropes in East Asian popular works, such as an abstracted, gothic version of Europe, and a vampire with European features, serve less as a vehicle for Western notions and more as a fantasy space to reimagine East Asian modern society.

In *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity*, Susan Napier considers the intimate relationship between the modern and the fantastical in Japanese literature. Napier notes that Japan, "at the nexus of modernization and Westernization" is "still

the only non-Western country to be counted as an equal by the Western powers" (5). To Napier's comment, published in 1996, I would add that South Korea's increased participation in the global economy and increase of wealth in the last two decades has made it quite important to the West as well. Japan and South Korea both experience power on the world stage due to their wealth, participation in capitalism, and cordial terms with Western nations. It is no wonder then that Westernization, which a century prior threatened to obliterate established modes of life in these nations, has taken such a strong hold in East Asian imaginative works. Napier contends that, rather than legitimizing the existing order, as with the "palliative function" described by Frederic Jameson, "most Japanese fantasy exists as a counter-discourse to the modern, even when it seems most blatantly escapist" (6, 8). Napier notes that there is a turn toward the rediscovery of local myths in Japanese fantasy, suggesting a drive to recover a pre-modern imaginary. According to Napier, it is modernity itself, rather than Westernization, that Japanese fantasy seeks to subvert (12). Thus, a closer look at Japanese fantasy brings insight to how Japanese writers problematize the modern.

As previously discussed, Korean comics have a close, if unacknowledged, relationship to Japanese comics aesthetically due to Korean comic artists drawing from, or plagiarizing, the stories of Japanese comic artists throughout the twentieth century. While it isn't sufficient to refer to Japanese scholarship alone in analyzing Korean comics, the close relationship between them means that some scholarly perspectives on Japanese comics will apply to Korean comics. Aside from the artistic connections between manga and manhwa generally, the use of visual kei aesthetics in Korean comics around the turn of the twentieth century suggests that visual kei may have been popular in South Korea as well during this time. While the music style may not have gained as much traction in South Korea as in Japan, the deconstructed and hybridized aesthetics

in gothic manhwa seem to belong to the same imaginary as that of manga. What is the significance of deconstructed or hybridized European and Asian aesthetics in gothic Asian comics? How do these aesthetics function in a vaguely historicized European fantasy space, particularly when the aesthetics seem to be a greater attraction to the comic product than the narrative itself?

In his analysis of the aesthetics of the Japanese animated movie *Ghost in the Shell 2*, Ma notes how the setting "'doubles' exoticism, drawing from both Western and Chinese stock images" (19). In one instance, "Occidentalist, cathedral-associated stained glass is etched with Orientalist, chinoiserie lattice tracing" (Ma 19). Ma's notion of how East Asian fantasies of the West become a "shadow of a shadow" often seem, in literary works, to take an uncanny turn. These hybridized aesthetics in Asian comics *Alichino* and *Model* often present themselves in haunted, decaying, and otherwise psychically unquiet spaces. The notion of uncanniness in this mingling of East and West can be seen as early as Junichiro Tanizaki's *Naomi* (1925), in which the protagonist, Joji, falls in love with and marries Naomi, a woman whose Eurasian appearance (with no apparent relation to her ancestry) inspires his single-minded obsession for her. Joji feels that Naomi resembles the Western actress Mary Pickford and, accordingly, dresses her in theatrical renditions of both Eastern and Western clothing, like a doll. Naomi's wardrobe is excessive, mirroring Joji's obsession, and, to budget more money for the clothing itself, no containers are purchased; instead, the newlyweds prefer "to spread them around where [they] could see them and try various combinations whenever [they] were in the mood" (38). Joji observes that the clothing "also served as decoration for the rooms" (38). The protagonist's focus on Naomi's aesthetic possibilities persists throughout the novel. Rather than lose her entirely, he endures her affairs with other men, his fascination with her never lessening despite hurt and

jealousy. Just as Naomi appears devoid of feeling or character, her emptiness seems to further encourage Joji's obsession with her racially ambiguous appearance. I note these developments in *Naomi* to suggest that these qualities of decadence, self-gratification, and a preoccupation with hybridized Eastern and Western aesthetics that surface in Japanese modernism resurface at the turn of the twenty-first century with visual kei and gothic Asian comics. Naomi is, in many ways, like a vampire in how her allure makes Joji vulnerable to her, which in turn allows her to drain him of resources without giving anything in return. In addition to her seemingly biracial appearance, her identity is liminal in terms of her degree of humanness; in many ways, she is like a doll or automaton in her lack of feeling toward others around her.

Naomi suggests how the hybridization of Eastern and Western aesthetics communicates feelings of anxiety in Japanese modernist writing through portrayals of uncanniness or irrational excesses. In visual kei and Asian gothic comics, a similar kind of hybridization, also marked with traces of uncanniness and decadence, is presented alongside narratives centered around the mingling of blood and/or potential unions between different species. The exoticized Eastern and Western details in *Alichino* and *Model* serve to complement the narrative subject matter obliquely, vaguely suggesting how the vampire fantasy is infiltrated with anxieties about a hybridized society. These anxieties resemble the kind of ambiguities that exist for Japan and South Korea under twenty-first century postcolonial conditions.

Sakai and Yoo consider how the United States' colonial power in East Asia is different than previous iterations of colonial power. Rather than imposing an external culture on the colonized nations, the United States fosters ethnic nationalisms, ensuring that nations remain distinct from one another and that the terms of colonialism remain largely unseen on the surface of everyday life. Sakai and Yoo find that in this invisible form of colonialism, "[o]ne perceives

multiple visions at the same time" such that "colonialism is finished and yet evident at the same time in East Asia" (5). This description of colonialism is like the notion of the uncanny, according to Sigmund Freud, in how one experiences a misplaced sense of the familiar that causes one's experience to become unreal. As with an uncanny experience, East Asian nations like Japan and Korea experience a familiar world that has become defamiliarized by invisible traces of colonization. While *Naomi* was published prior to Japan's defeat in World War II and the subsequent American occupation of Japan, Japan was highly conscious of Western colonial power in Asia during the Modernist period, when Japanese nationalism was rising. In other words, the Eastern and Western hybridization in Japanese and Korean aesthetics, marked by a gothic quality, suggests how postcolonial anxieties riddle the Western-inspired fantasy space in early twenty-first century Asian comics.

In *Alichino*, the protagonist Tsugiri uncovers his fate as a Kusabi, a special kind of human that serves as an antidote to the otherwise unlimited power of the Alichino. In terms of semantics, Tsugiri's special status is described with a Japanese term which, at least in the context of *Alichino*, refers to a sacrifice, while the Alichino themselves are named from a character in a Western literary work, Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. Alichino is one of the devils in *Inferno*, the first part of *Divine Comedy*, with a relatively minor role in the work. I observe these Eastern- and Western-derived names not to suggest that *Alichino* is portraying in any direct way a battle between East and West but to suggest that just as other location-specific aesthetics find their way into other parts of the manga, this scheme of naming could refer more broadly to the tensions between East and West. This tension is also perceptible in the lavish details of costumes and furnishings, which suggest an exoticized hybrid of East and West in a similar manner to Ma's observations on *Ghost in the Shell 2*.

Figure 6. Source: Gothic Lolita Bible, *Index Communications, vol. 46, p. 101.*

Alichino's visuals evoke a post-apocalyptic world through crumbling structures, languishing cities, and few apparent humans, with features suggesting locations both within and outside of East Asia. This alternative universe is clearly a patriarchal one. Different areas are ruled by Alichino lords like Lord Yui and Lord Roshoki. The few female characters in the work are contracted, beholden, or otherwise attached to more powerful male characters. For instance, two Alichino females, Myobi and Matsurika, each have a male character that is a "master" figure over them. Additionally, Myobi is styled in gothic lolita attire, a clothing style closely associated with visual kei after Mana, a Malice Mizer band member, began habitually wearing gothic lolita clothing. In figure 6, Mana models a gothic lolita dress for *Gothic Lolita Bible*, a gothic lolita fashion magazine popular in the early twenty-first century. As a publication enduring for several years, serving as essential reading for those in the subculture, *Gothic Lolita Bible* indicates the transformation of transgressive desires and the designs they inspired into consumer products. The inclusion of gothic lolita style in *Alichino* indicates the manga's participation in this consumer discourse.

Gothic lolita attire is an alternative clothing style in Japan that attained its height around the turn of the twenty-first century. Gothic lolita styles are usually worn by adult women but also sometimes by men. Gothic lolita clothing resembles that of a European Rococo or Victorian doll, sometimes with a dark or morbid twist suggesting an expression of subversiveness to the

dominant culture. Michelle Liu Carriger notes that "[t]he superficial distinctiveness of the 'Victorian' silhouettes that gothic lolita fashions cribbed from dolls, children's book illustrations, and fantasized European pasts…comes across as unmistakably Japanese, an uncanny reincarnation of Victorian values in the persons of contemporary young Japanese women (and others)." Carriger goes on to argue that "gothic lolita girls adopt past modes associated with the oppression of women in order to declare their independence from contemporary regimes of heteronormative hegemony." The inclusion of this fashion style is another element of Western-inspired aesthetics in *Alichino*, suggesting how a historicized European imaginary is utilized to process or revise problematic elements in Japanese society.

Although there are many interpretations of this clothing style, I interpret the image of gothic lolita in *Alichino* as a suggestion of pedophilia, particularly adult male lust toward young girls. This suggestion in the work is neither a social critique nor an affirmation of pedophilia, instead serving to evoke moods of transgression or ambiguity in a manner like that of the gothic. Despite the use of the term "lolita" in the fashion's name, many who write on this topic overlook or discount what seem to be rather clear references within the fashion style to pedophilia. Isaac Gagné notes that the term *rorikon*, a derivation of the term "Lolita complex," became a way to describe "the sexual attraction of older men to young girls" but that "[i]t is unclear why Gothic/Lolitas adopted or accepted such a word to describe themselves" (135). Carriger, despite asserting that lolita fashion is a means of resisting the patriarchy in a broader sense, also resists making the connection, noting that "[m]any Japanese lolitas have never heard of Nabokov's book, and tend to be disgusted when they learn what it is about." However, Shurei, in crafting *Alichino*'s narrative, references the Western associations with the term "lolita" in a direct manner with the gothic lolita aesthetic when Myobi takes on the form of a young girl to seduce the adult
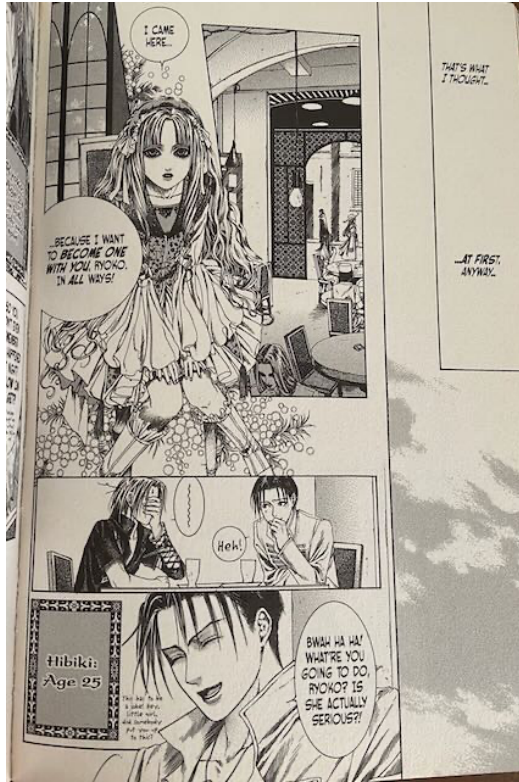
male Ryoko (see fig. 7). While Ryoko claims disinterest in Myobi's youthful appearance, some sexual aspects of their relationship are revealed as the manga progresses. *Alichino*'s use of both visual kei and gothic lolita styles suggest how European aesthetics are utilized in moments that push cultural or social boundaries, particularly in ways that visually revert to a more rigidly patriarchal environment than is visually obvious in Japan today.

Figure 7. Source: Shurei, Kouyu. Alichino, *Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 3, n.p.*

In other words, the lavish, hybridized details in *Alichino* make visible patriarchal forces that are experienced but not readily acknowledged in Japanese society. While Napier contends that Japanese fantasy often has a more subversive intention than the palliative function described by Frederic Jameson in his theory of popular culture, the fact that *Alichino*, a manga directed toward a young female audience, portrays but does not subvert elements that resemble a rigid patriarchal society suggests that the manga does not intend to imagine an alternative, potentially more empowering, world for girls but instead to make visible certain lived dimensions of the existing order. In fact, *Alichino*, in many ways, takes a patriarchal order for granted. Female characters, as dependents on male leaders or protectors, are either needy and ineffectual or darkly seductive as they latch onto blameless males. The real arbiter of change in *Alichino* is Tsugiri, a human male designated from birth as a Kusabi, an identity that enables him to defeat the Alichino, further suggesting how leaders are born, not made. Despite these patriarchal functions in the work, the *bishōnen*, or "beautiful boy" aesthetic, suggests

another means for a female readership to identify with the work by temporarily shedding gender identity.

Model, like *Alichino*, appears to take a patriarchal environment for granted. A remote European mansion is ruled by a vampire lord whose word is law, much like the despotic patriarch in the Western gothic tradition. Also, in line with the Western gothic tradition, *Model* features a female protagonist attempting to make sense of this environment. In this way, *Model* much more closely resembles the Western "female gothic" tradition described by Anne Williams in *Art of Darkness*. The male gothic, according to Williams, describes a struggle between a male protagonist and forces, often supernatural, that threaten the patriarchal order, an idea that has more in common with *Alichino*. The female gothic, on the other hand, reflects on the myth of Psyche. In Greek mythology, Psyche's explorations uncover new knowledge and strengthen female access to the symbolic. *Model* is clearly a female gothic in how Jae is driven to explore her surroundings, disrupt the preexisting order at the mansion, and retrieve new knowledge that provides her with access to a larger reality. Jae's quest throughout *Model* is to capture Michael's image on canvas, a goal she believes will greatly increase her prowess as an artist. However, to capture Michael, Jae must understand him better. Thus, exploring the secrets in Michael's mansion is paramount. While Jae and Michael develop a romantic relationship, it is not commitment from Michael that Jae seeks, but understanding of his true nature. At the end of the work, Jae describes Michael as "a man who is free from the flow of time" (Lee 7: 246) (see fig.
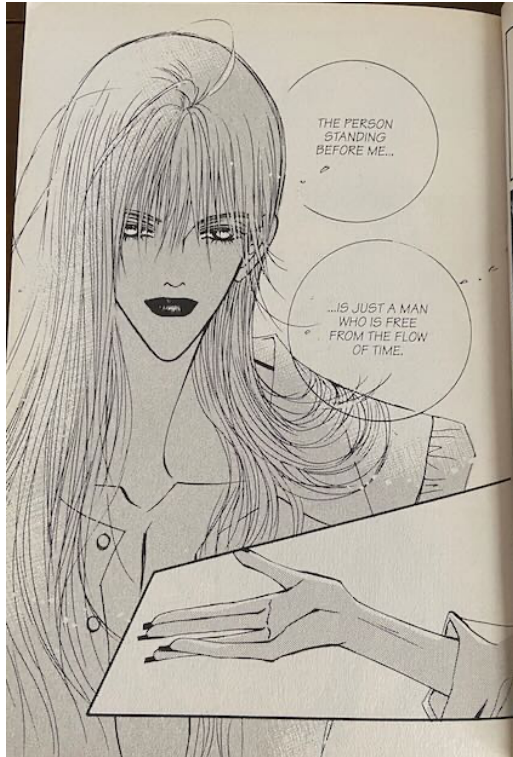
8). This revelation fills Jae with conviction that she will now be able to paint Michael's portrait. Whether the romantic aspect of their relationship will continue long-term is left unclear, but it is not the means to Jae's fulfillment. In this way, while Jae's world is framed by a patriarchy, her desires do not exactly align with its dictates.

Figure 8. Source: Lee, So-Young. Model*, Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 7, p. 246.*

Model uses Catholic imagery in its rendering of gothic aesthetics similarly to some visual kei performances and Western gothic subculture. While Suter's analysis concludes that Christianity is used in shōjo manga to heighten the sense of the forbidden in same-sex love. In *Model*, the question of social deviance never emerges in the same-sex desire between Michael and Adrian. However, *Model*'s use of the monastery as the scene of their developing relationship can be read as tying visually and thematically to other Boys Love comics. Because *Model* seems to consciously channel the gothic in its narrative and visuals, I find it is more productive to consider how *Model*'s use of Christian imagery connects to that of the Western gothic tradition. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* positions a Catholic monastery as a haven in counterpoint to a tyrannical lord's haunted stronghold, while Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk* portrays aspects of the Catholic church as hypocritical and otherwise evil through its title character and others. While *Model*'s aesthetics could be attributed to a visual discourse with contemporary Japanese and Western gothic subcultures, its inclusion of a religious order as well as an angel character, Adrian, make spirituality an element of the

narrative itself. However, these spiritual overtones of the narrative do not resemble the dualistic forces of good and evil associated with Christianity. On the contrary, Adrian, as a celestial figure, seems to be ambivalent toward the question of harming humans with his actions. Adrian's supernatural powers allow him to turn Michael into a vampire to save Michael from death, which unleashes the cruelty of a vampire into the world. In addition, Adrian sires a child with a human woman, Eva, then abandons her, causing both mother and child to suffer. Despite these actions, there is no suggestion that Adrian may be a fallen angel; in fact, the Christian God is not mentioned in the work, even though two major characters are monks. Instead, Adrian more closely resembles a pagan or indigenous deity who acts at will. In this way, the Western Christian tradition is used as a façade for a narrative that blurs boundaries and engenders ambiguities on several fronts of identity and culture.

While Catholic imagery clearly functions as an aesthetic in *Model*, it is also worth considering how the Catholic church gained a foothold in Korea in the early twentieth century and has persisted in Korean life both at home and overseas. The previous chapter examined how particular Catholic elements in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* were imbued with the uncanny. Cha's imagery conflates Catholicism with colonialism, alluding to the systematic conversion of women in Korea and Manchuria. In *Dictée,* the Catholic church works to shape women into silent and submissive bodies, receptive to men. In *Model*, the Catholic monastery serves as an aesthetically pleasing backdrop for an ill-fated love between two monks, Michael and Adrian, which culminates in Michael's suicide attempt. Christianity has become an aesthetic for imaginative play, divested of any Western connotations. In other words, unlike the hybridized elements in *Alichino*, *Model*'s aesthetics in many ways work against a hybrid identity, suggesting instead a nostalgic desire for a remote place and time. Catholicism's historical significance in

Korea's early twentieth-century history may play a factor in its contribution to the manhwa's overall narrative and visuals in evoking aesthetics that are simultaneously familiar and remote. Just as Catholic imagery often conveys uncanniness in the British gothic, which figures Catholicism as a part of the remote past, so might it function in Korean gothic manhwa, which may convey collective memories of Catholic colonizers.

While *Alichino*'s setting is unspecified, characters travel freely to various locales marked by differences in terrain and architecture, suggesting an ease in transnational movements. The spaces in *Model*, on the other hand, are characterized by increasing degrees of isolation as the narrative progresses. Jae first meets Michael when her friend brings him, ailing, to Jae's apartment in the city to recuperate. Jae later follows Michael to his isolated mansion to paint his portrait. The mansion has no modern trappings and very little contact with the outside world. The underground mausoleum where Michael lives represents an even greater degree of seclusion while finally, accessing Michael's past through uncanny visions, Jae witnesses Michael's monastic life in a prior age. Just as the Christian trappings in the comic have no relevance to Western religion, these spaces seem to draw greater meaning from being non-Korean, an exoticized Occidental location, rather than their relation to an actual Europe. Jae and Michael's gravitation toward increasingly secluded spaces as the narrative progresses suggests a desire to retreat from modern life to recover important memories or aspects of the self. Of this kind of retreat, Stewart notes that nostalgia is often realized through "a return to the utopia of biology and symbol united within the walled city of the maternal" and that "[t]he nostalgic's utopia is prelapsarian, a genesis…where authenticity and transcendence are both present and everywhere" (23). Thus, the increasing degrees of isolation observed in *Model* and *The Devil's Trill*, to be discussed later, suggest how the vaguely historicized European imaginary represents a

mythologized space of longing fabricated by a relinquishment of the traditional to modernizing forces.

Many scholars have noted how Korean popular culture often engenders nostalgia with historical and/or rural settings, coming to similar conclusions that popular works express a desire to return to Korean life prior to the turbulent events of the twentieth century. Chua and Iwabuchi note that Japanese and Korean dramas both tend to touch on this longing in a general East Asian audience, finding that "audiences in the different locations read imported products along a linear temporality defined by capitalist-consumer modernity, specifically in terms of nostalgia for a 'less- capitalist' past…" (Chua and Iwabuchi 8). Speaking of Korean history generally, Elaine H. Kim and Hannah Michell note that "[t]he South Korean rush to modernize, which has been tantamount to Westernization, generally meant running away from the past, with all of its humiliating political and economic weakness, as quickly as possible, so that even physical remnants of those times have been almost completely obliterated or relegated to museums" (142). Kim and Michell go on to consider how Koreans' struggle to survive the difficult events of the twentieth century meant the abandonment of "some things of great beauty and meaning in the desperate desire to escape from and forget about poverty and weakness" which "may have engendered feelings of longing and regret" (142-3). Ma examines the expression of nostalgia in Korean dramas for Koreans specifically, finding that, while nostalgia and melodrama are a part of the drama genre generally, "the urge to reclaim a golden past has rarely reached such frequency and fever pitch, so much so that collective and psychological restoration becomes an obsession for a people marked by *han*, or repressed pain and hate as a result of centuries of foreign invasions, recent colonization, and ongoing internal division along the 38th Parallel" (61). While these scholars are noting Korean popular works with historical Korean settings, the

aestheticized and generalized European setting in *Model* also serves as an escapist imaginary and alternative reality to the hermit kingdom prior to Korea's modernization in the early twentieth century. As these authors have suggested, the turbulent events of Korea's modern history necessitated an abrupt break with the past that has caused recent histories to seem remote and inaccessible. It also follows that these kinds of strongly repressed desires are included in popular culture works like manhwa, since they constitute a shared sentiment among many. While the secluded mansion setting in *Model* suggests nostalgia, the setting and overall narrative of *The Devil's Trill* evoke this drive toward seclusion and toward the past much more overtly.

  The Devil's Trill takes place in three different time settings: the early nineteenth century and 1990 in Germany, and 2150 in an unspecified location. While *Alichino* portrays hybridized Eastern and Western aesthetics and suggestions of transnational movement across various terrains, and *Model*'s protagonist is identified as Korean, *The Devil's Trill* has no references, visually or otherwise, to Asian culture or people. However, the question of recovering the past is essential to *The Devil's Trill*. The narrative centers around the vampire Eichner's determination to recover his lost love, Elizabeth, when she is reincarnated in 1990, and again in 2150, and claim the future they were denied in the early nineteenth century. Time in the work is cyclical as well as linear, due to the multiple deaths and rebirths of Elizabeth alongside an increasingly modern society. Eichner, a vampire, lives outside of time, retiring to the ground for long periods until he senses Elizabeth's presence nearby. The narrative does not dwell much on the details of how Eichner came to be a vampire or his existence as a vampire, instead focusing on his isolation from humanity and longing for authentic connection with others, realized through his contact with Elizabeth, whom he finds more trustworthy than other humans. In this way, Eichner is very much the kind of modern vampire that Inoue describes emerging in the late nineteenth

century with *Dracula*: isolated, brooding, and wandering. Karma and rebirth are important elements in *The Devil's Trill*, suggesting how a cyclical understanding of time stemming from Buddhist ideology underpins the work, making the European setting a backdrop only for an exploration of death and rebirth amidst an increasingly corrupt modern society.

Like *Model*, *The Devil's Trill* strongly suggests a desire for seclusion. Eichner lives on an isolated estate where few others venture. When Elizabeth is killed, Eichner lies dormant until he senses she has been reborn again, in 1990. However, Elizabeth's next life, as Buzz, ends in similar tragedy when she cannot put aside her own deep-seated fears and rivalry with her twin sister, Karin. In this world, the rural manor house scene is displaced by a modern, bustling city; however, Eichner stays a step removed from this world. Eichner addresses Buzz as "Elizabeth" and appeals to Buzz to remember the past through her violin practice of a tune they shared in her previous life. Thus, while Buzz's soul must continue to be reborn so that she may complete her destiny with Eichner, Eichner's image of Elizabeth remains unaltered despite Buzz's separate life and identity. Thus, for Eichner, there is a perfect "original" to which he and the reborn Elizabeth must return in spirit. In 2150, when Eichner recognizes Lazlo, his caretaker, and the final reincarnation of Elizabeth, he holds Lazlo close and remembers their first meeting in the early nineteenth century in a rose garden. Eichner muses, "Though many years may pass…My longing for you is one…Your soul is just one…And thus there is just one love…Lover of mine…Do you know? That I loved you so much I could not die" (Won 205) (see fig. 9).
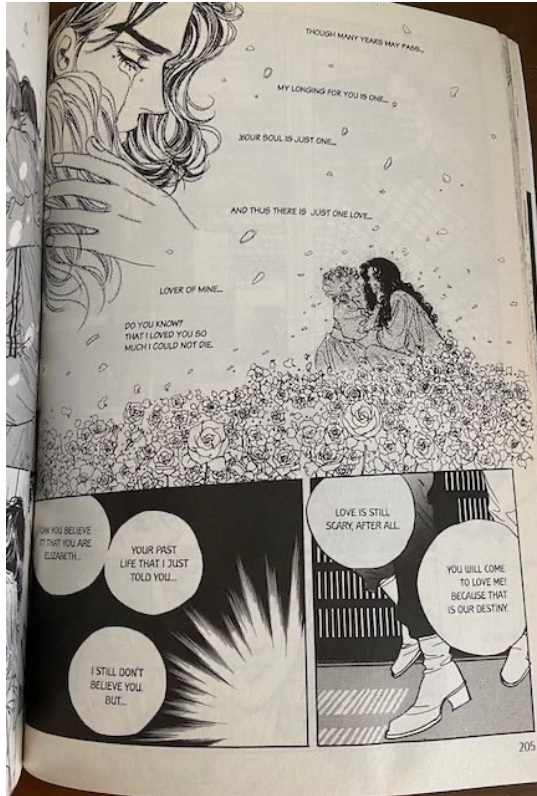
Figure 9. Source: Won, Sooyeon. The Devil's Trill, *Netcomics, 2006, p. 205.*

Eichner's monologue suggests how his tenacious grip on the past is an integral part of his character and that he understands Lazlo's authentic identity to be Elizabeth, despite the lives Elizabeth has lived in her successive incarnations as Buzz and Lazlo. Overall, Eichner's character is valorized, portrayed as much purer than that of humans, whose greed and treachery repeatedly foil his chance at a future with Elizabeth.

Dennis Walder's observations of nostalgia in postcolonial societies provide insight into why nostalgia plays a central role in the manhwa works examined, as well as Korean popular culture generally. Walder considers the "long history of colonial and postcolonial writing that invokes nostalgia as a means of resuscitating the forgotten or obscured histories of both colonised and colonizer" (12). During the early decades of the twentieth century, Korea was colonized by Japan, forcing Koreans to relinquish their nationality, language, birth names, and many other essential aspects of their culture. After the Korean War, the United States occupied South Korea, much as it did Japan after World War II. Sakai and Yoo argue that American occupation constitutes a second kind of colonization, creating an illusion of national sovereignty in the colonized nation but manipulating the nation's relations with other nations. Thus, Korea's turn to postcolonial nostalgia makes sense in terms of its decades of occupation by other nations throughout the twentieth century. Walder further notes that nostalgia often coexists with an increase of nationalism in the society (12). After the Asian Financial Crisis

of 1997, South Korea accelerated its efforts to boost the national economy through popular

culture exports as "soft" power. Many of these popular culture products today bear the stamp of

Korean nationalism. Korean popular music presents a representation of Korea as highly polished

and talented. Much of manhwa also bears traces of nationalism yet also reveals a yearning for the

past. Walder's observations suggest that nostalgia takes on a recuperative function toward a prior

order, seeking to realize a new version of this order in the present.

It makes sense, then, that so much of the nostalgia in *Model* and *The Devil's Trill* has a

conservative bent. For instance, *Model* portrays an isolated mansion of a patriarchal order,

vaguely suggesting the isolated Confucian kingdom, Joseon, prior to Korea's transition to

modern life and all the disturbances it brought to a culture that had remained closed to the

outside world for centuries. *The Devil's Trill* narrates the drama of bringing a deceased past love

into the present, unaltered, to exist alongside modern life in an eternity that privileges the

experiences of the past over the present. *The Devil's Trill* ends with a sense that the best that can

come is to restore that which the modern world has obliterated, offering a return to innocence. In

terms of this kind of desire, Walder remarks that "the imaginative reconstruction of the past may

be a conservative and parochial activity, reflecting a 'restorative' desire for belonging that

overrides distance; equally, it may be a radical and disturbing activity, reflecting…reclaimed

images of earlier times and places; or it may in complex ways address both possibilities" (12).

Both manhwa lean toward conservative rather than progressive visions of the future. While

scholars have noted that many Korean popular works focus on Korean history in a nostalgic way,

Model and *The Devil's Trill* utilize Western elements such as European settings, gothic

aesthetics, and the Western vampire trope, suggesting more overtly how these narratives are

engaging directly with questions of modernity by bringing elements of Korea's history into an

imaginary of the future. Walder's comment on how these narratives reflect "reclaimed images of earlier times and places" is key to the remainder of this chapter, in which I focus on the visual portrayal of male characters in Asian comics for girls (12).

Vampires and Gender in Asian Comics

Figure 10. Source: Won, Sooyeon. The Devil's Trill, Netcomics, 2006, p. 205.

Eichner, the vampire hero in *The Devil's Trill*, sequesters himself from the world in a mansion filled with art treasures. Eichner is discerning connoisseur of art, music, and humans. Though he must subsist on human blood, he finds most humans distasteful and shuns them in favor of a life of contemplation on his solitary estate. In figure 10, Eichner succors himself with the violin after feeding from a woman he found "particularly disgusting." Like Michael, Eichner lives hermit-like among fine treasures, suggesting traits of not only high social status but also discernment. Also,

like Michael, Eichner has long hair and wears aristocratic clothing that complements his androgynous looks. By way of comparison, the human love interests of these male characters are nothing out of the ordinary. What, then, is being projected onto the male vampire characters? Are these representations significant to masculinities in Asian popular cultures?

Recently, Asian masculinities have received more scholarly attention due to the representations of men in Japanese and Korean popular music. Earlier in the chapter, I noted the associations scholars have made between the cross-dressing acts of visual kei musicians and the onnagata, or the male actors in kabuki theater dedicated to performing women's roles. In line

with Walder's remarks on nostalgia, this connection between visual kei and kabuki theater suggests how Japanese alternative cultures function to re-express traditional aspects of the culture. Visual kei, a male-dominated music subculture, may be subversive to mainstream popular culture in Japan, but not progressive in the Western sense of the term. Previously, I noted that visual kei features homoerotic behaviors during performance. However, these behaviors are understood as fan service (elements extraneous to an actual performance that are intended to titillate fans) and do not necessarily undermine Japanese heteronormativity. Visual kei musicians do not necessarily claim queer identities, and the musician Kaya, as mentioned previously, considers his performance of a feminine look different from a drag performance. These differences between the subversive elements of visual kei and actual queer culture in Japan are important to distinguish, since the latter tends to work in a progressive direction, while the former is conservative in how it preserves traditional Japanese gender identities. Many scholars writing on Asian girls' comics, like James Welker, have argued that the aspects of feminized male and same-sex love often present in these comics suggests an increasing openness to non-heteronormative identities in Asia. In contrast to this viewpoint, I perceive a more conservative, patriarchal kind of fantasy in Asian girls' comics that seeks to romanticize aspects of Asian history prior to modernization.

Thus, in the following pages, I consider how Asian masculinities presented in Asian girls' comics hearken back to the seonbi, or Confucian scholar-official identity from the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910). This archetype is important to my overall evaluation of the masculinities presented in these comics because it clearly distinguishes the characters from the type more commonly referred to in scholarship—particularly regarding the rise of global Korean popular music—of a metrosexual masculinity that much more closely resembles Western masculinities.

Sun Jung argues that this feminized appearance of males in both manga and manhwa, as well as other Asian popular cultural products like music and television shows, is a transcultural hybrid appearance facilitated by the popularity of an appearance in one culture, often Japan, which is then copied by artists and musicians of other cultures. Jung speculates that the feminine male aesthetic originated with the bishōnen character in shōjo manga. Jung describes this kind of pan-Asian soft masculinity in terms of mu-kuk-jok, "a concept used to describe a cultural practice that has no particular national trait or odour" and "which is driven by transcultural hybridization" ("Shared," para. 2). The Korean iteration of soft masculinity is referred to as kkonminam, which, according to Jung, translates to "'flowery pretty boy'" ("Shared," para. 13). Jung claims that "[t]he rise of the kkon-mi-nam phenomenon suggests that the new era of soft masculinity has arrived" based on prior scholarship arguing that the existence of this type stems from the widening possibilities of female desire ("Shared," para. 13).

While I agree with Jung that this kind of pan-Asian soft masculinity is a direct product of transcultural flows between East Asian nations following the popularity of certain Japanese cultural products, I find that the feminized male characters in manga and manhwa around the turn of the twentieth century, prior to the global rise of Korean popular culture, have different characteristics than those of more recent times. Furthermore, even in recent historical comics, feminized male characters have a look much more suggestive of the seonbi type than the

contemporary metrosexual masculinity prevalent in Korean popular music. Figure 11 shows an example of the delicate scholar character type from the 2021 webtoon *The Palace of Bardo*. *The Palace of Bardo* is one of many current historical manhwa series, exemplifying how the seonbi type persists in Korean comics. Even if both types—metrosexual and seonbi—represent a "pretty boy" appeal in Korean popular culture, each type communicates preferences for Eastern or Western cultural values.

Figure 11. Source: Bamilssi and zaru. "Episode 15." The Palace of Bardo. *Tappytoon, 2021.*

The pan-Asian cultural flows Jung mentions also have a significant history prior to the increasing Westernization of these nations. Reading these cultural flows in terms of modernity, I draw on Dussel's notion of trans-modernity, the idea that nations whose local cultures were temporarily repressed by the rise of the West are expressing different kinds of modernity that acknowledge and incorporate local ideas. In considering the aesthetics of the historicized male characters in manga and manhwa, who are pale and slim, have very long hair, and wear flowing robes, I argue that these types refer to the appearance of the Confucian seonbi, or scholar-official, masculinity. Thus, rather than signaling an expansion in the range of women's sexual preferences, the prevalence of this type signals nationalist or Confucian undertones in the work

that reify a heterosexual binary. The seonbi identity emphasizes the importance of virtue and morality in line with Confucian codes, as well as a devotion to study, all of which are the province of the Confucian male ideal. Thus, while this type is not necessarily subversive to Asian notions of heteronormative identities, it is subversive to the Western domination of Asian gender identities that began in the early twentieth century.

Other scholars have speculated on the significance of the popularity of pan-Asian soft masculinity in cultural products aimed toward women. James Welker has analyzed the bishōnen trope in manga as an expression of non-heteronormative identity and queer sexuality with which some readers identify. Welker finds that even though bishōnen characters are male, and often in manga stories have same-sex relationships, the works' audiences, regardless of gender, identify with the bishōnen characters as non-heteronormative versions of themselves, due to their androgynous appearances. Welker argues that "through identification with the feminized beautiful boys, either as boys, girls, or androgynes, the readers are encouraged to experiment with nonhegemonic gender and sexual practices" (855). Welker considers how queer and straight readers identify with the bishōnen trope to conceive of their own sexualities in a space outside of heteropatriarchal expectations. Other scholars, like Joanna Elving-Hwang, have, like Jung, considered the significance of the popularity of the "beautiful boy" trope with female consumers. Elving-Hwang argues that, for women, this trope represents an alternative to traditional expressions of masculinity that undermine women's personal freedom and autonomy. Elving-Hwang notes that "for female viewers the kkonminam thus represent a 'safe' kind of masculine which does not threaten with violence or necessitate hierarchical submission" (12). While I agree with these scholars that these products must appeal to women to be successful and that there is ample evidence to suggest that this success is driving the popularity of the trope, I find that

certain kinds of soft masculinity expressed in manhwa, particularly those prior to the beginnings of the second, global Korean Wave in 2007, are better described in terms of seonbi masculinity, which acknowledges their connections to nostalgia. The question of seonbi masculinity in manhwa is a complicated one that requires analysis beyond the polarities of progression and regression. The identity signals a nationalist product based on nostalgic desire while also opening possibilities for identities beyond contemporary conventions.

In *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption*, Jung argues that seonbi masculinity is at the heart of South Korean soft masculinity. Speaking in terms of the seonbi masculinity prevalent in the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), Jung describes the seonbi, or scholar-official, as devoted to mental rather than physical achievements (*Korean* 27). The seonbi refrains from manual labor due to its earthly and transactional nature to focus on the study of Confucian texts (*Korean* 27). Jung finds that male characters in Korean dramas often embody seonbi masculinity (*Korean* 27). I find that male characters in manhwa also express the values of the seonbi type. However, I find that seonbi masculinity is portrayed much more literally in manhwa than in contemporary drama. As Jung acknowledges, Korean dramas transpose seonbi values onto male characters who are styled in a Westernized way. While male characters in dramas often wear contemporary clothing in a metrosexual style, male characters in historical or fantasy manhwa are often portrayed in long, flowing garments with long hair, corresponding visually to the seonbi type. Since manhwa permits storytelling through visuals as well as narrative, the similarity between vampire characters in *Model* and the seonbi type evoke a feeling of historical nostalgia to a greater degree than do contemporary Korean dramas. In other words, while at times, Korean drama narratives may suggest friction between certain capitalist and Confucian

values, certain manhwa works use visuals like the seonbi scholar to suggest the supremacy or desirability of Confucian values over capitalist values.

In *Model*, the character Adrian is distinguished by his long, flowing garments and long hair that spills to the floor. While Michael has these characteristics to a degree, Michael's clothing often contains elements suggestive of both Asian and Western influences, in a manner like visual kei style, and the style of Michael's hair is typical to that of a kkonminam or bishōnen character in girls' comics (see fig. 2). Adrian, on the other hand, in both visuals and narrative, is remote from modern life. While Michael and Ken may both be "pretty boy" characters in manhwa, Adrian's character design makes no compromises to contemporary tastes in portraying hair that remains uncut and clothing that has no modern elements. In figure 11, Adrian, pictured right in the left-most image, with long black hair and flowing robes, conveys a sense of the seonbi type. The question of hairstyle in the portrayal of seonbi masculinity is an important one with respect to Korea's modern history.

Figure 12. Source: Lee, So-Young. Model*, Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 7, n.p.*

In 1895, the Cut Topknot Act in Korea decreed those men must keep their hair cut short, eliminating the topknot of long hair that contributed to the image of Korean masculinity for centuries. This act marked an important moment in Korea's modern history, serving to polarize traditionalist and progressive factions and bringing death to both sides. Dongwon Shin observes that the Korean government mandated the cutting of topknots for "hygiene and convenience," while underlying these reasons was "the idea that long hair harms political reform and national enrichment" (13). Shin rejects the overt reasoning for eliminating the topknot, finding that Korean authorities of the time had little regard for other, more pressing concerns to improve hygiene like instituting sanitation systems or encouraging regular bathing. Instead, Shin notes, the topknot has a powerful association with Confucian traditions that those seeking to modernize the country wished to eliminate. Shin observes that "topknots were immediate markers of the traditional social order on the body" that "made it possible for Koreans to feel that their country was the only civilized nation to continue [Confucian] sages' tradition following the shift of power from the Han Chinese (Ming Dynasty) to the Manchus (Qing Dynasty)" (13). As an emblem of Confucian social order, the topknot "was an epitome of the distinction between children and adults, men and women, and noblemen and aristocrats" (Shin 13).

These moments from Korean modern history provide a sense of the political and cultural associations tied to certain masculinities in popular culture. A character with very long hair like Adrian, especially one who expresses other characteristics of seonbi masculinity, conveys qualities of historical Korean power and how notions of Confucian rank and identity may continue to function in society today. While the long-haired male characters described thus far have not worn the historical topknot, the visual of long hair suggests a connection to masculinities prior to modernization from a which a different expression of contemporary identity is emerging.

Shin's comments, quoted above, concerning the Korean determination to honor and develop Ming-era Confucian traditions from China, perhaps to a greater degree than China itself, suggest how Ming-era Chinese masculinities were transmitted in Korean culture prior to the twentieth century. An intriguing analogue of the persistence of this identity in Korean popular culture is the romantic portrayal of the "scholar-beauty" in Qing-era Chinese fiction. While there may be no direct connection between romantic Qing fiction and contemporary Korean manhwa, these forms of popular entertainment from different times and places share similarities in featuring a "scholar-beauty" male who enjoys an elite position in society and garners attention from admiring women and in including same-sex love between male characters. Geng Song, like Jung, perceives the pervasiveness of pan-East Asian soft masculinity in contemporary East Asian culture. Song argues that this masculinity "has its roots in the Confucian tradition of scholar masculinity shared by many East Asian cultures, such as the wen (literary attainment) masculinity in China or seonbi (scholar-officials) masculinity in Korean history." Song summarizes this type in noting that "[t]he talented scholar is physically weak, delicate and handsome, with androgynous beauty." There may not be a traceable lineage from Qing popular

fiction to Korean manhwa. However, the Confucian "scholar-beauty" type appears to suggest certain formulas for romantic fiction in both genres.

Scholars Kam Louie, Cuncun Wu, and Yiyan Wang consider how the scholar-beauty type emerging in late nineteenth-century China impacted popular literature and culture as well as literary fiction of the time. Louie summarizes this kind of masculine identity in terms of the ground it lost just prior and after the Cultural Revolution and modernization of China as well as its resurgence in both popular romances and literary fiction in the twenty-first century. Louie notes that "[t]he frail but attractive scholar of old was considered unsuited to the modern world" and that Chinese masculine identity shifted in the 1920s and after the Cultural Revolution, when "the traditional patriarchal authority of Chinese men was placed under intense stress and scrutiny" (9). Louie also observes that writers today, including Zhang Xianliang and Jia Pingwa, "consistently depict the scholar-writer as desirable" and that there is a self-promotional aspect to this depiction in how writers use the type "to promote themselves as desirable beings" (6). Louie's observations reveal a return to traditional Chinese values in literature in revitalizing this frail scholar type of masculine identity. Louie also notes the anti-Western sentiment in the promotion of this type in how "Chinese men have seen themselves for the last two centuries as guardians not just of traditional morals, but also of their women against the onslaught of Western values" (6). Cuncun Wu focuses on the feminine appearance of male subjects in late imperial Chinese literature and art, arguing that the feminine male was the ideal male during this time. Analyzing several popular romantic and erotic works of the period, Wu finds "an intertextual aesthetic fashion that valorised males of feminised appearance and manners" (20). Wu finds great consistency in these portrayals in late imperial romance novels, noting further that this development is also linked to the creation of a genre of homoerotic romances, drawing on

"fantasies relating to feminised boy-actors" and "the pages of 'flower guides,' the catalogues of male beauties who doubled as actors and male prostitute" (21). While it may be only coincidental, the way that the "boy's love," or homoerotic, romantic relationship, is a common theme in Asian girls' comics, suggests how the feminine male type has made its reappearance in popular works today, both in its characterization of the passive, fragile-looking male and the focus on romances between these kinds of male characters.

Yiyun Wang emphasizes how the scholar-aspect of this popular feminine male type in imperial China works to reinforce gender binaries and strengthen the patriarchy. Wang notes that "writing provided the male scholars with dominance and hence sexual attractiveness" and that their feminine traits were read as ideal in terms of "the Taoist cosmological interpretation of sexuality, which stresses the balance of the masculine and the feminine" (43). In other words, an idealization of the feminine qualities of males did not mean that women were more highly valued in society since, as Wang puts it, "[w]omen were not on the scale" (43). In terms of the kind of power that the scholar-beauty type expresses, Wang states that since "[c]ultivating the balance between yin and yang, or male and female elements, was essential for men and was especially important for those in positions of power," the feminine male was seen as an identity of power through self-mastery (44). These patriarchal aspects of the scholar-beauty flow naturally into the realm of romance in how "these delicate males…were mostly the favoured choices as lovers, husbands or sons-in-law in the texts" (Wang 42).

While other male types, like the soldier, existed in literature "the scholar usually dominates and is therefore seen as more 'masculine'" since "[t]he scholar apparently has more political influence than the soldier" (Wang 42). The question becomes, then, why soft masculinity has become popular in recent Asian popular cultures. Jung's analysis of audience

responses to Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese boy bands suggests that women drive the popular demand for this type. However, cultural consumption in East Asia cannot necessarily be read in straightforward terms of supply and demand. Particularly in South Korea, state cultural policies drive the cultural industries and have a direct hand in the kinds of identities that are circulated within and beyond the country. Wang's analysis, too, suggests that women's preference for soft masculinities in late imperial China is closely related to the kind of power these males signify in Confucian terms. Since the state cultural industries lean toward the conservative side, it makes sense that this type flourishes in popular cultural products today, since it taps into Confucian values, serving to strengthen those values, which have historically functioned as a tie between East Asian nations. The conservation of Confucianism in popular culture may also serve as a bar against Western capitalist values and the adoption of Western masculinities in East Asian popular works.

Given these descriptions of the popularity of soft masculinity in late imperial Chinese literature, as well as influence of onnagata performances of femininity on Japanese visual kei, the feminized characterizations of males in contemporary Asian comics should not be described merely as the expansion of Asian women's sexual identities and preferences, though this factor could certainly make women consumers more receptive to the type and result in the type's transformation over time. Rather, it should be considered, particularly regarding the styling of the characters in Asian comics, that the images of tall, thin figures with long hair and long, flowing robes strongly suggest a throwback to the scholar-official figure that recurs in East Asian cultures prior to modernization. As Wang's analysis indicates, this figure is not necessarily a progressive one but signifies a particular kind of Confucian patriarch desirable to female characters in romance novels for his power and influence in society. The patriarchal aspects of

these figures are clear in narratives for Asian comics for girls. For instance, in the manga *Alichino*, women occupy subordinate position to men in the narrative, dependent on them either by circumstance or due to their desire for the men. In *Model* and *The Devil's Trill*, the lead vampire characters are patriarchal leaders over their respective isolated estates. In *Model*, as in *Alichino*, female characters seem to become enslaved by their own desires for the beautiful male characters. The next aspect of these feminized male characters to be examined is their nature as vampires. Does vampirism in these characterizations signify the drama of the modern individual and/or the contemporary city, as Inoue and Pile have suggested? If so, is it possible to distinguish different narratives expressing this drama in terms of the individual paths to modernity experienced by Japan and Korea through popular culture works such as Asian comics?

The vampire figure in Western folklore has no clear analogue in Japanese or Korean folklore. Instead, both Japan and Korea seem to have adapted the figure from Stoker's *Dracula*, shaping it to reflect local fears and desires. Keith Allison, considering the popularity of vampires in twentieth-century Japanese films, notes that much as with the Western iteration of the vampire, the Japanese version often expresses fear of the foreign. According to Allison, "Westerners are the targets this time around, and in the eyes of the Japanese authors, they are every bit as fearsome and threatening and perverse as west Europe regards the east." Allison notes that in one of the first Japanese vampire novels, Seishi Yokomizo's *Dokuro-Kengyo* (1939), a character's "love of Western culture…leads to his vampirism and further leads him to turn others into vampires." The idea is like Tanizaki's *Naomi*, previously discussed in this chapter, which conveys uncanny fears and desires about the hybridization of Japanese and Western cultures. The portrayals of the Alichino characters in *Alichino* reflect Allison's general commentary on Japanese portrayals of the vampire. For instance, in *Alichino*, the Alichino

characters, who prey on humans, are ultimately adversaries of the protagonist and lack redemptive qualities to soften their image. These characters are closer in nature to Stoker's original Dracula, rather than later iterations of the vampire in twentieth-century popular culture, in how the vampire is represented as "other," a foreign object that inspires fear, rather than the sympathetic loner.

In *Alichino*, the protagonist is Tsugiri is human. He is described as a Kusabi, a counter to the power of the Alichinos, and the only one capable of defeating them. Thus, Tsugiri is charged from birth with the task of killing Alichinos. The Alichinos, while not vampires per se, have many of the same qualities of the vampire as portrayed in Western modern and contemporary works. The Alichino character Myobi often seems self-absorbed and indifferent to the pain of others. However, Myobi is human enough to fall in love with a human character, Ryoko, who suffers through Myobi's cruel behavior toward his loved ones. Much like Anne Rice's Louis or Lestat, Myobi has the traits of the modern narcissist. The Alichino characters drain the life essence from their victims in a fatal kiss, much like the intimate embrace of the vampire. While the interiority of the Alichino characters is not revealed, Tsugiri and Ryoko, who cross terrains to battle the Alichino, are sympathetic characters, motivated by their desire to protect loved ones in the clutches of the Alichino. Tsugiri, like most of the male characters in *Alichino*, has the feminized appearance associated with the bishōnen trope. While female characters are drawn to Tsugiri's beauty, Tsugiri's attachment to Enju, another male character with long hair who wears flowing robes, has romantic overtones. Enju radiates a peaceful, almost spiritual, nature that is like the scholar-beauty character in Chinese romances (see fig. 13).
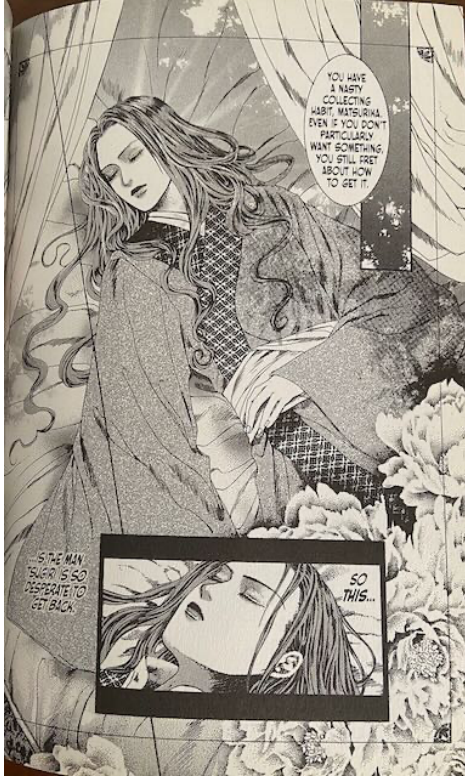
Figure 13. Source: Shurei, Kouyu. Alichino, *Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 3, n.p.*

The feminized traits of Tsugiri make him relatable to the shōjo manga's female audience, while Tsugiri's love for Enju suggests an enduring idealization of the scholar-beauty type. Enju's passive nature contrasts with the human behavior that attracts the Alichino to their prey: the desire to interfere with fate or obtain an impossible desire. Thus, *Alichino*, by crafting an imaginary that stakes local powers of defense against the corruptive powers of foreign influence, emphasizes the power of kinship relationships as well as the Buddhist virtue of non-attachment to defeat the fatal attractions of the Alichino. It is the human and Kusabi characters, working to stave off the embodiments of vice in the Alichino, who are given dimensionality and interiority in the narrative, rather than the vampiric Alichino.

Sarah, writing for *Seoulbeats*, observes that while the modern Korean vampire seems largely constructed from Western vampire tales, the character remains consistent in different Korean representations. According to Sarah, the Korean vampire is not repelled by crosses and usually looks "very human." Furthermore, Sarah notes, if "the vampire chooses not to drink human blood…all their strong vampiric characteristics will gradually become more and more human-like." This Korean representation of the vampire seems to be a close analogue of the modern human. The morality implied by the vampire's transformation through abstinence suggests that the Korean vampire, like the Japanese vampire, may be an expression of fear of corruption through foreign interference. However, the ability for the Korean vampire to be

redeemed from a corrupted form suggests that the Korean vampire is a sympathetic character. Sarah's observations hold true for both *Model* and *The Devil's Trill*. *Model*, as I mentioned previously, leans toward the decadent visual kei aesthetic in Japan at the start of the twenty-first century. The vampire Michael, while self-indulgent, is sympathetic through his similarities to the protagonist Jae. Like Jae, Michael has suffered due to an unfulfilled artistic vision and seems to have buffered himself from pain by indulging his every desire. The reasons for Michael's choice to be a vampire—vanity, failure, lack of fulfillment—humanize Michael by exposing his flaws. In *The Devil's Trill*, the vampire Eichner is initially set apart from humans by rose gardens that surround his isolated mansion. It is within this space of refinement and gentility that Eichner contemplates his similarities to and differences from humans, agonizing over humans' flawed and corruptible natures as well as his own loneliness.

In *Model*, the protagonist, Jae, and her love interest, the vampire Michael, are similar in their desires to capture sublime beauty on canvas. Jae is captivated by Michael's androgynous appearance and agrees to exchange her own blood for Michael's consent to serve as her model. Jae leaves the city for Michael's isolated mansion. However, once there, Jae is frustrated by her inability to understand Michael's true nature, which seems to be the key to her completion of his portrait. Jae experiences psychic visions of Michael's past with another feminine male vampire character, Adrian. Jae's visions gradually reveal the complicated relationships among the mansion's inhabitants in a manner analogous to the unraveling secrets of a Western-style gothic novel. In her visions, Jae learns that, like herself, Michael was frustrated by his inability to capture the image of a supernatural being on canvas—the character Adrian, revealed at the end

of the work to be an angel (see fig. 14). At the end of the series, Jae discovers that the key to completing Michael's portrait is to consider Michael outside of her preconceived notions of "man" or "vampire." Jae's final description of Michael as "a man who is free from the flow of time" (Lee 7: 246) unlocks Jae's ability to capture Michael's image and finally dispels the mansion's gloom.

Figure 14. Source: Lee, So-Young. Model, Tokyopop, Inc., 2005, vol. 7, n.p.

Jae's final description of Michael's identity with new language seems to end the artistic paralysis that Jae has experienced throughout the series. If the vampire Michael represents the influence of the foreign, the Western, as it has been absorbed by the local, then the quest of the protagonist is not so much to defeat or drive out the foreign, but to understand and characterize it. Jae's "enlightenment" at the end of the work mirrors Korean attitudes toward the West from the start of the twentieth century, when China released Korea as a tributary state and many thinkers became interested in foreign ideologies—particularly those of the West—to bolster Korean independence. While Korea was soon absorbed as a Japanese colony in the early twentieth century, and experienced later turbulence through war and national division, South Korea continues to show this kind of interest in absorbing and adapting ideas from the West in its cultural policies.

In other words, even though *Model* utilizes a Western setting and the Western trope of the vampire, the ideology underpinning its narrative does not reflect Western values. The vampire trope in *Model* has similarities to the Western vampire trope in how Michael craves blood as

sustenance and, except for sunlight exposure, which can injure or kill him, is apparently immortal. The religious overtones of Stoker's *Dracula* do not transfer onto the Korean archetype. In fact, rather than being repelled by crosses, Michael and the other inhabitants of his household seem to favor them in their mode of dress and decorating. In his life as a human, Michael was a monk who developed a romantic fascination for Adrian, a being he couldn't identify or characterize properly through art, which led him to attempt suicide. It is revealed later in the story that Adrian, another inhabitant of the monastery, is an angel in disguise; however, his abilities and tendencies as an angel seem to have no relation to the Christian angel. Adrian is portrayed as powerful, able to transform Michael into a vampire as well as transform his own image at will, but the question of this act being a good or evil one is not approached, as one might expect in a Western narrative of the vampire. *Model* does not really develop a binary of good versus evil. Characters suffer through their own choices, or the actions of others, but they do not reflect judgment on these choices or their outcomes. It may be that *Model* does not exactly reflect Korean values any more than it reflects Western values, since the question of values does not arise in the narrative. However, as Storey comments regarding the impact of foreign global culture on local environments, Western culture may be used to break free of preexisting boundaries and identities in a narrative like *Model*'s. Thus, *Model*, in appealing to a youth subculture, explores ideas that may be evolving from or expressing an opposition to certain Korean values.

The Devil's Trill, originally published in 1998, just prior to the first chapters of *Model* serialized in 1999, does not stylistically reflect an engagement with the visual kei subculture in the same way *Model* does. *The Devil's Trill* is set in multiple time periods in Germany and an unspecified location in a future time, with no visual cues that link the story to Korea or any other

East Asian nation. Although Eichner wears European clothing, his isolated intellectual and artistic pursuits, as well as his contemplative nature, suggest connections to the seonbi type (see fig. 10). While *Model* seems to disregard or blur established boundaries in both visuals and narrative, *The Devil's Trill* in both visuals and narrative conveys a preoccupation with the conflict of good versus evil. Eichner, the vampire character of *The Devil's Trill*, has many of the same characteristics described by Sarah, in *Seoulbeats*, with some minor deviations. For instance, Eichner craves blood but can remain alive without it—specifically, by eating the red roses that grow around his isolated estate. Additionally, Eichner, while immortal, may be harmed or killed by sunlight, and the narrative implies that his condition may have a cure.

Eichner's vampire state sets him apart from humans, not as violent or subhuman, but instead as an elite. Through his suffering from loneliness, Eichner seems to have achieved enlightenment about human behavior and the meaning of life over the years. He consoles himself with music and the fine arts, finding only one person throughout the millennia, Elizabeth, worthy of his heart. However, Elizabeth, unlike Eichner, does not seem to have achieved this exalted state of being and causes suffering to herself and others in her successive lifetimes. The eliteness about Eichner's enclosed life resembles that of the yangban, or literary upper class, of Joseon prior to Korea's modern era. Soyoung Lee notes that the yangban's activities were expected to "follow the Confucian doctrine through study and self-cultivation… and help cultivate the moral standards of Joseon society." In Western popular culture, vampires often resemble the elite members of society, starting with Stoker's Dracula, who enjoys wealth and power in his native land as well as in England. Eichner is similarly positioned as master of a vast estate. However, Eichner follows the ideal of the yangban class in dedicating himself to practice and appreciation of the fine arts, as well as contemplating the moral behavior of the humans around him. Lee also

notes that the yangban class "actively sought to preserve the purity and exclusivity of their group—for instance, through marriage only among members of the yangban class." Eichner's exclusive love for Elizabeth is not based on her class but his perception of her worthiness as the only truly pure-hearted human he has found. Despite the purity of Elizabeth's intentions, her flaws are attributed as the reason for her tragic deaths and rebirths throughout the manhwa, further heightening the idea of moral exclusivity.

Rather than serving to blur boundaries, as gothic narratives often tend to do, *The Devil's Trill* seems to emphasize them, setting Eichner, a vampire, apart from the fallible humans that torment his vulnerable nature. In addition to Eichner's separation from the rest of the world, demarcated by the ever-blooming rose gardens that represent for him both love and sustenance, the narrative introduces other decisive binaries, such as that of modern rationalism versus romantic sensibility as well as Elizabeth's reincarnation as a twin who is unable to resolve her differences with her sibling. The narrative emphasizes cyclical time over linear. Like Michael, identified by Jae as a man who stands outside of time itself, Eichner persists through the millennia, while Elizabeth is reincarnated first as Buzz, in 1990s Berlin, then later as Lazlo in a futuristic world. Eichner's timeless world is one that celebrates the fine arts as the highest forms of human expression. Ultimately, his world clashes with that of science. In his dormant state, Eichner is captured by a scientist and becomes a subject for experimentation, from which he is ultimately rescued by Lazlo. Until he discovers that Lazlo is Elizabeth, Eichner submits willingly to the scientist's torture since he cherishes the hope that his condition may be cured, allowing him to walk by the light of day. In *The Devil's Trill*, the quality of rationality is paired with corruption and greed, while romantic sensibilities are the virtues that promise to uplift the human condition to a more ethical, enlightened state. Thus, *The Devil's Trill*, in its exploration of the

Western vampire trope, dwells on the questions of morality in a world that parallels contemporary society in its Westernized façade and its emphasis on science and technology over the fine arts as humanistic expressions. However, in a reversal of the dualistic portrayals in *Dracula*, evil is not a characteristic of the vampire but is instead a quality of humans, to be eradicated over a course of several lifetimes until the soul is purified.

While *Alichino*, *Model*, and *The Devil's Trill* all borrow from gothic Western tropes, including that of the vampire, each work also features a central male character whose physical or mental attributes make him vulnerable to the outside world. *Alichino* and *Model*, by portraying delicate male characters with flowing hair and robes that are confined from the world, suggest how the scholar-beauty archetype, prominent in late Qing romances, has persisted in East Asian narratives as a counterpoint to modernity. Similarly, Eichner, withdrawing from the human world to savor only the highest forms of human art and culture in his mansion, valorizes the qualities of a scholarly elite figure over the violent, greedy tendencies of humans such as Elizabeth's husband and the scientist that captures Eichner. The Western vampire mode is compatible with the re-expression of this idea because it represents ideas like the intrusion of the foreign and the isolation of the individual from the outside world which capture East Asian experiences of modernity. Storey notes that the past "is always articulated, rehearsed, and elaborated in the context of the present" (83). In this chapter, I have considered how East Asian masculine types such as the onnagata and the scholar-beauty have been re-expressed in contemporary comics aimed at girls and women. I have suggested that this re-expression signals popular interest in and identification with traditional gender types found in East Asian literature prior to the twentieth century. Storey further notes that "[i]nterpretation will always be interpretation as informed by current attitudes and beliefs and not from the perspective of the

context of the original memory" (84). In other words, it's worthwhile to consider what has been conserved from these prior expressions of masculinity as well as what has been altered to gain a deeper understanding of how these types express desired identities in the early twenty-first century.

Conclusion

Jung argues that pan-Asian soft masculinities have become popular due to women's expanded range of gender identities and desires. Reflecting on Jung's argument, my analysis suggests that these contemporary identities are reimagined based on East Asian literary tropes. This idea correlates with Storey's argument that a local culture's confrontation with the foreign does not necessarily mean that the local culture will come to resemble the foreign. East Asian comics have, for instance, incorporated Western culture as an aesthetic or as symbolism that stands in for local desires or expressions. In this chapter, I have considered how *Alichino*, *Model*, and *The Devil's Trill* adapt Western gothic tropes like the vampire to reflect local identities and desires. My analysis has focused on two aspects of the Western gothic adapted for twenty-first century East Asian comics: old European habitations such as mansions and monasteries and the vampire trope.

European settings in the comics examined do not necessarily indicate the comic's engagement with the Western world per se, but the European settings do connote a confrontation between the foreign and local, even if the local elements with which the reader might identify are European. There has been a significant difference in how the Westernized setting functions between the Japanese and Korean comics examined. *Alichino* is set in a futuristic or alternative universe with dystopian connotations suggested by ruins, an ease of movement between different terrains (no national boundaries), vampire-like overlords in control of major cities, and deconstructed attire, any of which may link back to prior dystopian or post-apocalyptic anime

and manga works. *Alichino*'s visuals hybridize Eastern and Western elements with a gothic twist, giving the hybridized setting an uncanny quality. Ma's analysis of *Ghost in the Shell 2* notes a similar kind of gothic hybridization. The portrayal of uncanny hybridization between East Asia and the West in Japanese literature is found in early nineteenth-century narratives like Tanizaki's *Naomi*, which portrays an insensitive, doll-like woman whose Eurasian appearance obsesses the narrator. The gothic overtones in the Westernized setting in *Alichino* suggests unease at the site of confrontation between the local and the foreign.

The settings of the Korean comics examined, *Model* and *The Devil's Trill*, are more overtly specified as European, though they center on the concept of an old mansion in the countryside rather than emphasizing modern European spaces. These settings do not visually connote hybridization so much as a space set apart from and unblemished by the modern world. The settings' qualities of isolation and grandeur suggest a sense of nostalgia for a world prior to modernization. Scholars have read other Korean popular works, such as historical dramas, as nostalgic. *Model*, in addition to the European estate, also incorporates a monastery from centuries prior in narrative flashbacks. The monastery setting serves to heighten the sense of isolation from the outside world in the story and is devoid of religious connotations. Along these lines, *Model* uses religious imagery in its character design as an aesthetic and includes an angelic character, Adrian. Neither the religious imagery nor Adrian's angelic nature have any perceptible ties to the Christian religion. While the religious imagery seems to be borrowed from aesthetics from visual kei, a popular Japanese subculture, the characters of Adrian and Michael are both morally ambiguous and, despite their identities as, respectively, angel and vampire, the ideas of good and evil, or Heaven and Hell, do not arise in the narrative. Thus, in *Model*, these Western elements, stripped of their original connotations, function as foreign elements on which local

identities and desires are projected. In *The Devil's Trill*, the sense of nostalgia for an untouched past is heightened, alongside acute isolation, suggesting an ideal of the Joseon kingdom, characterized by its isolationist policy as well as its rigorous practice of Confucian values. As with *Model*, the Westernized setting seems to have no further significance than a desire to reach beyond the modern and local and to evade the notion of linear time though concepts such as immortality and rebirth.

I have also examined the kinds of masculinity presented in these works, noting their idealization of soft masculinity, or a masculinity that incorporates characteristics that are associated in modern times (particularly in the West) with femininity. Rather than reading these portrayals of soft masculinity as subversive in a strictly forward-looking sense, I have considered how these identities incorporate elements of masculinities in Asian cultures: in Japan, the onnagata from kabuki theater; and in China and its tributary states, including Korea, the scholar-beauty from romantic and erotic literatures. While some scholars have read Asian soft masculinities in terms of subversive performance, utilizing in their analyses Western gender theory such as that of Judith Butler, I find that these readings do not acknowledge the historical archetypes and what the images suggest about popular reinventions of East Asian culture. In line with the thinking of John Storey on popular culture, I find significance in the use of historical identities in these products meant to appeal to female readers in the early twenty-first century. Rather than queering identities in the Western sense of the term, these masculinities move outside of the polarized gender types introduced by the West and suggest a reinvention of local East Asian gender types. In line with Dussel's thinking on trans-modernity, I consider that since only a couple of generations have passed since these archetypes were prevalent in East Asia, this re-expression of identities associated with Chinese and Japanese notions of the beautiful or erotic

signals a stronger reversion to local cultures in the wake of waning Western influences in Japan and Korea.

Chapter Three: The Ghosts of Nature: Yearning for Connection with Humans and the More-than-Human World in Contemporary Korean and Chinese Environmental Literatures

The Sillim outside the window isn't as green as I'd imagined. The trees that were supposed to be green like Line Two are standing naked. The bus drops me off in front of the bank where I stand looking around. The street looks like a quilt made of a few rural town centers—run down, disorganized, and unruly like a tabloid magazine. Time seems to have formed a puddle here. It's not just Sillim. All the streets in Seoul are the same way. They look like collages (Kim).

Kim Ae-ran's short story "Prayer" opens with a collision between expectations and reality. The protagonist, In-yeong Suh, dreams of the green she associates with the name of her forthcoming bus stop, Sillim-dong, which, as it turns out, has no visual connections to the forest for which it is named. In-yeong experiences her physical surroundings through her body as well as mind when observing that "[g]reen seeps into my tongue when I say, 'Sillim'" (Kim). In-yeong's orientation toward her environment is part of a larger ecocritical turn in Korean literature that acknowledges the fluid boundaries between humans and their surroundings as well as the discrepancies between the "green" rhetoric of urban development and the condition of natural surroundings. Such discrepancy is suggested when In-yeong observes the bare trees alongside the urban area surrounding the station, her eyes finding everything lacking.

As In-yeong continues throughout her day, the natural features of Seoul's landscape emerge amidst shabby housing developments: the Han River, the mountain she tentatively identifies as Gwanak. Meanwhile, human efforts to "redevelop" urban territories fall flat. In-

yeong views the small garden at her sister's flat with misgivings, noting that "[i]t's so small I would have missed it if she hadn't pointed it out" (Kim). Listening to her sister's brave defense of the small refuge in the overly cramped dwelling, In-yeong observes that "[p]lastic violets have sprouted on fake lawn" (Kim). In-yeong's desired connections with her natural surroundings are unfulfilled in both her uncertainty whether the mountain on which the flat is located is Gwanak and her yearning for the green the few spring trees at her bus stop have yet to develop.

Through a series of moments suggesting "faked" instances of nature, "Prayer" portrays the larger anti-ecological implications of urban development amidst citizens' fracturing relations with each other. Kimberly Chung emphasizes similar conditions in her analysis of projects portraying the detrimental effect of urban development on the environment. In her interpretation of the artist mixrice's visual projects, Chung turns to Terry Gifford's idea of the post-pastoral, "a focus on our sense experience as animals entwined within the biosphere" (20). Chung also utilizes Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence," a way to observe subtle, pervasive, and cumulative forms of harm to humans and the environment wrought through neoliberal politics. In analyzing Sehui Cho's "The Dwarf" (1970), Chung notes the importance of the entanglement of social and environmental problems, focusing on three factors relevant to other ecocritical literature of the late twentieth century: "marginalized labor, the dispossessed poor and environmental degradation" (23). Chung finds that while works contemporaneous with "The Dwarf" focus on the problems associated with industrialization, more recent works are concerned with the cultural effects of cyclical Korean redevelopment. "Prayer" illustrates this idea in focusing on the social behavior of Seoul residents in close quarters, suggesting the breakdown of communication and empathy that occurs due to contemporary living conditions.

According to Chung, the apartment complex is a crucial recurring element in contemporary ecocritical literature as a space for human life and a significant part of the urban landscape as a symbol of rapid development. Chung notes a cynicism that penetrates the Korean consciousness toward political showmanship of environmentally friendly practices. For instance, Chung notes mixrice's connections between visuals in "The Vine Chronicle" and the failed transplantation of a 450-year-old zelkova tree uprooted for construction purposes. Chung suggests how the Korean public's skepticism toward the government's interest in the environment has evolved from other instances such as the destruction of a 500-year-old forest in hosting the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. Government-sanctioned destruction and redevelopment projects have been accompanied by promises of restoration that ecocritical artists and writers find doubtful. A similar kind of cynicism pervades "Prayer" as In-yeong quits a job her mother idealizes, observes the shabby surroundings her sister endures while studying for civil service examinations, and experiences embarrassment at the lack of polish of the government official with whom she meets to complete a survey for a gift card. In short, the world around In-yeong is composed of false fronts. The humanity of individuals behind their shabby façades remains visible in the story. However, the system that has contrived these façades is implicated indirectly. The culprit must be determined by the reader since characters seem to be too deeply imbricated in the system to form an objective critique.

In this chapter, I examine the questions of strangeness alongside the related concepts of loneliness and isolation in contemporary Korean and Chinese fiction. How is nature rendered "strange," or, alternatively, how do people become estranged from nature in these stories? While these stories are not explicitly "gothic" per se, the lens of the Asian gothic applies to my analysis in my observation of the imbalances and indications of integrity lost in human care for the

environment and for the human communities situated in a larger natural world. The Asian gothic indicates "strangeness" at sites of injustice not only to humans but to the environment as well. In "Prayer," In-yeong encounters a series of strange and insufficient replacements for natural forms. These include a station name, plastic flowers in a boardinghouse courtyard, and an out-of-season Christmas tree. In-yeong also experiences strange relations with others: a meal of raw pork with her sister eaten without complaint, an awkward meeting with a government representative. In-yeong's ordinary encounters with humans and the more-than-human world express her estrangement from meaningful connections in contemporary Seoul.

In this chapter, I consider how twenty-first century Korean and Chinese fiction present an alternative picture of East Asian modernity through images of urban stagnation and waste products while also developing a distinct counter to Western ecocritical thought, which tends to dominate ecocritical literary discourse. East Asian ecocriticism tends to label Western ideologies as foreign, perceiving that the escalation of environmental damage in East Asia is continuous with modernization projects modeled after the West. Because of the close relationship between environmental damage due to modernization and the prevalence of Western thought in modernization, it is essential to consider the development of East Asian ecocriticism, which centers East Asian philosophies on the relationships between humans and the more-than-human world and which tends to distance itself from Western ecocriticism. Jinhee Kim notes that "[t]raditionally, the East tried to find life's truth and morals in nature" and that "the resilience and energy of nature helps us dream of being elevated into higher beings" (Kim). I point to East Asia's longstanding literary relationship to nature not to suggest that East Asian cultures are inherently less culpable for environmental harm but instead to point to an authentic starting point

for East Asian literary conversations about the environment, which is considerably different than that for Western orientations toward the environment.

Western ideologies tend to take a paternalistic approach to nature. Any activist approach aligning with Western ideas and politics presupposes that action is required on the part of the human to counter the harm humans have done to the environment. This stance replicates the anthropocentric thinking it seeks to counter with action by making distinctions between humans as actors and the environment as manipulable material. The Western perspective may tend to brush aside East Asian ecocritical literature as too passive, perceiving the value placed on reflection and critical thinking as counterproductive, a waste of precious time as environmental destruction continues: global sea levels rise, oceans and their creatures choked with plastic, and forests vanish, along with life-giving oxygen. At the same time, as much as environmental activists of any nationality may seek to curb destructive practices, global neoliberal ideologies remain intact that make large-scale changes or concerted efforts between nations impossible. Often, Western scholars (myself included) have difficulty recognizing certain kinds of anthropocentric thinking that are obvious to people approaching questions of nature from non-Western worldviews.

In finding a position of appropriate action, Korean ecocritical literature must reckon with anthropocentric ideologies in Western literary discourse, which have circulated in East Asia since the early twentieth century. Turning back to earlier notions of relation to the environment suggests how the process of modernization and continual urban development in East Asia might be modified or curbed. Jinhee Kim notes the emphasis Korean environmental poets place on understanding life as well as the anti-life mechanisms of modern capitalism. Kim finds that this balanced understanding is necessary to begin to control the anti-life mechanisms that have

escalated environmental destruction in the past few centuries. Similarly, Hyung-yup Oh notes the trend of "life literature" within Korean eco-literature, which focuses on the essence of life to surmount a contemporary culture of destruction to all living things. Oh points in particular to the work of U-chang Kim, who uses "ecological reasoning to reestablish our relationship with nature by moving beyond anthropocentrism, which is responsible for maintaining the status quo of Western ideas and thinking." This is not to say that Korean ecocriticism seeks to avoid Western literary discourse but to remain cognizant of which texts can contribute to a body of ecocritical thought that grows from an East Asian foundation.

Won-Chung Kim surveys recent Korean ecocritical writings, noting that while some Western authors have caught on due to their sympathies with Asian philosophy, critics favor Korean voices. According to Kim, Korean critics are concerned with developing ecocritical theory that stems from Korean-oriented ideologies. Kim finds that the Korean Wave, South Korea's recent success in penetrating the international market with cultural and technological exports, has given Korea more cultural confidence, leading to greater interest in developing their own literary theory over importing Western ideologies. Overall, Kim notes, Western eco-philosophers have met a mixed response, with those most influenced by or interested in East Asian philosophies, like Henry David Thoreau and Gary Snyder, meeting with approval, while others working from a Western Christian framework, like Wendell Berry, finding less footing. Kim describes two Korean ecocritical thinkers that have risen in importance in Korean criticism: Kyubo Lee (1168-1241) and contemporary writer Chiha Kim. Lee's writings are important to Korean ecocriticism in how they go above and beyond traditional East Asian aesthetic views of nature. Kim summarizes Lee's advocacy in observing that "hostility between humanity and nature is caused by the machine mind and will be alleviated only when some radical change of

human attitudes is made" (5). Lee's writings argue against a self-interested, utilitarian view of nature and toward viewing nonhuman animals with compassion as fellow beings. Kim notes that the contemporary writer and thinker Chiha Kim focuses on a concept of "Life" that moves beyond Western-centered notions of ecology. Chiha Kim finds that "life is not exclusive to organic things which have the capacity to reproduce themselves, but encompasses all things which self-organize by diversely circulating and relating with others" (Won-Chung Kim 6). Chiha Kim is part of a body of contemporary ecocritics that perceive industrialization as inhuman and anti-ecological, a "culture of death" (Won-Chung Kim 7). These critics also view the West as introducing practices that harm the environment while also failing to generate sustainable worldviews or philosophies that advocate more than a respect for nature.

In the first two sections of the chapter, I analyze strangeness in imagery of urban environmental stagnation and decay in short stories by Ae-ran Kim, Jungeun Hwang, and Seong-nan Ha reflect on the consciousness of characters struggling with repression of personal and national histories and unexamined lives in South Korea, and how this strangeness reflects estrangement from cultural values toward community and the environment due to the adoption of dominant modern ideology. In the last section, I analyze Pingwa Jia's *Happy Dreams*, which, via the protagonist's role as a trash-picker, considers both the material accumulation and waste in urban Xi'an, China and the relationships between humans and waste. In *Happy Dreams*, not only is waste rendered strange, but those that manage waste are othered by urban dwellers. I analyze these works as responses to late modernity and the proliferation of capitalism and materialism in both nations.

I draw from various critical perspectives on modernity and ecocriticism, first summarizing the literature on environmental thought and politics in East Asia before discussing

the application of Rob Nixon's theory of "slow violence" to my analysis. Paul Harris and Graeme Lang argue for the importance of understanding environmental practices in Asia. Harris and Lang find that Asian countries are adopting destructive Western environmental practices which, given the populous regions in Asia, could significantly amplify the harmful effects of industrialization and urbanization around the globe. Harris and Lang note that China is already responsible for producing one-third of the world's greenhouse gases (4). The harmful effects of pollution and climate change from this production have, according to the authors, already resulted in significant negative health effects for those in Asia.

Environmental activism has developed alongside industrialization in East Asian nations for decades. Literary activism and direct advocacy reflect political conditions specific to East Asian nations. Scholars like Karen Thornber find it more productive to analyze trends across East Asian environmental literatures. On the other hand, when considering how East Asian nations approach in-person advocacy, Mary Haddad argues that East Asian nations must be studied individually due to significant differences between political regimes.

Karen Thornber describes how ecoambiguity pervades East Asian literatures. According to Thornber, ecoambiguity is a representation of environmental issues fraught with irony and internal contradictions. Thornber finds this quality not only in East Asian literatures but real-world scenarios as well, citing the potential deforestation of Shōsen Gorge in Japan as an example. According to Thornber, tourist attractions like Shōsen Gorge represent an important point of public contact with natural formations. Activities like deforestation are often argued by bureaucrats to make natural features visible, drawing visitors to the park and ensuring that natural spaces remain undeveloped. Thornber notes while the quality of ecoambiguity is productive to examine across East Asian literatures, examining the local approaches of various

Asian literatures does not capture the larger discourse at work. Instead, according to Thornber, this shared ambiguity is clear when one observes "how creative works from disparate places negotiated more generally with ecological quandaries" (55). Thornber distinguishes this quality from other literary ambiguities effected for artistic value, instead characterizing it as a sign of a lack of consciousness or a confession of inadequacy or failure to recognize and act in an ecological crisis.

Mary Haddad analyzes the relationships between environmental activists and authoritarian governments in East Asian nations. Haddad argues that timing is the most important factor when attempting to influence governmental policy, in terms of the vulnerability of the ruling party, the ruling party's need to participate in global politics, and the country's prior experience with environmental movements. Haddad notes that East Asian governments often include activists and academic experts on advisory panels to mitigate mobilization of public protest. As a result, many East Asian nations have advanced environmental policies enforced by authoritarian governments. Haddad also considers how many citizen protests in East Asia have been mobilized by rural communities who suffered the effects of pollution and environmental depletion first-hand (88). Korea's environmental movement began when the country's rapid growth led to environmental damage that harmed human health. Residents of industrializing Ulsan and Onsan suffered the effects of pollution, while Koreans in Seoul began to protest air and noise pollution. Haddad notes that activism is a more delicate issue in China due to the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian governmental style. Since protestors risk punishment, activists tend to focus on developing strategies for solutions rather than offering critique of current conditions. In seeking to prevent mass mobilization of citizens in protest, the Chinese government "is ramping up its efforts to improve the environment in the country" (Haddad 97).

However, as Harris and Lang point out, much more is needed to solve China's environmental crisis, which impacts the health of its own citizens and contributes to a third of the planet's greenhouse gases.

Chung notes the relevance to Nixon's theory of slow violence to Korean environmental literatures. Because portrayals of the environment are so often bound up with those of human life and politics in the literature, slow violence is a way to perceive the subtle relationships between human behavior and the environment. Nixon describes slow violence as "a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). Nixon notes that we (presumably, the West) are conditioned by media to perceive violence in decisive, explosive moments rather than in cumulative effects. Nixon calls for new kinds of imagery to represent slow violence in ways compelling to an audience. Nixon notes that media bias toward "spectacular violence" makes it more difficult to perceive at-risk ecosystems and human communities vulnerable to "turbo-capitalism" (4). Revealing the close relationship between vulnerable environments and the poor, who are least sheltered from the effects of environmental destruction and toxicity, some Korean and Chinese literary works center the everyday situations of the poor, such as Kim's "Prayer" and Jia's *Happy Dreams*. Others, like Hwang's "Raptors Upstream" and Ha's "Early Beans" emphasize mental or emotional impoverishment alongside images of environmental spoilage or destruction. Instances of slow violence do not have clear start or stop dates. As a result, these instances do not cohere with narratives of progress that valorize decisive actions.

In Chapter One, in my discussion of *East Goes West*, I described Han's self-conscious determination to identify himself as a man of action and distance himself from slower, more contemplative activities, which he assigns to his friend Kim. In *East Goes West*, Han's

assumption of an action-oriented mindset reads as artificial or forced at times, which brings the idea forward more directly for the reader's consideration. Han's determination to Westernize means a disavowal of subtlety or cumulative insight. This favoring of action over thought and of progress over perception is a modern ideology that makes it unlikely to perceive or develop solutions for issues of slow violence. In instances of slow violence, history must be understood differently. Rather than a linear progression of past to present, slow violence acknowledges the ways that the past lives on in the present. Nixon notes that "industrial particulates and effluents live on in the environmental elements we inhabit and in our very bodies, which epidemiologically and ecologically are never our simple contemporaries" (8). Thus, attention to the small and subtle and a different understanding of time are needed to perceive how the past overlays the present in the everyday, within and around us.

Nixon points to the way official discourse tends to dominate general understandings of landscape. The local is disfavored in comparison to the "official," resulting in the loss of localized vocabulary and knowledge of the environment. The "vernacular landscape," representing experiences and histories belonging to a community, is at odds with the "official landscape," which "writes the land in a bureaucratic, externalizing, and extraction-driven manner that is often pitilessly instrumental" (17). The tension between these narratives is problematized in Kim's "Prayer" when the protagonist contemplates the hidden stories in compartmentalized living spaces, the shabby and enervated qualities of residents ascribing to modern urban living standards. Nixon perceives that official discourse tends to ignore or disavow "spiritualized vernacular landscapes" in favor of treating land and some humans as inanimate resources (17). The East Asian literary texts analyzed in this chapter seek different understandings of local spaces through observation of visually unpleasing details like shabby housing, uncollected

garbage, and waste ditches in an insistence on the real and tangible effects of slow violence that modern ideologies seek to conceal.

Korean and Chinese environmental literatures are important contributions to ecocriticism in their critique of modernity from East Asian philosophical worldviews. The following section focuses on the portrayal of the environment in recent Korean literature, reading scenes with Korean ecocritical theory and the idea of slow violence. Kim's "Prayer" portrays the ordinary happenings in a woman's life against a stagnant backdrop of Seoul. The story considers the dead-end prospects of two young women through their shabby surroundings, both aspects of reality which the protagonist seems obliged to pretend to not notice. Hwang's "Raptors Upstream" relates a woman's uncomfortable outing with her boyfriend and his parents which culminates in a picnic amidst raptor waste. The theme of unacknowledged truths also speaks through "Raptors Upstream" as the protagonist experiences dissonance and alienation from her companions whose family drama harbors repressed pain and memories from the Korean War.

Pretending Not to Notice

Politeness and reserve are a means to give others space, which in turn allows dense populations to feel comfortable in close quarters. These qualities are important to retain peace and sanity in close urban quarters and tightly packed public transportation in urban spaces. However, these qualities, which tend to avoid direct confrontation or spontaneous communication, also present a problem in leaving the status quo unchallenged and individuals without a cohesive vocabulary to express the incremental effects of slow violence on their everyday lives. While the texts examined in this chapter don't seek to dislodge this tendency, scenes often center around the unspoken or unmentionable and the lives of those who have repressed their own desires, leaving the reader to contemplate the strangeness of silence or complicity in a destructive system. Contemporary Korean's women writing focuses on the small,

bodily-experienced details of living, expressing the slow violence of neoliberal thought in urban Korean culture on human bodies as received through the senses.

Ch'oe Yun observes how, overall, late twentieth-century women's fiction focuses on the everyday lived experiences of women, disfavoring a linear narrative structure for a more open structure without a conclusion. Ch'oe notes "inner monologues, garrulity, the magnification of sensation, and the depiction of everyday life" as characteristics of this literary style (487). Ch'oe emphasizes the sense of self-possession that emerges from recent women's writings from the deepened self-awareness that comes through detailed observation as well as the attention to one's own sensory experiences. Ch'oe describes women's literary space as "an extremely private, personal sphere – a possession through the senses" (489). Ch'oe's analysis suggests how women's writings were, for decades, considered irrelevant in comparison to topics more valued by a heteropatriarchal literary culture. However, having honed a sensitivity toward details, everyday sensory experiences, and private spaces for reflection over the past few decades, women's writings impart the kind of awareness for which writers like Nixon call in arguing for new literary expressions of slow violence. More particularly, these works express what has become strange alongside rapid urbanization in Korean literary fiction.

"Prayer"'s attention to the lived dimensions of the protagonist's life, the various directions of her thoughts and examination of her memories, and her private bubble of contemplation toward the surroundings outside her window from public transportation, repeatedly highlight her relationship to her natural surroundings as they are bound up in her education and economic status. Bureaucratic institutions' mediation of the environment through "green" naming of landmarks belies visible realities, as revealed through In-yeong's close attention to her surroundings. However, individuals express connection and even kinship with

their flawed surroundings. Just as "plastic violets…sprouted on fake lawn" can provide In-yeong's sister with a natural respite, In-yeong perceives the city's surfaces as natural bodies. Observing a "forest of buildings," In-yeong considers how "[t]he translucent skin of the buildings reflects sunlight with their entire bodies" and sees "the expression on the face of Seoul at one in the afternoon" (Kim). The discontinuities in In-yeong's description of buildings—first, plant-like, then, as animals with "translucent skin"—suggest her stream of consciousness and changing perceptions alongside her changing view from the bus window, as well as a yearning for natural spaces, trailing her observation of the differences between the name "Sillim-dong Station" and the reality (Kim). Contemplating the "bodies" of the buildings, In-yeong notes that "[t]here are too many windows in the world—people grow dark in all that light" (Kim). Her later experiences and observations in the story will similarly reflect the depersonalization and anonymity of urban life. Struggling for privacy or independence, it is too easy for people to become isolated from family and community units in this recently developed urban space.

In their crowded surroundings, individuals become more private and shun direct communication. In-yeong recalls her sister's struggle to study for civil service exams in a "Quiet Room," at the local library that was full of noisy bustle. She notices another more serious-minded student who offers her a ride home one day. Seemingly intimated by his directness, she begins taking a bus to a different study room, further away. In the second location, she receives an anonymous note about her frequent coughing, which spurs her to move once again. In the boardinghouse, In-yeong observes notes on the community bulletin board: "*Please walk on tiptoes in the hallway. – The Manager*" and "*Whoever stole my wallet, please die*" (Kim). The messages juxtapose an impersonal command for consideration toward others and an anonymous, passive-aggressive threat. Amidst these conventions of impersonal communication, fear—or

desire—for contact is implied in the story. In her sister's boardinghouse room, In-yeong notes that plastic foam has been used to plug up holes from an electrical outlet. Of the plugged holes, In-yeong's sister comments "'[i]t's like someone's peeping'" (Kim). In-yeong notes that "[s]he'll frequently make eye contact with that thing during her time here" (Kim). Having shunned direct communication with strangers in the past, In-yeong's sister seems to have an acute consciousness of privacy and a desire to maintain walls between herself and those outside of her family circle.

Even between family members, whose affection for one another is clear, communication is stilted. In-yeong's father, arrested a few years earlier for drunk driving, spends time in a detention center, after which the family gathers "for a painfully awkward meal of tofu soup," seemingly unable to speak freely (Kim). In-yeong recalls that "[s]ince the detainment, every time a prison scene comes on TV we laugh in unison and change the channel" (Kim). Shame seems to hang over the family, freezing any honest or direct communication between members. Instead, family behavior becomes conciliatory, comprised of gestures of "smoothing-over." Even between the siblings, a meal of pork *shabu shabu*, a meal usually comprising of raw beef, becomes an occasion of awkwardness. In-yeong is unsettled, wondering at the safety issues of consuming raw pork, while her sister assures her the matter is "no big deal" (Kim). The matter of food safety unclear, the women consume the raw pork anyway. The story suggests an atmosphere of not rocking the boat, of avoiding direct confrontation in matters great and small, in a series of gestures that add up to discontented, tentative relationships. The objective portrayal reveals the strangeness of these moments and the ways in which people have become estranged from each other and their larger social and natural environments.

"Prayer" portrays these tendencies without offering direct critique. The story suggests how unquestioned human beliefs and habits result in a society that has gone askew, through

small, incremental happenings, while a larger bureaucracy's chief concern is urban development. The effect of this development on culture seems to be one of partitioning individual lives, resulting in a breakdown of communication that makes objections to even small matters seemingly impossible. The story's keen attention to small details makes the situation perceptible, revealing the slow violence of modern urban planning. The series of events in the story suggest primarily how urban surroundings mediate human relationships and shape everyday human habits. However, In-yeong's frequent observations of her natural surroundings reveals her awareness of how urban development projects are replacing or misrepresenting the natural features of Seoul. The story is not necessarily a call to activism but to observation. Only through paying close attention to one's surroundings can one become sensitive to the nature of slow violence.

Nixon notes how slow violence culminates through the widening gaps between official discourse and vernacular description of the environment. According to Nixon, official discourse tends to consider the land in terms of resource and extraction, while a vernacular understanding of the environment considers how the landscape engages with a community's history. This gap is demonstrated in "Prayer" when In-yeong wonders at her lack of knowledge about Seoul's geographic features, musing, "I'm not sure if the name of the mountain we're on is Gwanak, just as I don't know where Sillim begins, or where 9-dong or 12-dong ends" (Kim). Earlier in the story, In-yeong considers the discrepancy between the station's name "Sillim," which suggests a green forest, and the lack of green in her surroundings. Her stream of consciousness suggests how official discourse blankets Seoul's spaces, making it difficult to discern the city's natural features for herself. This falseness is echoed in the repeated imagery of artificial plants. In-yeong views the plastic violets in the small boardinghouse courtyard with skepticism, even as her sister

avows her gratitude for that small bit of nature. Later in the story, as In-yeong meets a government official in a church as a makeshift interview space, she completes a questionnaire by the light of a "Christmas tree from the previous season" that "slowly blinks in the dark church lobby" (Kim). The image suggests a lack of care or attentiveness to the establishment by those responsible, the lingering of the past into the present, contributing to a sense of decrepitude, and the replacement of natural surroundings with artificial representations like plastic flowers or Christmas trees. The image reflects against In-yeong's initial wondering at the lack of green to underscore the gradual browning of Seoul.

In "Prayer," artificial representations of nature dominate the environment: signage suggesting nonexistent green spaces, plastic flowers in a courtyard, a Christmas tree in a foyer. The review of literature referred to how East Asian portrayals of nature are often intimately enmeshed with meaning about human experiences, Jinhee Kim noting that traditionally "the East tried to find life's truth and morals in nature." In "Prayer," it is not nature but nature's marked absence that suggests larger truths about contemporary life. The lack of tangible nature parallels an overall absence of apparent human life as urban residents are partitioned from one another physically and emotionally, distanced by urban design, custom, anxiety, or discomfort. If "life literature" aims to portray anti-life practices, or those that result in the destruction of life, as well as the quality of life itself in essence, "Prayer" illustrates how modern urban development wipes an area free of tangible nature only to replace it with artificial representations. Thus, the gaps in the landscape and in the communication between humans signify the presence of "anti-life."

Like "Prayer," Jungeun Hwang's "Raptors Upstream" portrays humans pretending not to notice larger issues, struggling to get along politely while ignoring an elephant in the room. Nature, while prominent in "Raptors Upstream," plays a different role, serving to exacerbate and

draw out long-buried truths in a dysfunctional family. In this sense, "Raptors Upstream" is not environmental literature in attempting, directly or indirectly, to bring consciousness to the destruction of nature, but instead nature takes on a more traditional function in the work in how it reflects aspects of human life, in particular, signifying uncomfortable, long buried, and painful issues family members strive to ignore. Thus, in "Raptors Upstream," humans are not actors on nature, but rather the other way around, an ironic turn since the work takes place in a bird sanctuary in a nature preserve.

The unnamed narrator reflects on a significant memory of her ex-boyfriend, Jehee, that she has a hard time letting go. The narrator recalls going on a picnic outing with Jehee and his parents, with whom she was well-acquainted after dating Jehee for some time. Jehee's father is recovering from surgery during the outing, while his mother is dictatorial to both father and son but careful to put on a friendly face to the narrator. The heat of the noon sun and the scarcity of shade reflects the growing inescapability of long-repressed emotions and memories accumulated by Jehee's parents and passed on to Jehee, who behaves in a responsible manner for them. The narrator recalls that

> Jehee put the camera around my neck and told me to take pictures. Do it when father and mother are walking side by side, in a natural way. It wasn't easy. I tried to capture Jehee's father, who was walking and fanning himself, Jehee's mother, who couldn't take her eyes off the trees, and Jehee, who was lugging the cart behind them, in the same photo, but one of them would go out of frame each time, and since Jehee's parents were walking far apart, I didn't get many opportunities to catch them together (Hwang).

Called on to record an image of intimacy in the outing, the narrator finds herself at a loss, since each family member is in a separate world. For Jehee's mother, being in nature triggers her

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memories of fleeing outdoors during the Korean War. A spider descends upon them during their walk, looking "like it had come down from the clouds" (Hwang). Jehee's mother is drawn to the animal, saying "she had seen such spiders in the forest while fleeing the war" as she "deftly placed the spider on her finger and let it crawl over her hand" (Hwang). While Jehee's mother doesn't share her memories of the war during the outing, the narrator supplies them, having heard the story before. When fleeing a combat zone, Jehee's mother carries her infant sibling on her back. A spark ignites the baby's blanket and burns the baby alive; however, she has no choice but to keep running. It seems that Jehee's mother has told the story again and again, making her pain a part of her children's upbringing and young adulthood. Even the narrator, not technically a member of the family, is required to share the terrible memory. What becomes clear as the story progresses is that while the facts of the past have been articulated, characters are incapable of resolving the feelings of trauma they bring.

Thus, Jehee has grown up under the shadow of his parents' memories of the Korean War and its aftermath, their bankruptcy during a collapsed economy, prior to his birth. The narrator, seemingly sensitive to the feelings of all involved, also feels responsible for the pain of the prior generation. At the same time, she struggles against her own revulsion of her present circumstances, in a manner like In-yeong in "Prayer." Just as In-yeong balks at consuming raw pork in a restaurant, the narrator of "Raptors Upstream" can't put aside the sense of wrongness in the surroundings Jehee's parents choose for their picnic. Making a half-hearted protest, the narrator notes that "[t]he drooping trees covered in soil looked spooky and sunlight didn't reach there" and that "[l]eaves swept up by the water lay rotting on the stones" (Hwang). It seems her revulsion of the place is both on material and spiritual levels. She perceives that the valley looks somehow unclean but also has the sense that "something had died a miserable death there"

(Hwang). The narrator's boyfriend, Jehee, disregards her misgivings and goes along with his parents' wishes, "leaning against the cart and staring at the valley resignedly" (Hwang). The uncanniness that the narrator experiences in the valley seems to emerge from the unresolved trauma of Jehee's mother. The narrator recalls the memories of Jehee's mother and feels a sense of horror in the valley to which no one else will admit initially but which gradually sinks in for them all, as "Jehee's parents, who'd been telling me with magnanimous looks that it was normal to have food by the waterside when you came picnicking at a place like this, said less and less" (Hwang). Thus, not only do Jehee's parents insist on having lunch in a drainage ditch, but they also insist on the complicity of Jehee and his girlfriend. It is this insistence on complicity that seems to unravel the narrator.

It seems from the narrator's remarks at the beginning and end of the story that she has trouble letting this memory go because of her sense of shame in not being *more* complicit. A sense that *she* ruined the occasion. She wonders, "[w]hat if I had agreed with Jehee's parents and happily climbed down that slope and helped spread the mats on the valley floor? Wouldn't that have been better for everyone? Wouldn't that have been right?" (Hwang). The picnic is brought to an abrupt end when a park ranger forces the family to leave the area, but even then, Jehee's parents are impenetrable, as "Jehee's father shouted back, Okay, we'll just finish this up and leave, and smiled at him good-naturedly" (Hwang). Jehee's mother stumbles back on her ascent and is slightly injured when Jehee's father catches her and pulls her up. Together, they laugh at the predicament, and, to the narrator, "[t]hat laughter sounded like it was meant to show everybody that they were good people and had no malice" (Hwang). The narrator observes them "with a strange feeling as the laughter gradually disappeared," noting how "Jehee's mother clasped her shoulders as if to hold in her pain" (Hwang). In many ways, Jehee's family seems

like a typical dysfunctional family, the narrator bearing painful witness to dynamics obvious to her as an outsider. At the same time, the narrator is not truly outside the situation, forced to be complicit in the parents' pretense by her own sense of loyalty to them.

Furthermore, the narrator's reflections on the parents' hardships during the Korean War and ensuing economic turmoil in South Korea suggest how the malaise affects a generation of survivors and their descendants. While nothing is shared about the narrator's own parents, her conflicted feelings between protest and complicity throughout the outing with Jehee's parents suggests that on a deep level, she too is affected by the general trauma of the previous generation and feels burdened by their expectations. The stagnation and unsuitability of the surroundings the parents have chosen for a picnic is real and tangible but also symbolic of their internal stagnation, just as the heat of the noon sun suggests the discomfort all strive to ignore from the repressed trauma in Jehee's family. Thus, nature has an active role in the story in breaking down emotional barriers to bring the trauma to light, although the moment is fleeting. Hwang's depiction of nature suggests how in contemporary Korean fiction, nature can take on the traditional role of reflecting inner truths about human nature in a manner that is relevant to contemporary crises and generational struggles. While not environmental literature per se, the pervasiveness of the natural world in the work and its function as a catalyst to bring painful truths to light sheds insight on how Korean ecocritical literature centers humans in a larger natural world, demonstrating the continuity between humans and their surroundings in a way that affirms East Asian philosophies toward the environment. The stagnant and decayed surroundings in "Raptors Upstream" signify the unhealthy emotional state of the family unit but are not making any obvious critique on environmental destruction from modern developmental efforts.

Nonetheless, the acknowledgement of the stagnant or unclean surroundings signifies a social failure in the story.

While some Korean literary texts portray waste as a sign of a larger moral problem, others portray both the constructive and destructive aspects of waste in urban society, furthering revealing how *like* us our waste is. Gay Hawkins argues that because the notion of waste is a means through which we define our identities and boundaries, our behaviors in relation to perceived waste matter. Hawkins finds that waste is at the heart of social constructionism; the human is distinguished from what is not human: the "waste" (2). At the same time, Hawkins finds, how we deal with waste contributes to our individual and collective identities. Hawkins notes two different approaches to waste: the perception of the accumulation of waste as a sign of moral corruption in contemporary society and its part in a larger "disenchantment narrative" and the analysis of our practices surrounding the issue of waste. The former narrative Hawkins reads as a negative take on the matter and the latter as a more constructive approach in yielding more information about our relationship to our constructed notion of waste. While this "disenchantment narrative" on waste frames many of the stories analyzed in this chapter, waste is also envisioned in terms of a second self, or uncanny double; an archive or database of detailed information about individual lives; and a career or vocation that promises to uplift one's prospects in society.

The recurring topic of waste in contemporary East Asian literature also makes visible friction between modern Western ideas and traditional East Asian philosophies. East Asian nations have taken on Western philosophies, in whole or modified forms, alongside processes of modernization, but modern trappings in East Asian urban settings do not necessarily indicate the depth to which the societies have taken Western ideology to heart. Sharon Hong notes that "[t]he

'modern' city of Seoul comprises deceptively similar elements of a modern Western city" (20). Hong argues that "the city's modernization has been influenced by colonial and Western forces, but still remains rooted in distinctly East Asian urban practices" (21). Many Korean literary texts indicate tensions between these forces, pointing to the incompatibility or unsustainability of certain Western ideas in Korean culture. "Prayer," for instance, suggests the loneliness and dehumanization that results from overly compartmentalized lives—the paradox of urban residents living as total strangers in very close quarters. In the previous chapter, I described how the vampire in Korean literary texts may be read in terms of the modern individual's isolation from others and from the natural world. It seems that in many ways, Korean popular culture has localized this trope out of a sense of identification with the modern individual's loneliness and compulsive desires. Korean literary portrayals of waste similarly reflect this sense of lacking or loss—the "disenchantment narrative" to which Hawkins refers. Junichiro Tanizaki describes the clash between Western hygienic practices and traditional East Asian philosophies. While Tanizaki speaks mainly for Japan, he captures a sentiment that recurs in some texts examined in this chapter.

In Western culture, waste and decay are often associated with the abject, as described by Julia Kristeva. Kristeva describes the abject as

> [a] massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it,

annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture (2).

Kristeva clarifies the cultural significance of the abject in Western culture, a tendency to position the abject in opposition to one's own identity and to bury it deeply. Western modern culture has a certain obsession with hygiene that stems from binary thinking of the mind-body split that is not necessarily shared by other cultures. While, clearly, non-Western societies have hygiene practices that are important to their cultural identities, there are certain Western modern obsessions that present a challenge to non-Western societies, often obliged to adapt to these practices to survive or compete in a globalized world. Many contemporary East Asian literary texts addressing issues of modernity, like Pingwa Jia's *Happy Dreams*, which I will discuss later in the chapter, utilize waste imagery to a degree that seems transgressive or shocking, peeling back layers of denial to question the mind-body split and binary thinking of self and other. In considering the purpose of this kind of imagery, it is useful to consider how traditional East Asian notions of waste clash with Western modern ideology.

Junichiro Tanizaki argues for recognition of these differences in "In Praise of Shadows," when describing his struggle to outfit his home with modern conveniences while striving to incorporate traditional Japanese aesthetics (1933). Tanizaki addresses not so much the question of hygiene but the Western preference for materials that favor the appearance of hygiene. According to Tanizaki, Western fixtures transform the bathroom from a place of "spiritual repose" to a utilitarian non-place. The materials used to construct the traditional Japanese toilet are, according to Tanizaki, incompatible with modern tastes because "[n]o matter how fastidious one may be or how diligently one may scrub, dirt will show, particularly on a floor of wood or tatami matting." Thus, while Japanese toilets may be clean, their defining feature is not their

cleanliness but their ability to provide a sensory respite for the user. Contrasting Eastern and Western expectations toward the toilet, Tanizaki notes that "[t]he novelist Natsume Sōseki counted his morning trips to the toilet a great pleasure, 'a physiological delight'" and that the Japanese toilet is optimized for this experience, "where, surrounded by tranquil walls and finely grained wood, one looks out upon blue skies and green leaves." Westerners, on the other hand "regard the toilet as utterly unclean and avoid even the mention of it in polite conversation" (Tanizaki). Ultimately, Tanizaki, and most East Asian urbanites, choose porcelain and steel, much as Tanizaki predicts in the essay, relegating many features of traditional Japanese home design to the past.

Tanizaki's observations on Western ideas of cleanliness are like John Scanlan's analysis of waste treatment in modern society. Tanizaki's comments allude to the inspiration that the embodied experience of the toilet brings to Japanese writers, implying a certain union between mind and body undervalued by modern society and discouraged by modern technologies. Scanlan notes "a trend towards successive separations that lead to further differentiation at the individual level, which *at the same time* (and through the network of social associations that sustain life) results in an almost total abstraction from reality" (36). "Prayer" and "Raptors Upstream" portray various kinds of denial of reality in modern society, whether in communication with others or at the level of the psyche. The presence of waste—the abject substance that calls modernity into question—in "Raptors Upstream" is an uncanny interloper at a family picnic, a suggestion of a history that will not be flushed away to leave the present clean.

Tanizaki notes that literature promises to hold the "world of shadows" that the modern world obliterates from East Asian aesthetics in favor of excessive light and cleanliness and an apparent distaste for ambiguity of any kind. A close examination of East Asian literary texts

reveals this to be true regarding the clash between traditional and modern attitudes about waste. Several contemporary literary texts, including Seong-nan Ha's "Early Beans" and "Flowers of Mold" and Pingwa Jia's *Happy Dreams* consider the intimate relationships between humans and waste. The presence of human garbage in these texts looms as threatening in its excessiveness but also, at times, with anthropological implications, teeming with the private details of the lives of unknown others.

Modern urban planning separates humans from their waste much as it separates them from each other, resulting in a lack of information about the nature and magnitude of both. Thus, for us, waste becomes strange in its unfamiliarity, and other people become strangers. In modern life, we become estranged from the entirety of natural cycles by isolating ourselves from evidence of death, waste, and decay that brings a renewal of life. The texts that follow suggest a yearning for connection to others alongside the issue of hazardous and unmanageable waste— issues that, when taken with a more holistic view of nature, inform each other with the various complexities of modern human life. The process of decomposition, the breakdown of organic matter for reuse, presents life as a cyclical process of death and renewal, an aspect of human life that modern ideologies disregard or repress.

The Significance of Urban Waste

The foul stench was coming from the dumpsters. Uncollected garbage piled up like pyramids around the apartment complex…The man leapt over the stains like an athlete competing in the triple jump event. Dressed in pointy dress shoes, snug jeans, and a white dress shirt with the top two buttons undone, he looked like an amateur cowboy who had just stepped out of a Western movie. He shaded his face with one hand and with the other, clutched a cell phone instead of a pistol…He sought some shade as he waited for the car to cool down. On one side of the lot was a heap of oversized junk—everything

from an old refrigerator, stereo, and mattress to even an electric rice cooker. A full-length mirror also stood between the scraps. As though the mirror had been left out in the rain, the varnish was peeling off its frame like scabs. He went right up to the mirror and gazed at his reflection. He puffed out his cheeks, stroked his chin, and opened his mouth wide to check between his teeth. He then curled back his lips, exposed his teeth, and brayed silently like a donkey (Ha 170-71).

Seong-nan Ha's "Early Beans" opens with a scene of a young, cocky businessman on his way to work. He appears well-dressed but excessive and theatrical in his behavior, like a costumed actor in a Western movie. The narrator's choice in simile ("amateur cowboy") implies that this persona of a modern working man is a poorly concealed façade or show. The pieces of looming, decaying junk that surround the man evoke a post-apocalyptic frontier. Waiting for his car to cool, the man is drawn to admire himself in the mirror and behave foolishly—as though acknowledging on a subconscious level the pantomime of his businessman persona. The man goes on to experience a day full of chance collisions with strangers that seem to leave no lasting trace on any involved but that reveal the depths of the man's unexamined life.

The story begins and ends at the apartment complex, a place Chung has noted to be symbolic in ecocritical literature of both contemporary human life and rapid urban development. In this story, the apartment is surrounded by garbage which, by the end of the work, "seemed to have multiplied" (Ha 190). If the protagonist is a contemporary cowboy, the frontier he encounters is fraught with overcrowded streets, tricky schoolgirls on the train, and looming piles of festering garbage. Instead of the slick hero he dresses to be, the man becomes a fool at every turn, unable to get ahead of the game. Despite his best efforts, a collision with a delivery driver in heavy traffic becomes unavoidable. The protagonist delivers the package for the wounded

delivery driver, only to be distracted on the train by three schoolgirls purposefully teasing him

with glimpses of their upper legs. When he ends up bringing the package to the father of one of

the girls, she promises him a date but disguises herself in a public restroom and evades him. As

he returns in defeat to his apartment building, the man must "stop often because of the garbage

that [keeps] sticking to the bottom of his shoes" (Ha 190). The story's effect is one of

accumulating chaos. The businessman protagonist seems to be not only foolish but somewhat

shallow, easily diverted, and ill-equipped for a day that goes off the rails. Meanwhile, the

garbage around his living space accumulates, anonymous and unfathomable, a weight of

unexamined history and an emblem of an ultimately unsustainable and inefficient urban system.

John Scanlan finds the treatment of waste an important sign in Western modernity in

what it reveals about Christian beliefs at modernity's roots. Scanlan notes that Christianity

operates under a sense of future perfection, rejecting the present frailty of the body in preference

to the idea of shedding the body to become all mind after death in heaven—a state of perfection.

Modernity continues the tradition of this mind-body dualism, exacerbating the need for the

separation between self and the signs of waste or decay, which represent the absence or frailty of

life. Much as Kristeva describes waste as a sign of the abject, Scanlan notes that "[w]ith garbage

banished to the past and imagination and desire set on the future, of course garbage is overlooked

by history and in memory" (35). Thus, a literary focus on waste is considered banal or

transgressive—counterproductive to the goals of modern life. Kim's review on Korean positions

toward Western ecocriticism, described earlier in this chapter, notes that Korean scholars tend to

reject Western philosophies rooted in Christian beliefs—such as those of Wendell Berry, whose

ideas have little hold in Korea—in favor of thinkers who are already oriented toward or inspired

by East Asian philosophies. Similarly, Korean literary depictions of waste critique aspects of

modern life, such as the modern concept of linear progress toward a state of perfection, as it stems from Christian philosophy. This critique appears as not so much a total rejection of modernity but a refining process through exposing desires for relationships and communities to which urban development is often counterproductive.

In line with Kristeva's logic of the abject, Scanlan notes how waste takes on a spectral quality due to the denial of our connection to the embodied aspects of life. Scanlan finds that "garbage provides a shadow history of modern life where the conditions for its production and the means by which it is rendered invisible cast it as an unwelcome double of the person" (36). The opening scene in "Early Beans" depicts this kind of modern double when the man idly studies his reflection in a discarded mirror. The trash accumulating around his apartment building suggests the shadow history that he leaves behind in his identity as a modern businessman. At the end of the work when the protagonist, defeated, returns to his apartment, the garbage sticks to his shoes, threatening to overwhelm him in an even more persistent sign of the uncanny. Scanlan notes that garbage corresponds to "Freud's understand of the uncanny as the eerily familiar object, image or phantom that continually resists any of our attempts to disconnect from it—it is the remainder as unwelcome presence" (36). Thus, in "Early Beans," the persistence and tenacity of garbage gives the lie to the modern idea of life, which demands the elimination of waste and any undesired remnants of the past in pursuit of the future.

"Early Beans" also portrays the protagonist's struggle to realize a masculine identity, suggested by the discarded mirror he uses to examine his reflection at the beginning of the work. At the end of the story, he confronts his image in the mirror once more. Not only is his appearance bedraggled from his day's adventures, but "[s]omeone had hurled a rock at [the mirror] and cracks ran like a spider web from its center, causing his reflection to splinter into

pieces like a mosaic" (Ha 190). The imagery suggests how the protagonist's struggle to present a cohesive image has failed or has been exposed as a falsehood. Just as the garbage surrounding the man is a mysterious and random—and festering—assemblage—the instability of the man's identity and relationship, and his unexamined desires, have been exposed through the day's trials.

Advocating the study of waste in literature, Susan Morrison notes how "[l]iterature reflects the ways in which humans commonly perceive waste, yet can also offer complexly textured models for individual and communal behavior and relationships with the world around us" (3). The Korean texts I examine in this chapter focus more on relationships between humans than between humans and more-than-human world. This latter case has come to be more expected in literature dealing with ecocritical themes like cyclical development and urban waste since Western ecocriticism tends to perceive the issue in terms of the problematic split between the human and other parts of nature. Recent Korean literature, however, is much more focused on the loss of compassion for others and for the sense of one's own complex humanity, calling not so much on the reader's ethics or on a position of action but on our intuitive sense of ourselves as complicated beings imbricated in natural systems and cycles. In these texts, waste serves to demonstrate the meaning in what we leave behind. Morrison notes that "[t]hough waste has been understood differently in various places over time, certain aspects remain constant: waste is always material (first) and figurative and metaphoric (second)…Waste is literal *and* literary" (8). Thus, waste functions on multiple levels in texts to provoke our consideration of the physical traces we leave and what they say about us.

Morrison's analysis of garbage in the modern age sheds further insight on the link between garbage and identity in "Early Beans." Morrison finds that waste can mean "desolation,

pointlessness, and uselessness, but also excess and surplus" and that "both extremes have been viewed as problematic, void of meaning, and immoral" (8). Morrison's remark clarifies why literary texts critiquing modernity and/or urban environments might center garbage as a focal point. The linear, progress-oriented nature of modern life often necessitates a reliance on convenience and disposability that leads to excess waste. In "Early Beans," particularly large items of garbage —a refrigerator, stereo, mattress, and mirror—suggest an anonymous tenant who has left everything behind. In modern life, we assert our identities through what we buy. Thus, a description like this suggests how, as modern humans, the items to which we aspire are future garbage that we will leave as our legacy—many of which are impervious to the cycles of decay and renewal and which will continue to clutter the earth for centuries. Regarding urban environments in particular, Morrison notes that "[f]or the city to maintain its identity as a well-functioning organism, filth needs to be hidden" since it "undermines the authority of urban infrastructures" (75). Thus, the expanse of garbage at the beginning and end of the story may also be interpreted as transgressive, belying the city's façade of cleanliness and productivity by exposing the end products of urban life.

In "Flowers of Mold," another of Ha's short stories, the archival significance of garbage is explored more thoroughly. The story describes a man whose main activity outside of work is exploring bags of garbage from other people in his apartment building. By doing so, he amasses a wealth of information about the residents around him, a method he seems to prefer to direct communication because, in his view, "[g]arbage never lies" (Ha 144). While the protagonist's behavior may strike one as intrusive, his loneliness and empathy with other lonely people are communicated in his actions throughout the story. As with the protagonist of "Early Beans," the man is employed, unmarried, and troubled in love. He is also left unnamed, an "everyman." An

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emotional chain of events leads to his unconventional hobby: disappointed by his love interest's engagement to another co-worker, he spends a long night writing her unsent letters expressing his frustrated love. Later, an apartment council comes to his door to rebuke him for throwing out his trash without using garbage bags. The council members identify him by pieces of his trash. When the man confronts his own trash, he experiences both revulsion and the germ of an idea that he, too, can learn the intimate details of others by inspecting their garbage.

The contents of the man's garbage reveal the events of the evening clearly: several empty bottles of soju along with the noodles he prepared but never touched, as well as the discarded letters to his unrequited love. He realizes these remnants have probably revealed the evening clearly to the apartment council. Examining the bag, the man finds that

> [t]hough the garbage was his own, it seemed completely foreign to him. He discovered crumpled-up letters; they were already somewhat flattened out. It was clear the women had already gotten to them. When he pictured them passing around his letters, snickering among themselves, anger surged through him. Even his handwriting seemed alien (133).

The man's garbage has been rendered strange in his separation from it, familiar in the intimate details of his life it clearly reveals but, now putrefying, repulsive to him as well. Though never stated directly, it seems that the man never told the woman of his feelings and that, as a result, she merely viewed him as a friend. The man notices small details about what she likes about her fiancé—for instance, his eloquent way of speaking and cobalt-colored dress shirt. The man believes that if he had noticed these details before, he might have won her for himself by dressing and behaving the right way. Wounded by this disappointment, he seems to believe that astute observation will shield him, somehow, from future hurt.

This sequence of events reveals the possibilities garbage holds in the man's lonely life, a constructive approach that correlates with Hawkins' view of waste management as an essential part of the self. In a shocking moment, the man finds his private life revealed; his garbage has shared with strangers his private, painful evening reckoning with an unrequited love. Of this kind of moment, Hawkins comments that "[a]fter irritation, this experience can trigger strong feelings of exposure" in how "[a]ll this evidence of your intimate life is revealed as waste" (45). From this moment of humiliation, the man turns toward the voyeuristic possibilities of garbage. Hawkins that "[m]anaging [waste] is something you do in private, something that is naturalized as part of a prepublic individuality" (46). Able to reconstruct the details of his evening and reinterpret what each detail signified about his mental state from his own garbage, the man realizes that the analysis of the garbage of others will share their similarly private moments.

This scene is preceded with one of the man watching a woman and her child on a playground from his apartment window. Noticing the woman shelling kidney beans, he jots down notes to help him identify her trash when he sifts through garbage bags in future. He asks, sotto voce, "'[a]re you planning to cook rice with beans tonight?...Who could forget that taste? The creamy texture? You mind if I have some?'" (128). In the scene, his strange behavior, indicated estrangement from others, communicates his loneliness as well as his intrusiveness. As with the other Korean stories examined, apartment living is associated with simultaneous intimacy and sustained loneliness. The modern apartment compartmentalizes the Korean literary subject in a way that preexisting customs struggle to breach. The same polite reserve that preserves the peace in close quarters also prohibits the development of well-balanced social relations. The struggles of the Korean literary subject are like those of the modern subject: loneliness and the externalization of one's inner mythology. Yoshitaka Inoue finds that "[m]any

modern individuals suffer from deep isolation and internal conflicts, and, as a result, they carry an enormous burden. One person has difficulty connecting to others, and another may have difficulty letting go" (88). Details concerning the communal housing in "Prayer" express similar issues, such as the sequence of impersonal and hostile notes pinned to the community bulletin board and the implied fear of In-yeong's sister that a peeping tom could peer at her through the holes in her wall. Both stories demonstrate how the compartmentalization of modern life taxes human relations with paranoia and obsession.

In "Flowers of Mold," garbage is layered with various kinds of significance: for the man, it provides a window into the lives of others and a tangible form of truth; for the reader, it represents our personal histories and the forces of decomposition at work in cycles of growth and decay. The man approaches garbage with the seriousness of a forensic scientist. His bathroom, which he scrupulously cleans after each investigation, is dedicated to his project. In one study, "[s]trands of hair are tangled up in dust and cigarette butts…The hair is easily over twenty centimeters long. He pulls the strands taut and examines them under the light. He picks up a cigarette butt burned right down to the filter, and peers at the teeth marks on the end of the filter" (Ha 134). These objects, once part of, or in close contact with, a stranger's body, receive the man's astute attention. However, unlike a forensic investigation, the man does not seek a response to a particular research question. If he approaches any mystery at all, it is the mystery of another person who is ultimately unknowable. On the one hand, the man's actions might be seen as a part of an obsessive-compulsive disorder. On the other, his attentiveness to the details of other's lives and bodies have a certain tenderness that contrasts with the callous disinterest in other people normally associated with urban living.

Beyond this meticulous interest in the lives of others, garbage takes on other shades of meaning for the reader, leading us to consider the traces that we leave behind on the earth and the degree to which they resemble who we really are. As we see the man's motivations behind his actions—his loneliness and desire to truly understand another person—garbage exposes how no real connection to others can come through a society bound up in materialistic desire and consumption. While the cigarette butt the man holds bears traces of a person's teeth, it can reveal nothing about the person's inner life: their desires or motivations. The man is guided by a faulty belief that he could have altered his behavior to capture the interest of the woman he loves, had he understood her desires in time, but the obvious truth the man seeks to avoid is that one's love for another cannot be boiled down to the color of a dress shirt or a way of speaking. On a similar line of thinking, Morrison remarks that "[h]istory is nothing more than the examination of the garbage of human presence" (55). We construct history from archival remnants, materials that may or may not have intended for such a use. However, a history is only one of many possible narratives about the past; history is constantly being rewritten. "Flowers of Mold" exposes the traces we leave behind of our transient desires but also the limitations of the stories we can make about those traces.

Heart in the Countryside

City folk, including me and my family, pride ourselves on our stylish, luxurious bathrooms, regarding them as a sign of progress and civilization, but the city is like its people: what goes in must come out; we excrete as much as we ingest. Then why do we simply not see, or care about, the people who do the job of cleaning up our waste? They're as essential to our lives as breathing, and we don't forget to breathe, do we? I'm constantly telling people we ought to be more grateful, yet what usually moves us are

heroic acts of altruism and self-sacrifice. How have we managed to completely forget about the sun in the sky and clean water in the earth? (Jia 462).

In the author's note included after his novel *Happy Dreams*, subtitled "Happy and Me," Pingwa Jia shares some of the ideas and encounters that inspired the work. The work's protagonist, Happy Liu, is, according to this note, heavily inspired by an acquaintance of the same name who, having grown up in the same rural hometown as Jia, attempts to make a living in the city as a trash-picker, an individual who subsists on sorting and recycling various sorts of garbage. Jia's reacquaintance with Happy leads to an interest in the lives of trash-pickers, which he hopes to turn into the novel. In the passage above, Jia suggests his own orientation to the novel. Despite his rural background, Jia identifies and is identified as "city folk" (462). Much of the research that goes into the work comes from Jia's face-to-face encounters as a well-known writer with trash-pickers in Xi'an. Some are skeptical and cagy, while others offer him a meal or even a gift. At one point, Jia uses his fame to swing a favor for an illiterate trash-picker who unknowingly parked his cart illegally. It seems to be hard for Jia to resolve the heavy line of demarcation between himself and others from his background. Jia notes that if not for his college ranking, he might "be a farmer now, and a middle-aged trash picker too," further grieved "to think of the poverty, low status, loneliness, and discrimination they experienced, having left the land to come to the city" (473). While *Happy Dreams* centers around Happy Liu, a character drawn from Jia's old acquaintance, it's clear from the author's note that the protagonist is his alter ego. Despite the deplorable living and working conditions of trash-pickers, it is not so much Happy's plight that pivots the novel, but his indomitability and unwavering conviction of his own worthiness. Happy never loses his delight in life's beauty and mysteries, despite the bleakness of the concrete jungle of Xi'an.

Jia's *Happy Dreams* has been called "a modern epic about a countryman's journey into the city" (Zhou 641). From an ecocritical perspective, the novel is rife with insight on the lives of trash-pickers, urban development, and modern practices that quash rural identities and traditions. Happy Liu migrates from his rural hometown of Freshwind with his friend, Wufu, to seek income in rapidly developing Xi'an. It is not so much that trash-picking business is very profitable but that small farmers are now doing so poorly. Happy remarks that they "[t]he yield from a small field earned you only eighteen yuan, and you could earn seventeen or eighteen yuan in a day here" (Jia 45-46). Happy refuses to see himself as on the fringes of society, despite the social discrimination trash-pickers experience from urban dwellers. Instead, he takes on a modern viewpoint as being upwardly mobile, believing that if dresses and acts the part, others will recognize him as a cut above the station of trash-picker.

Ultimately, however, Happy is unable to move upward in Xi'an society. When the woman he loves is arrested and sent to a rehabilitation center, to be released for a large sum of money, and her wealthy patron disregards her plight, Happy and his loyal friend Wufu get temporary work as day laborers to earn money more quickly for her release. The difficult work, however, kills Wufu. Determined to honor Wufu's wish to be buried in his hometown, in accordance with their rural tradition, Happy attempts to smuggle his body back, since city law demands that Wufu's body be cremated. Happy's efforts are unsuccessful, and Wufu's body is confiscated by the police for cremation. In the end, Happy is determined to remain in the city, not because he likes the life or harbors hope for the future, but because he believes Wufu's unquiet spirit remains in the city. This epic of a rural man's adventures in city living ultimately reveals the urban environment as hostile and exploitative toward outsiders. Happy's optimistic principles and loyalty don't get him far in a society rife with corruption. However, the spiritual

reward of belonging to such a society seems doubtful. Happy's devotion to his deep-rooted principles despite his surroundings and circumstances seems the greater achievement.

The novel's focus on the lives of trash-pickers sheds light on a large but little-known class of workers in China that serves as a microcosm for conditions mirrored in all modern societies. The unbreachable barrier between trash-pickers and other city-dwellers is symptomatic of a larger modern problem of "othering" vulnerable classes. Morrison reads this problem on a more ideological level, observing that the taint of garbage, repressed in the urban consciousness, infects those charged with its management and removal. Morrison finds that since garbage is ideologically threatening, it must be contained, and thus "anyone who touches the waste becomes, in turn, contaminated as refuse, to be thrown out socially, geographically, and morally" (99). The mingling of trash-pickers and other city-dwellers is portrayed in *Happy Dreams* as quite unthinkable on the part of Xi'an residents. Happy's shoes are not allowed to cross the thresholds of homes, even though his shoes are dirtied with their trash.

There are also practical concerns that *Happy Dreams* highlights in how trash-picking and waste scavenging have resulted in large populations of people in Asia who live on the margins of cities, necessary to urban life but in permanent precarity. Dickella Premakumara and Toshizo Maeda find that waste scavengers make little money and can barely afford food; scavengers are also likely to catch diseases doing this kind of work. Yeqin Zhao notes the rise of shanty towns in Shanghai along with the increase in migrant workers, attesting to the ways that migrants are excluded from citizenship. Zhao observes that "[t]he occupations and businesses to which [migrants] have access are strictly limited, resulting in the formation of a social group of blue-collar migrants and the intensification of contradictions between the elite and lower classes" (95). This kind of class demarcation is a familiar story in urbanizing societies worldwide.

Progress depends on the exploitation of an underprotected class. It is no wonder, then, that instead of trying to resolve the discrepancies between Happy and his surroundings, *Happy Dreams* turns inward, abandoning the quest of upward mobility in favor of spiritual integrity.

Min Zhou's analysis of the novel considers how the trash-pickers are "othered" as abject in the novel alongside the trash they collect. Zhou finds that Happy's desire to take on an urban identity to overcome "the dichotomy of the city and the country as well as what that dichotomy represents, for example, identity, culture, class" is ultimately unsuccessful, in how he finds "himself a marginalized being making a living in the city as a trash-picker" (641). Zhou reads Happy's behavior and attitude as a persistent resistance against the city's efforts to expel him as outcast. For instance, the footprints Happy leaves in a hotel lobby "are the symbol of Happy's way of existence in the city, which is there, but is to be wiped off" (643). Zhou finds that "[w]hat is really important for him is that he now has his footprint on the floor of the city" (643). Zhou further notes that Happy feels a physical connection to the city due to donating his kidney to an unknown resident of Xi'an. His donation of the kidney is particularly significant since "[a]s an essential organ, the kidney, according to traditional Chinese medicine, is closely related to one's energy, spirit and mind, and is therefore an important source for one's vitality" (Zhou 646). This detail could be read in multiple ways. For instance, Zhou finds that "Happy does not feel the loss of a kidney to be the tragedy in his life, instead he is proud, as if the new owner of the kidney has now become a part of his own identity, his alter ego or other self" (646). On the other hand, ultimately, Happy gives a vital part of himself to a world that gives nothing back, nor accepts him in the new identity he visualizes for himself.

As Zhou points out, Happy remains an outsider in the urban environment, a status Zhou reads alongside the theory of Walter Benjamin, who considers the position of trash-pickers in the

scheme of modernity. Zhou points out Benjamin's observation that "[t]here exists no essential

difference between the rag-picker and the bohème," in how both "occupy no place in the grand

narrative of urbanization" (648). Rather, Happy's occupation is a necessary evil to the city,

preserving its appearance of cleanliness and productivity. Recognizing the legitimacy of his

occupation means also recognizing the vast quantities of inorganic waste that urban living

produces. Waste produced in rural areas is often more easily recycled or composted,

reincorporated into a living cycle. The useless waste of the city reveals its unsustainability. Zhou

notes that this kind of waste "mirrors and upsets the mainstream urban culture and contains

embarrassing elements that mock and disturb the urbanization process in China: behind the clean

and elegant city space there exist spaces like the building called 'leftover house' where Happy

and his friends reside, where there is not even a proper kitchen or toilet" (649). Happy may be

attempting to resolve the stark polarization between his position and that of city-dwellers by

injecting his presence and optimistic into the city but his efforts are unsuccessful, revealing a

bigger picture in which the city itself is the blight, rather than its trash, or individuals like Happy,

who labor to clean it up.

  Happy Dreams seeks to expose the humanity of trash-pickers, like how Morrison views

the literature of waste as ethical criticism. Morrison finds that Emmanuel Levinas' perspective

on a text's openness to the "Other" "can alter how we read literature, not to create a closed

system of analysis, but as a way of seeing the utterance of literature as an ethical event" (9-10).

Both the framing of the subject in the text itself and the remarks in Jia's author's note suggest

that Jia intends to highlight the humanity of trash-pickers against the prejudiced viewpoints of

city-dwellers. As Premakumara and Maeda and Zhao have noted, the lives of migrant workers

are precarious, and the demand for such labor increases alongside continued urban development.

As previously described, in the Asian gothic, incidences of strangeness indicate a loss of integrity that requires correction to bring the living and nonliving worlds into balance. In *Happy Dreams*, the way both waste and trash-pickers are rendered strange indicates not only an imbalance in human consumption, resulting in the proliferation of material waste, but the unjust estrangement of migrant workers who deal with waste.

Both *Happy Dreams* and the Korean literary texts examined in this chapter present the proliferation of waste in urban settings in a "disenchantment narrative" of the modern city rendered dystopian by its own excesses, as described by Hawkins. Characters in the works express varying degrees of disgust toward waste; waste is understood as a looming and unavoidable byproduct of the modern consumerist lifestyle. This critique is peripheral, however, and as Hawkins notes, overall unproductive in its limited scope. Alongside this narrative, however, each text engages with the notion of waste constructively: waste reflects one's self-image, a database of highly personal information, or, in the case of *Happy Dreams*, a career by which to attain a higher status in society. Overall, waste is rendered in more constructive contexts in *Happy Dreams* than in the Korean literary texts examined. In *Happy Dreams*, while the city dwellers perceive waste and trash-pickers as abject, Happy sees waste as valuable objects to trade for cash and himself as an upwardly mobile individual. The fact that trash-picking earns more profit now than farming glorifies the profession in Happy's eyes.

Another distinction between *Happy Dreams* and the Korean literary texts examined here is in the portrayal of governing bodies. The question of government surfaces in "Prayer" as In-yeong encounters the bus station, Sillim-dong, the name of which suggests much greener surroundings than reality, and a shabbily dressed government representative. "Prayer" suggests a slowly decaying infrastructure alongside individual withdrawal and paranoia. Similarly, the

accumulating garbage in "Early Beans" provokes questions about the infrastructure's health and fitness. "Flowers of Mold" conveys a slightly more authoritarian tone when the waste management committee identifies and tracks the man by his garbage, then threatens him with fines for improper disposal. However, none of these works problematize bureaucratic corruption and authoritarianism to the same degree as *Happy Dreams*. In *Happy Dreams*, the governing body is robust rather than decaying, much more intentional in its exploitation of outsiders like Happy, and impervious to local traditions, refusing to relinquish Wufu's body to be buried in his native countryside.

Pingwa Jia has been associated with the "roots-seeking" literary movement in late twentieth-century Chinese literature. Roots-seeking writers express a nostalgic turn toward the stronger and more independent rural cultures that persisted in pre-modern China. The movement valorizes both a return to nature and a return to local and ethnic traditions. Roots-seeking writers purportedly shun Chinese politics entirely, refuting official discourse of a unified Chinese identity, which ignores or excludes ethnic minorities. Roots-seeking literature is not dedicated to indigenous traditions, though magnifying these is part of its aim. The literature also investigates contemporary human relations with nature and a nostalgic yearning for an agrarian life. The "roots," then, are both figurative, in terms of ethnic or ancestral roots, and literal, in terms of reconnection with the more-than-human world.

Mark Leenhouts notes that roots-seeking writers blame the Communist Revolution for separating the Chinese people from their cultural traditions and from nature. Leenhouts states that roots-seeking writers "oppose the May Fourth movement not only for its radical break with tradition in favor of the appropriation of Western literary techniques but also for its tendency to use literature for moral and sociopolitical engagement, to the detriment of art" (300). The May

Fourth movement was dedicated to developing a new kind of literature more accessible to all classes, rather than reserving literature as a province of the scholarly elite. In looking for alternatives to imperial Chinese society, May Fourth writers turned to the West for inspiration. The Communist Revolution transformed egalitarian literature into political propaganda and, by way of the Cultural Revolution, ensured the widespread acceptance of a single political viewpoint. Roots-seeking writers are not only conscious of the effects of the Communist Revolution on culture but also the Western ideologies that led to its inception. Leenhouts notes that "[r]oots writers and theorists saw the remote rural and minority areas, as preserves of cultures somehow untouched by the homogenizing influence of modernization, Westernization, and even the Chinese revolution, on the one hand, and of the Confucian or dominant Han Chinese culture, on the other" (300). Thus, at its heart, roots-seeking literature is seeking to amplify diverse perspectives, while rejecting official narratives that aim to homogenize culture. This literary movement has much in common with the kind of thinking Rob Nixon advocates to counter the notion of slow violence in modern society.

As I mentioned earlier, Nixon notes how official discourse tends to stamp out localized vocabularies and knowledge about landforms. Nixon perceives these two kinds of discourse emerging from separate aims; the former aims to extract resources from the land, resulting in its depersonalization, while the latter aims to incorporate knowledge of the environment in community narratives (17). In this latter case, land takes on cultural as well as practical meanings, contributing to a community's identity. Leenhouts finds that in addition to qualities of regional cultures, "[n]ature is another important element in roots-seeking literature" and that its writers "reveal a certain nostalgic longing for the authentic, natural life embodied in their rural characters and from which they feel alienated" (303). Thus, roots-seeking writers tend to look

backward to pre-modern life in a desire to recover or reappropriate former lifeways. For instance, the trash-picking profession portrayed in *Happy Dreams* tends to evoke the centuries-old industry of human waste collection in East Asia.

The "night soil," or human excrement, industry came under scrutiny, particularly from the West, as East Asia began to modernize. While people in Japan, Korea, and China participated in the trade of night soil to transform urban accumulation of human waste into precious fertilizer for crops, China seems to have been particularly criticized for persisting in the practice into the twentieth century, by Japanese as well as Western observers (De Decker; Yu 51). Apart from outsiders' perceptions of the practice, Yu notes, "[t]o the Chinese population…excrement was less a public health matter than an integral element of agricultural production and a precious commodity, as it was widely used as fertilizer" (51). Thus, traditionally, accumulated waste, much in demand by farmers, would move from urban to rural zones.

Happy Dreams suggests how this interdependency between urban and rural zones has been warped or compromised. Not only is the farming industry drying up in the work, provoking distantly looming (and unaddressed) questions in the work about how populations will be fed and spurring farmers like Happy and Wufu to the city to make a living, health and sanitation codes have become so strict that after Wufu's death, his body must be cremated by law, making it impossible to bury him in his hometown. This detail suggests how contemporary Chinese law blocks traditional practices that otherwise allow for closer connection and easier flow between urban and rural zones as well as allowing the deceased human body to be absorbed by other parts of nature. While a portion of urban garbage can still be repurposed as fertilizer, garbage disposal is not as profitable a venture as night soil collection once was (Yu 56). Furthermore, much of modern trash cannot be recycled at all and can only be shuffled to a landfill; conversations about

trash tend to open contemporary consumer-based economies to criticism in terms of their practicality and sustainability.

Once Happy and Wufu earn their first money picking trash in Xi'an, they spend their earnings on food, which is prepared and consumed with relish. Mealtimes are spotlighted throughout the work, including descriptions of what they eat, their ease of digestion (or not), often followed by raunchy talk of their experiences in the bathroom. Happy draws frequent comparisons between food customs at home and those in Xi'an, noting that

> In Freshwind, you always knew when it was dinnertime: smoke puffed from every chimney and billowed down the village streets. You could hear shouting and arguing and lots of colorful swearing from every household, and chickens clucked and dogs barked. In the city, you knew the time only from a wristwatch. But Wufu and I didn't have wristwatches…so you might go a whole day feeling that the sun's rays hadn't moved, that nothing had moved… (37).

Happy's comparison between Freshwind and Xi'an emphasizes Freshwind's vibrancy and activity against Xi'an's stillness. The accuracy of a wristwatch for telling time seems paltry against the lived dimensions of Freshwind life that contribute to a sense of community. Happy sources vegetables from the market with relish, sharing the produce with Wufu despite their prior agreement to split costs and Wufu's protests. Making money is clearly not what Happy is after; it's the city's acceptance of him as a legitimate part of itself, an expectation of the same kind of community that he, perhaps, has come to hold toward a rural environment. Happy meets with resistance at every turn, owing to his identity as a trash-picker. Yet to Happy, handling waste or garbage is not a source of shame or taint to his identity but an indication of his status as contributor.

Clearly, Happy is moving swiftly toward disappointment throughout the novel—or could it be something else? What meaning might be taken from the city's ultimate rejection of Happy's humanity? At the end of the work, Happy is charged with returning the body of his deceased friend, Wufu, for burial, in accordance with the traditions of their hometown. To do this, he must evade any police detection of Wufu's death by pretending Wufu is ill or intoxicated throughout the journey. Otherwise, Wufu's body will be cremated in accordance with municipal law. Zhou notes the historical significance of this act, finding that when Happy "carries Wufu's body back home, he is not just making a trip from the city back to the countryside, he is making a journey back in time, becoming a 'corpse-walker,' someone who literally carries the dead back home, which had been a custom and even a profession for some peasants back in pre-modern China" (649). Ultimately, Happy's efforts are unsuccessful, and Wufu's body is appropriated by the police for cremation.

This situation, among others, portrays both nostalgia for a traditional past and cynicism toward its adaptability to the modern present. Assessing Jia against the backdrop of the larger roots-seeking movement, Nick Stember comments that "[i]n many of Jia's works, one gets the sense that no traditional culture remains to be found, that any that does remain has been so devalued it is not worth finding" (27). Confronted with these systemic failures toward humanity, Happy's perceptions take a spiritual turn at the conclusion of the work. Happy understands Wufu's spirit as persisting in the urban environment in which he died, "forever an unquiet ghost, hovering above the city streets" (Jia 453). This sentiment is mirrored earlier at the very beginning of the work, which briefly describes this turn of events before skipping back to the start of Happy and Wufu's life in the city. Here, Happy observes that "[t]hough Wufu's body had been taken to the funeral parlor, [he] felt his spirit must still be around here in the square, maybe

perched on the traffic lights or sitting on the piles of roast chicken, hard-boiled duck eggs, bread, and bottles of mineral water on the street vendor's cart" (Jia 4). Happy's sentiment toward Wufu suggests his desire to continue with life—a bit wiser, grieved, but not defeated. After all, Happy intends to continue trash-picking to earn money for the release of his love interest from the rehabilitation center. Of Jia's work generally, Stember comments that

> …[O]ne feels that Jia is not so much fetishizing violence and rural poverty as he is facilitating the gradual release from suffering that comes from achieving a higher plane—a neo-Buddhist meditation on the guts and gore and bones of late-stage capitalism in modern-day China. Steeped in the classical and historical Chinese tradition, the worldview that Jia presents in his work is a never-ending cycle of growth and decay, consolidation and diffusion. (28)

This moment in the work reflects on Stember's observations in describing how Wufu, a rural migrant worker never accepted into Xi'an society, becomes part of the city's spiritual landscape and in how Happy's determination to persist in the city constitutes a spiritual conclusion, in the absence of a traditional respect paid to the dead. Happy's sense of their importance as spiritual as well as material beings is reflected earlier in the work in one of his many confrontations with Xi'an citizens who discriminate against him due to his status. In the scene, Happy muses to himself, "Who was I? Well, I wasn't just any old trash picker, I reminded myself, certainly not! That woman clearly had no insight. All she saw when she looked at me was a bit of junk to be gotten rid of. But I was a pearl!" (Jia 95). On the one hand, Happy may come across as a bit puffed-up in how he aspires to distinguish himself. Initially, Happy believes that wearing the right clothing and affecting the right mannerisms will convince others of his legitimate belonging in society. On the other hand, Happy's insistence on his importance—however imperceptible it

may be to others—seems to emanate from an understanding of a spiritual as well as material element to his nature.

Modern philosophy, as it stems from Western Enlightenment ideology, is overtly atheist in nature, even as it develops from a Christian futurist notion of progress toward an idealized state, as noted by Scanlan. Literary criticism itself is so deeply entrenched in modern philosophy that it can be difficult to discuss subjective perceptions of spiritual topics without a plethora of distancing qualifiers and careful language to indicate the objectivity of the critic. The legitimation of spiritual beliefs, especially non-Christian beliefs, in so-called literary fiction is transgressive to modern thinking. The god of modern progress and future perfection, a jealous god, like its Christian predecessor, that does not permit space for any other, is deprioritized in such a mode. Invoking the spiritual to heal the damage wrought by modern bureaucracies is like the spiritual encounters that must right wrongdoings in the Asian gothic mode. Strangeness exposes what is out of integrity, necessitating acts of justice on the part of the living to restore peace to the nonliving.

Earlier in the chapter, I summarized the differences noted between East Asian and Eurocentric ecocritical thought—namely, that the former prioritizes reflection and a more holistic consideration of how the human is a part of a greater notion of "Life." Both Korean ecocritical texts and Jia's *Happy Dreams* communicate the need to strengthen the modern individual's relationship with other humans, the more-than-human world, and a spiritual source to check the destructive tendencies of urban development through moments of strangeness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed Korean and Chinese literary texts from an ecocritical angle, observing how portrayals of nature, decay, and garbage relate to contemporary human relations. These texts present the various environmental problems of East Asian modernity

concealed by official discourse in the context of East Asian ecocritical dialogues. These dialogues are inclusive of some Western ideologies, especially those drawing from East Asian philosophy, but disregard others, particularly those that stem from a Christian framework. Thus, I have highlighted how East Asian ecocritical texts describe and critique modern societies and strive toward perspectives and solutions that counter Western philosophies. Often, this ideological journey seems to involve nostalgia or reflection toward or reckoning with a pre-modern past, a desire to recover ideas and lifeways that were abruptly overthrown in the early twentieth century when Korea and China began to modernize.

Rob Nixon's notion of slow violence works productively with the Asian literary texts examined in this chapter due to its emphasis on reflection and critique of strictly linear notions of time, ideas similarly explored in Korean ecocritical philosophy. Nixon works with an awareness of the limitation of modern perceptions, especially in how we are conditioned to notice problems on catastrophic levels, ignoring the slow creep of everyday life toward disaster. Literary texts like Kim's "Prayer", Hwang's "Raptors Upstream," and Ha's "Early Beans" and "Flowers of Mold" examine how the dimensions of everyday life serve as microcosms for larger disorders in modern society, exposing these problems through strange encounters. Earlier in the chapter, I described Ch'oe Yun's assessment of late twentieth-century Korean women's fiction as open in narrative structure, lacking in conclusion, and focused on the details of the everyday. While these earlier works were more concerned with the social dimensions of women's lives, this observation also holds true for the Korean women writers examined in this chapter. My analysis demonstrates that this tendency has persisted into twenty-first century fiction, giving Korean women writers a means to describe the slow violence that threatens Korean society in a style that has evolved organically from earlier observations on women's lives.

One common symptom emerging in the literary texts examined is that of the modern individual's isolation, often expressed in the texts through the compartmentalizing nature of urban apartments. Apartment life signifies the paradox of intimacy with strangers. The nature of living in too-close quarters in the modern world can mean taking pains to secure one's privacy and losing empathy for anonymous neighbors. The texts highlight the loss of community and the breakdown of direct communication. Korean short stories express the obsessions and paranoia that develop in the absence of direct communication in a modern, depersonalized world. Aspects of ordinary life are rendered strange due to a greater estrangement from others and from the natural world. Jia's *Happy Dreams* concludes with a turn to the spiritual. Faced with grief and disappointment, the protagonist looks beyond urban material trappings to take sustenance from the spiritual dimensions of his surroundings.

One recurring topic in these texts has been that of waste or garbage. Waste is an important indication of the repressed in literary texts. In the texts examined in this chapter, waste also signifies unsustainability as well as our mortal leavings and transience. Waste has the potential to pose urban life as a cycle of growth, death, and renewal (or lack thereof), a viewpoint that clashes with a modern view of linear progress and that reaffirms an ecological understanding of life. Waste, coded as strange, exposes processes of estrangement, both through residents' encounters with waste as a desperate connection to others, as in "Flowers of Mold," through symbolic suggestion, as in "Raptors Upstream" and "Early Beans," and through urban waste management schemes, which in East Asian literary texts, exposes a new labor class vulnerable to discrimination. *Happy Dreams* expresses an overall critique of modernity: that of segregating and disenfranchising one class of people to the benefit of others. All works examined show how, under conditions of modernity, the human is simplified as a body without a spirit.

I have argued that *Happy Dreams* continues the roots-seeking literary tradition, one that seeks to amplify multiple lifeways, while rejecting official narratives that aim to homogenize culture. *Happy Dreams* comes from a different literary perspective than the Korean texts examined in terms of evoking the roots-seeking Chinese literary movement, of which Korean literature has no clear analogue. However, both the Chinese and Korean literary texts examined suggest the need to develop connections between humans and humans and the more-than-human world, and to develop or recover spiritual understandings of the universe that bypass a modern perspective. In these works, instances of strangeness reveal breaches in integrity due to acting with the dominant modern ideology. *Happy Dreams* goes a step farther than the Korean literary works examined in invoking the spiritual to bring marginalized worlds and ideologies back into balance.

Chapter Four: Strangeness in the City in 21ˢᵗ-Century Korean Literature

In this chapter, I analyze the portrayal of the city in Korean literature written in the 21ˢᵗ century with attention to moments of strangeness that complicate dominant narratives of Korean urban spaces. Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is the city examined in most of these texts. Seoul has, in recent decades, acquired a global reputation as a high-tech hub of culture and prosperity, at least in part owed to the government-backed marketing of highly image-conscious Korean popular culture. South Korea's decades of industrialization under a military authoritarian regime in the latter half of the twentieth century have been succeeded by policies oriented toward capitalism and globalization. The Korean Wave, a global surge of popularity in Korean popular culture, assisted in its latter years by the promotional efforts of the South Korean government, has penetrated Western markets, causing a stir of scholarship in fields ranging from economics to the humanities.

Images of Korea, and Koreans, mediated through glamorous Korean popular music (K-pop) videos, movies and television shows present flawless impressions to the youth of the rest of the world. South Korea's reputation for producing physical beauty has made the country a major global destination for cosmetic surgical procedures. In the present COVID-troubled era, South Korea has triumphed over other world powers in its control of the virus, eliciting further attention from other developed nations. Uri Friedman notes that in addition to achieving one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, "South Korea has also amassed soft power and diplomatic influence by providing pandemic-related assistance to other countries and establishing itself as a widely perceived model for how democracies should contend with COVID-19." To the West, particularly the United States, it may look like South Korea has taken modern ideologies to their heights. The image that South Korea broadcasts to the rest of the world is one of prosperity, beauty, discipline, and, more recently, generosity.

A close examination of South Korea's modernity reveals that it has very little in common with Western modernity, despite some similarities on the surface. According to Hye-Kyung Lee, while South Korea has a democratic government, the country's policies have maintained a singular consistency since Korea's colonial period. Lee argues that to understand South Korea's governmental policies, one must acknowledge the complicated interactions in Korea between entities typically viewed as oppositional forces, like governance and market, or governance and civilian life (4). The standard discourse regarding "postcolonial" nations, especially nations colonized by the West, does not align with South Korea's approach to issues like globalization and cultural preservation. For instance, citing Néstor Garcia Canclini, Lee notes that a Latin American view on postcolonial governance is a clear separation between state and culture to prevent state actions that stifle creative expression, such as censorship or other modes of

authoritarian interference (8). Conversely, Lee finds, South Korea takes an active interest in globalization, viewing it as "a 'national(ist) project' centred on increasing the nation's cultural export and brand power" (9). To take one example of Korean popular culture clearly mediated by hands-on cultural policy, K-pop exhibits performer style and music that bear little traces of a local South Korean music scene, instead optimized to be relatable to a global and, more recently, mainly Western, audience.

This recent optimization of K-pop for the West is demonstrated in how Korean music groups have recently teamed up with Western artists for collaborative projects: for instance, the 2020 release of "Ice Cream" by Korean group Blackpink and American singer Selena Gomez, and the 2021 release of "My Universe" by Korean group BTS and British band Coldplay. Contemporary South Korean cultural productions optimize to generate profit and soft power for South Korea. K-pop icons present images that often appear devoid of race or ethnicity in a manner like the Western idea of the "default" white body. K-pop performers typically have pale skin and a range of hair colors from dyed pastels to blonde. While questions of whether K-pop emulates Western ideas of beauty are beyond the scope of this chapter, my point is that Korean popular culture does not express any substantial interest in diversifying the kinds of identities popular in global media but instead to build on and amplify what is already deemed preferable. South Korea's Korean Wave efforts are a highly nationalist project but, embracing globalization wholeheartedly, result in very different products than those of other postcolonial nationalisms. For instance, Canclini's view on postcolonial governance might promote citizen creativity independently of nationalist interests as well as abolish censorship or other means by which government controls citizen expressions. South Korea's postcoloniality is characterized by an

authoritarian government actively mediating popular creative expressions within the nation by shaping those expressions toward a global audience.

Communist ideologies have shaped Korean literature throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, preceding the escalation of globalization. Following the colonial era, Korean literature has sought to closely reflect social conditions, particularly those of the working class, in a social realist style. Yongmin Kwon notes that Korean literary works after Korea's liberation from colonization focus on realism while "problematizing the notion of understanding reality" (468). According to critics, a realist style persisted throughout the twentieth century. However, literature turned to new areas of concern and became increasingly concerned with the welfare of the *minjung*, a word with communist connotations denoting working-class people. Susan Hwang finds that this development, emerging in the 1970s, was associated with a larger "*minjok munhak non* (discourse of national literature)" and focused on closing "the gap between literature and the people" (309). From this point on, literature "was heavily invested in bringing the working class to the forefront—both as the speaking subject and as the subject of literary representation" (308). Ch'oe Yun, analyzing women's writings in the 1990s, noted that women's fiction deviated from "the demands of social participation" and "the grave debt of critical consciousness" that characterized earlier literary texts responding to South Korea's succession of military regimes (494). Yun refers to this emerging form as "authentic literature" (496). According to Yun, this freer style was characterized by "lightness, the meaninglessness of reality, or an abandonment to the senses" (496). From this point, the works show less concern with social responsibility and project a greater indifference toward *minjung*.

The literary works analyzed in this chapter express a similar kind of detachment from social responsibility, instead problematizing the conditions of daily life through moments of

strangeness. These strange incidents disrupt expectations toward harmonious living and expose a fragmenting society. The works externalize inner turmoil with behaviors that suggest troubled feelings that must remain unspoken. Like social realist literature, these texts focus on the struggles of working-class individuals. The works focus less on issues of poverty or joblessness, topics of interest in twentieth century social realism, and more on the loss of human connections and empathy, as well as the effects of monotonous living and working conditions and lack of privacy in population-dense environments. I read these texts against recent scholarly literature on living and working environments in Seoul, focusing on issues described in terms of their modernizing surroundings including social trust, communal values, individualism, and nationalist perceptions of homogeneity.

Statistics reveal everyday life in South Korea to be dark for many: the nation has had the highest suicide rate in the world among developed nations for the past two decades (Park). Katrin Park notes that due to immense economic disparities, younger people "call the country 'Hell Joseon,' likening it to an infernal kingdom one can only escape through death or emigration." Park finds steep academic competition, difficulty securing jobs, even with a college degree, and stigma regarding mental health care to be likely causes for suicide rates among young people. One question I seek to address is: how do these living and working conditions and the feelings of hopelessness they elicit find expression in Korean literature? To address this question, I analyze portrayals of the city in Korean literary and popular works. The city is a visible expression of how people come together to live and work. Certain recurring elements of city life, like apartment living or waste management schemes, as explored in the previous chapter, have much to reveal about how individuals socialize, cooperate, and deal with the problems generated by population density.

Nihal Perera and Wing-Shing Tang advocate the study of Asian cities in counter to dominant urbanisms informed solely by Western cities and Western perspectives. The authors argue that Asia "creatively combines local, Western, and global understandings and experience," while also "grounded in local cultures, processes, practices, and physical spaces, causing Asia's own globalization" (Perera et al. 3). According to Perera and Tang, the imaginative power of Asian cities has been underrepresented due to the prevailing colonialist ideology of metropole and colony, the former as developed, the latter undeveloped (2, 4). The authors argue for a study of Asian cities from a perspective grounded in Asian transnational histories and ideologies, finding that "conventional separation of states and regions individually locates them within West-centric dependent structures" (Perera et al. 9). In considering the importance of this perspective, the authors point to the deliberate reshaping of socialist ideologies toward Chinese society in twentieth-century urbanization projects in Beijing, yielding the phrase "socialist urban planning with Chinese characteristics'" (Perera et al. 11). Perera and Tang advocate the perspectives of translocalities and trans-temporalities to analyze Asian cities, perspectives that acknowledge transnational flows in the production of locality as well as how personal and collective views of past, present, and future give shape to a city (19). Literary portrayals of Seoul are shaped by visions of history, distant and recent, capitalism, leftist activism, bureaucracies, population explosions, and contemporary social culture. These portrayals demonstrate that multiple nations, cultures, and histories contribute to the idea of Seoul.

Jini Kim Watson reads a literary portrayal of Seoul in terms of the "New Asian City" (NAC)—a term that describes Asian cities that have undergone rapid development in a short period. Watson notes that such cities are often postcolonial in nature and duplicate the colonial regime with the installation of a military government, reproducing the colonial scheme of

producer and consumer within the same country (212-13). Such is the case for Seoul which, following its liberation from a Japanese colonial government, and after years of political instability and civil war, was rapidly industrialized by the South Korean military government in the latter half of the twentieth century. According to Watson, NAC's have characteristics that set them apart from other urban centers such as immense heights and densities as well as ongoing construction (195). Watson notes that the NAC has "distinctive qualities of 'newness' and a modernity seemingly incongruous with Europe's" (195). In addition, Watson finds that "subjects of the NACs are alienated by architectural newness, relentless repetition, and ominous compression" (195). These qualities noted by Watson concerning NAC subjects are reflected in the short fiction of Ae-ran Kim, Seong-nan Ha, and Ko-eun Yun.

In the stories I examine, characters lead compartmentalized lives and express symptoms of anxiety through strange behaviors often accompanied with disastrous consequences. At the same time, a certain homogeneity tends to bind characters together. In Ha's and Yun's fiction, certain characters sympathize readily with one other and will form a group to back a cause or common interest, demonstrating a potential for mobilization against a dominant vertical collectivist culture: that is, one in which members perceive themselves as more directly connected to an authority than to one another. The stories examined provide insight into how 21st-century Korean fiction portrays urban environments with qualities like those of NAC's through depictions of characters' social relations and their mediation by the urban environment. Contemporary short stories portray social alienation, a desire for escape, and a tendency toward neurotic obsessions and behaviors. In Kyung-sook Shin's *I'll Be Right There* (2010), looking back on the 1980s-90s, during South Korea's era of industrialization and multiple military regimes, students demonstrating against the government are portrayed very differently than

students and young professionals in literature today. In the novel, young people are in close

relationship with each other and express a sense of belonging to and ownership of the city itself.

Seoul's industrialization in the latter half of the twentieth century resulted in mass

migration to the city and subsequent makeshift housing, particularly around the outskirts of the

city. Watson notes that "squatter dwellings" accounted for "some 30 percent of its buildings.

(197). Not only did this rapid migration transform the material nature of Seoul, but it also

transformed city dwellers into workers. Watson finds that the new regimes conserved the

producer and consumer ideologies from the colonial era, an important distinction from prior

scholarly assumptions about the division between producer and consumer cities that

characterizes Seoul as a NAC (199). In this model, the metropole and colony exist

simultaneously in a shared space. Worker-citizens are imbued with responsibility toward

growing the national economy with their diligent labor. Individuals are expected to postpone

questions of personal benefit and work for the nation's future prosperity. Regarding NAC's in

terms of "postcolonial 'producer cities,'" Watson finds this mass industrialization to be "a way

for labor power to be produced and consumed by the developing nation" (212). This system

gives way to the "salaryman" type—a businessman character who is nameless, apartment-

dwelling, and usually single—in many of the short stories examined. Although valorized in

official discourse in industrializing South Korea, the salaryman in contemporary stories is

neurotic, lonely, and desperate for diversion or escape from the driving routine. This

industrialization is also felt in the material nature of the city itself: substandard, cramped living,

working, and transportation conditions that result in social alienation.

In contemporary texts, the city exhibits the tension and dynamics between communal and

individual values, an important issue in contemporary Korean society. Chanki Moon and

colleagues describe South Korea as a vertical collectivistic society. According to Moon and colleagues, those in collectivistic societies "prioritize group-level goals and place more importance on situational factors when appraising others" while vertical collectivistic societies, in particular, "are more likely to regard respect for authority as a key value" (2). Moon and colleagues find that South Koreans highly value harmonious group relations and respect for authority and that hierarchy is a governing factor in relations between individuals (3). In contrast, a horizontal collectivistic society would emphasize relations between individuals considered to be of equal status. Tobin Im examines how, in modern Korean society, this trait of collectivism affects competitive behaviors. As noted by Park, competitiveness is a factor among students and young professionals leading to depression and suicide. According to Im, South Koreans' collectivist culture affects how people express themselves in situations of competition. Im notes that South Koreans tend to refrain from expressing negative emotions in front of others (21). Im describes a "concealed competition" expressed between competitors who pretend calmness and the absence of competition (21). This literature clarifies how collectivism is expressed against the relatively recent escalation of competitiveness in contemporary Korean democratic society. While literary texts function as imaginative, rather than realistic, portrayals of social dynamics, these studies clarify some potential sources of repression and frustration that lead to characters' disruptive or bizarre fears and obsessions, especially given that nearly all the characters in these texts are young professionals.

In these texts, the urban environment is a network that enmeshes characters in a world of inescapable problems. Close proximity; the need to "save face," or not express emotions directly, as Im indicates; and a gnawing sense of desperation characterize texts like Seong-nan Ha's "Flag" and Ko-eun Yun's "Sweet Escape" as characters seemingly surmount the confines of

reality in their efforts to escape city life. Their efforts culminate into strange incidents that reveal inner turmoil toward contemporary life.

Escaping the City

> He had taken off his shoes, hung his suit, and then removed the rest of his clothes one by one as he made his way up the pole. In the end, he'd even shed his briefs, hanging them at the very top. Sitting atop the pole without a stitch of clothing, he must have resembled Adam, the first man. He would have been tense, no doubt, taking care not to touch another line (Ha 89).

Joanna Elving-Hwang argues that in South Korea, businessmen's carefully groomed appearances cater to a homosocial gaze to project power and confidence. Elving-Hwang finds through interviews with Korean businessmen that appearances are highly influential in the judgments men make about one another in the corporate world. Furthermore, the efforts and expense that Korean businessmen take to project this kind of classy appearance is scarcely acknowledged consciously, even by the men themselves, but instead constitutes an unconscious part of a corporate culture that perpetuates gender stereotypes. Elving-Hwang notes that the salaryman is an important ideological element in late-twentieth century South Korean culture in its significance toward a developing economy (134). This persona is derived from the Japanese *saraiiman* type, which aims, through dress, to communicate "an image of financial success and transnational sophistication" (Elving-Hwang 134-135). Elving-Hwang finds that, in this context, the salaryman is "a corporate warrior whose nationalistic duty [is] to ensure the national survival against North Korean communist threat by selflessly and unquestioningly working long hours to build the gross national product" (134). Twentieth-century Korean literature, in a social realist style, has often focused on the hardships faced by the working class and their oppression under an authoritarian scheme. In many ways, the problematization of Korean corporate culture

continues this literary tradition. Elving-Hwang's analysis suggests how the salaryman is a performance career-minded Korean men must enact as part of a vertical collectivistic society due to the importance placed on the role by the government.

Seong-nan Ha's "Flag" suggests with this evidence of a man apparently stripping and climbing to the top of an electrical pole that someone has abdicated the important role of salaryman. An electrician investigating a reported power outage finds the articles of men's business attire hanging from the pole. The electrician speculates the man climbed the pole while stripping, reaching the very top in the nude. At the bottom of the pole, the electrician finds a diary that seems to have belonged to the man. The contents of the diary are divulged in the latter half of the story, revealing a life marked by pressures that ultimately leads to this mysterious act and subsequent disappearance.

The diary recounts the life of a car salesman who spends most of his time compulsively polishing the windows that showcase an expensive Chrysler. The entries emphasize the repressive nature of the man's life and work as well as his ritual of mental escape: contemplating a billboard on his commute each day of a Hawaiian maiden advertising vacation destinations. The man's working-life is oriented around the Chrysler, which he is dedicated to selling one day. He remarks that he has "mastered the art of cleaning windows" but has not yet "figure[d] out how to become a top-notch salesman" (Ha 92). The man recites phrases from the sales brochure for the car to himself and, when no one is around, climbs into the driver's seat to examine the car, having nothing else to absorb his attention during the day. At his job, there is little room for the man to be human. He notes that, in the showroom, he "can't even perform ordinary acts, like blowing [his] nose or tightening [his] belt" since everything and everyone in the showroom is oriented around the cars to be sold (Ha 92). Thus, after three years working the job, the man's

imaginative life is centered around the car he is dedicated to selling one day and the billboard of the Hawaiian maiden he glimpses at a bus stop.

The man lives alone in an apartment, riding public transportation each day to his work. This activity, like his hours in the showroom, is physically restrictive. The man is compressed by bodies in a forced intimacy that only exacerbates his alienation as he is pushed and shoved by others entering and exiting the bus. He claims not to mind the indignities, explaining that "[e]very day for the past two years, whenever I've passed through this congested area, I've looked up at that billboard" (Ha 91). He notices that while the billboard has weathered over time, "her smile remains the same, just as it did two years ago when I first saw her" (Ha 92). This brief, daily escape for the man seems to make his life bearable, suggesting elements that his life lacks: companionship, intimacy, nature, space. While the physical billboard is subject to the elements, like himself, the fantasy it conveys allows him to transcend his surroundings. The man confesses to watching the billboard faithfully, "whether hunched up like a turtle in [his] down parka, peering over steamed up glasses, or oblivious to the rainwater trailing down [his] umbrella onto [his] shoes in the rainy season" (Ha 92). The meaning that the daily ritual takes on for him suggests how little else he sees in his usual surroundings to stimulate his imagination as well as his unarticulated desire for a mate.

Some new excitement is bound to enter the man's life, then, when the model for the billboard comes to the Chrysler dealership, interested in purchasing the luxury car the man has always dreamed of selling. The highly charged sequence of events that follows is what seems to lead to the man's apparent journey up the electrical pole, surrendering his clothing and possessions along the way. When the model enters the dealership, the man recognizes her face instantly, though he's quick to note the differences: her skin is pale, her body thin, and her height

equal to his own. It's quickly clear that the man's obsession with the image is not transferred to the model herself, who doesn't attract him with her real looks or personality. Weeks later, the model visits the showroom again. For the first time, she gives the man "the vibe" he's learned means someone is seriously interested in purchasing a car (Ha 103). It seems that, incredibly, not only is the man about to sell the luxury car, as he's always dreamed, but to the billboard's model, no less. However, the turn of events ends in disaster when the man inadvertently drives through the window he's polished with such clarity, crashing the car into a streetlight, and injuring the model. The incredible coincidences and the disaster that follows are strange in their acute reflection of the man's otherwise hidden desires and fears.

The last entry in the diary is brief and undated. It seems that the man has returned to his everyday existence of work and watching the Hawaiian maiden on the billboard. He recalls that, on this day, someone has knocked off his glasses while rushing for the door on the bus, and other passengers trampled them, breaking them. He observes that he doesn't mind, that "[t]hrough the cracked lens, [he] now [sees] five maidens" (104). The reader is left to draw conclusions about what follows. Perhaps the man climbs the pole to be closer to the Hawaiian maiden on the billboard or to escape the restraint of his living and working conditions. Seen through the lenses of studies from Park and Moon, the man's compliance with his external stressors is a conventional behavior in South Korean urban society. The competitive living and working spaces are at odds with traditional collectivistic values and result in the man's increasing isolation and abdication from reality. These ideological conflicts manifest in eruptions of strangeness in the story.

Like social realist literature throughout the twentieth century, the text focuses on the frustrations of the worker in a larger scheme by taking the perspective of a working man who

remains nameless. The generic persona that recurs in Ha's other short stories ("Flowers of Mold" and "Early Beans") likewise represent a communal, rather than individual, experience, problematizing how certain Korean cultural values clash with contemporary urban life and livelihood.

The man sees himself as part of a larger collective, rather than as an individual pitted against other individuals. His identity is sustained through fulfilling the role he has been assigned. Thus, by abdicating the role, the man surrenders his identity as a worker. This is indicated symbolically through his removal of his business suit as he climbs the electrical pole. The electrician marvels, on seeing the dangling clothing, "[h]aving shed his skin, where could the man inside have gone?" (Ha 91). This observation suggests how the man's suit is not a covering to remove at will, but a vital part of his body. Without this indication of his role in the collective, it seems as though he has ceased to exist—or at least, to be perceived by others. The story articulates the futility of realizing a world beyond the constraints of urban living. Park highlights how these conditions play out in Seoul: young people feel "can only escape through death or emigration." As social realist literature of the past has described the plight of the worker amidst unfair or inadequate working and living conditions, exploited by those of a higher stratum, Ha's story portrays how schemes like capitalism and neoliberalism ultimately make life unsustainable in a collectivistic society like Seoul, where individuals identify themselves in relation to one another rather than through their individual actions.

The man fails to achieve the individualistic mindset necessary to survive in a neoliberal scheme while also expressing qualities central to Korean social culture. The man unsuccessfully attempts to motivate himself in terms of his neoliberal work environment, a dealership for imported cars: he knows must make the sale to be a success, but his efforts are misdirected. He

spends his days polishing windows and waiting for someone to give him "the vibe." He doesn't have the go-getter attitude, as observed by his manager, who tells him, "'[y]ou know, being good at cleaning windows isn't everything'" (Ha 97). The man's behavior has similarities to what Tobin Im describes as fatalistic beliefs in Korean culture. Im states that fatalistic beliefs are part of a traditional Korean cultural mindset in how individuals tend to accept their social status, normally assigned at birth, even if the status is very low. Im notes that "people of the lower social class learned powerlessness from repetitive experiences through the ages" and believed that difficulty or struggle in life was a part of one's fate (12). While, as Im points out, Korean society has modernized and accepted some Western ideas, including that of social equality, this sense of fatalism is still present in the literary texts examined in this chapter.

In "Flag," the man is needled by his manager for not being more successful at selling cars. Rather than being aggressive, he waits to get "the vibe" from potential customers. Each day, he endures small hardships on the cramped bus commute and in the constraints of his workspace. He detaches from these experiences by dreaming of the Hawaiian maiden on the billboard he sees each day, resulting in his increasing withdrawal from reality. These events suggest some of the frictions between Korean ideology and South Korea's capitalist economy. Capitalism fosters competition between individuals who focus on their own goals rather than those of the collective. As Moon and colleagues note, collectivistic members of a society are oriented toward goals of the larger organization, rather than those of the individual. The man's behavior aligns with this perception of identity in how the man is scrupulous to contribute to the dealership by polishing windows and putting on a professional appearance. However, he fails to pursue the individual goals necessary to be successful in a capitalist organization. The apparent loneliness, detachment, and desire to escape echoes the observations of Park on the troubled

mental health of young professionals in South Korea, which she connects to the country's high suicide rate. The kind of discontent the man in the story expresses with his life indicates that his own identity and desires, mediated by traditional Korean culture, are incompatible with the competitive culture he experiences in the city.

"Flag is characterized by a sense of absurdity or surrealness through its numerous implausible coincidences and the moment the protagonist seems to disappear entirely. Ko-eun Yun's "Sweet Escape" similarly expresses a character's loosening grip on reality when a young laid-off professional who develops an obsession with bedbugs. As with "Flag," the protagonist of "Sweet Escape" is an unnamed working man. Recently laid off from his job, the man explores photography, joins various clubs, and plans a summer trip to Europe with his wife. He stumbles upon an online post about bedbugs and lodgings that provokes his anxieties and inspires more Internet research. He obtains pest control supplies and, on the trip, sprays their belongings and lodgings obsessively. After their return home, the man's obsession escalates. Rather than searching for a new job, as his wife occasionally hints he should, he becomes fixated on eradicating any possibility of bedbugs from their apartment. He spends hours cleaning the home and researching bedbugs on the Internet. The man finds that "[b]edbugs were nothing other than a medium by which he could learn about the world. Thanks to bedbugs, he'd learned how to clean. Thanks to bedbugs, he'd learned how to cook…And thanks to bedbugs, he'd gotten to know his neighbors" (Yun). There is little in the story indicating what the man's life was like before he was laid off, except that he was employed at the organization for seven years, but it can be inferred that his work absorbed his attention and structured his days, rendering the six-month sabbatical he wanted to take with his severance pay an anxiety-riddled experience.

While I have read the dilemma presented in "Flag" in terms of Korean social culture, this aspect of "Sweet Escape" relates to a contemporary modern masculinity that applies to a capitalist labor environment generally. According to Kadri Aavik and colleagues, the career is a modern concept that evolved from the idle practices of the upper class in the Western world (4). The idea of "career" is distinct from that of labor in how it implies a greater degree of prestige as well as an upwardly mobile path. Therefore, a career serves to define an individual's class which, as previously discussed regarding the perception of social strata in South Korea, is a crucial marker for urban Koreans. Aavik and colleagues note that "success in the arena of work has been and still is an important source of self-validation for most men" (6). Conversely, failure to realize this kind of success "can imply failure in doing masculinity, including for men themselves" (Aavik et al. 6). The man's fixation on bedbugs may be read as a new kind of career: it stems from his idleness and constitutes a means for him to connect with others as well as develop a new life purpose. The man even begins to associate the size and shape of coffee beans with bedbugs and loses his taste for coffee, a beverage associated with modern urban go-getters.

The man's fixation soon spreads to others in the apartment building, who believe a neighbor's infestation may soon become their own and are eager to contribute to a solution. This kind of solidarity reads as an expression of an underlying collectivistic culture as neighbors who have had no occasion to interact with one another in the apartment building quickly form an organization, "WWB (World Without Bedbugs)" (Yun). The neighbors are

> brought together by the sense of fellowship that people feel when they all live at the same
> street number in homes with the exact same layout…people whose fridges were all in the
> same place in their apartments, whose stovetops were in the same place, whose washing

machines were in the same place, and who even went to the bathroom in the same place.

And more than anything, they had the same enemy (Yun).

The bedbug dilemma gestures to communist possibilities in a contemporary South Korean urban neighborhood. Not only do residents share a communal space and live in the same way as each other, they share a collectivistic mindset and sense of social responsibility. The narrative slants toward the absurd in the people's desire to eradicate an enemy that has yet to materialize but also suggests how the behaviors and lifestyles associated with a communist society lie just beneath the surface in South Korea, after decades of military regimes aiming to eradicate communist sympathies in its citizens. The ease with which neighbors band together could be interpreted as a critique of people's susceptibility to external influence, a negative outcome that may emerge from collectivist thinking, or a larger desire on their part to gather and organize, for which the threat of bedbug infestation merely furnishes an excuse.

The residents' capacity for sympathy and common feeling are demonstrated in their participation in the bedbug society, as well as the same potential for anxiety that has resulted in the laid-off man's obsession. At one meeting, "[t]he further they delved into conversation, the more people began to scratch their bodies" (Yun). It is concluded that "[i]t was the bedbugs" after someone leg begins to swell and redden during this proceeding (Yun). Just as the man's imagination has run away with him, so do others': when a seamstress who labors in her rooms bears markings of a sewing needle on her skin, the injury is interpreted as a bedbug bite. The club's momentum is sustained by a conviction in bedbugs' existence in their apartment building. The story takes a stranger turn as residents brainstorm a permanent solution inspired by a supposed custom from traditional Korea: children, out of filial piety, would sleep in their parents' beds for a time before their parents did, to sate the bedbugs with their blood before the

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parents went to bed. The neighbors decide that one resident should be a "sacrifice" for all, dousing himself with bedbug pheromone for a week to attract all the bedbugs in the building, then immediately boarding a plane and leaving the country. Unsurprisingly, this role is eventually assigned to the laid-off protagonist.

The man's acceptance of his role as "sacrifice" seems, to fill him with rapture and freedom. Perhaps, at this point in the story, some bedbugs surface, since he finds that "[a]fter about a week, he'd managed to collect quite a few bedbugs onto the mattress" (Yun). It seems that his desire for control over the unknown and unseeable enemy has been realized, as he seems to take pleasure in how the bedbugs are always with him, "intoxicated by the pheromones on his body" (Yun). As the story's title indicates, escape is what he appears to be seeking. At some point through the madness, the man's wife has left him, so that, alone, he journeys toward a distant island. While on the bus, the man reflects that he feels "a sense of relief that there [are] no more dreadful events to come" and that he finally feels at peace (Yun). This peace is conflated with the notion of death when the man happens to see an obituary on a newspaper after boarding the bus of someone sharing his name: "[a] different person with the same name, but he still felt peculiar" (Yun). The man's strange sensation marks another surreal moment in the text in which the man might imagine death as a triumph over the problems from which he seeks escape. While suicide is not a topic that is mentioned directly in either "Sweet Escape" or "Flag," the abdication of characters from their required roles suggests suicide. As Katrin Park mentions, South Korea has had the highest suicide rate in the world for two decades among students and young professionals. In both stories, these escapes are marked by a sense of uncertainty about the future. In "Flag," the electrician is always looking for the businessman's return, disbelieving that

he has truly vanished. In "Sweet Escape," details surrounding the man's departure, such as his restored love of coffee, suggest that the working world still looms large.

In "Sweet Escape," the man's suffering may be inferred but a cause is never provided. The story offers little information about the work he did or his life before becoming unemployed. The man has married recently and, prior to his growing obsession with bedbugs, his relationship with his wife seems to be loving and mutually supportive. The man's seemingly arbitrary obsession correlates with the representation of the vampire in Marxist criticism, further underscoring how the text critiques the conditions of capitalist labor from a social realist perspective. Botting notes that "Marxist criticism…traces contradictions and class antagonisms in which…monsters appeared as exploited yet resistant bodies of dehumanising systems, signalling tensions in the ideological fabric that naturalises a bourgeois view of the world" (16-17). As his obsession with bedbugs grows, the man becomes increasingly estranged from those who retain a "bourgeois view": the workforce and, eventually, his wife. When he becomes the "sacrifice" to the project of bedbug eradication, he is rendered monstrous; doused in bedbug pheromones and, possibly, with some bedbugs clinging to him, he boards a bus to catch a flight. When he leaves town, "[n]o one—not even his wife—[says] goodbye," while, entering the bus, "[s]everal passengers [turn] their heads as he [walks] by" (Yun). While the responses seem plausible given the man's erratic behavior and subsequent disheveled appearance, his unceremonious parting suggests that a more significant social rejection has taken place. In attempting to regain control of something that symbolizes his own exploitation, he has become monstrous to others and is cut off from society.

The man's obsession with bedbugs, blood-sucking insects that attack prone, vulnerable bodies, suggests an underlying anxiety toward vampiric forces. In "Chapter Ten: The Working-Day," in *Capital: Volume 1*, Karl Marx compares capitalism to vampirism in how

> [t]he prolongation of the working-day beyond the limits of the natural day, into the night, only acts as a palliative. It quenches only in a slight degree the vampire thirst for the living blood of labour. To appropriate labour during all the 24 hours of the day is, therefore, the inherent tendency of capitalist production (Marx).

According to Marx, capitalism's insatiable desire for labor calls for shifts, so that workers that have been "used up" by day may be replaced by fresh workers. Thus, workers exist to contribute to surplus-value, or capital. The man's creeping anxiety about having his surroundings infested by bedbugs suggests an underlying trauma of victimization by exploitative forces that shape a capitalist labor experience. The man himself has been "used up" and discarded unceremoniously for an undisclosed and, perhaps, unknown reasons by being laid off from the company after seven years. Marx goes on to make other connections between vampirism and capitalism in the chapter: quoting Friedrich Engels, Marx argues that laborers in a capitalist system are transformed into slaves when no law is in place to protect them from exploitation, since "the vampire will not lose its hold on him 'so long as there is a muscle, a nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited.'" Thus, on the one hand, the man laid off from his job feels used-up, victimized, and stripped of the salaryman identity valued by South Korean society. On the other, his declared six-month sabbatical from work reveals itself over time as an unacknowledged loathing to return the workforce that has exploited him continuously for seven years.

Given this unconscious association between labor and vampirism, it is clear why the man experiences a sense of rapture in his escape. The man believes that "[f]inally, after all this time,

he'd found it. Peace" because there are "no more dreadful events to come" (Yun). However, the end of the story also suggests that the man's substitution of bedbugs for what truly afflicts him with anxiety will offer only a short-term solution. The man's escape, after all, is temporary. He has "a week's worth of vacation spending money in crisp bills, a round-trip plane ticket, and a room reservation voucher" and, contemplating his getaway, even wonders "what Pacific coffee [tastes] like." Thus, the ending of "Sweet Escape" is marked by the same inconclusiveness toward the businessman's fate as that of "Flag." Each work suggests how escape from urban society is impossible within the bounds of reality. In "Flag," the car salesman who has shed his business suit can only be read as escaping his surroundings if one reads the mysterious ending as supernatural: perhaps he has found a wormhole or warped into another dimension, although there is nothing about the text otherwise to suggest a supernatural element. The logical impossibility of his disappearance from the top of a flagpole only heightens the sense of inescapability of such circumstances in the real world. Likewise, in "Sweet Escape," no true restoration to the man's psyche is possible. His solo vacation is a temporary release from his worldly obligations. His returning interest in coffee—a substance viewed as powering the working world—suggests an imminent return to an unexamined life following his project to triumph over bedbugs.

Figure 15. Kelly, Tom. "First Light on Seoul." 24 May 2012. Online image. Flickr. 30 March 2022.

Both "Flag" and "Sweet Escape" feature the apartment building as a significant element

in the South Korean urban landscape. Not only do the main characters live in apartments, but

apartments are a means through which residents share hardships, such as a power outage or

(potential) pest infestation. While these shared experiences are imposed onto residents through

circumstances beyond their control, the kind of apartment living suggested in contemporary

Korean fiction is devoid of locality or neighborly familiarity. On the contrary, apartment

residents suffer from loneliness and isolation, surrounded by strangers similarly isolated. The

communal experience of a power outage is envisioned by an electrician preparing to identify and

repair the affected lines. The electrician imagines that "[t]he children who woke were cranky;

they missed the hum of the refrigerator and the whir of the fan, sounds as comforting to them as

a lullaby" while residents open refrigerators to find melting and spoiling food (Ha 87). At the

same time, lives appear scripted, with no apparent deviations from established routines. The

streets are deserted as the electrician checks poles for repair, the only signs of life the sound of

children singing together in an elementary school and a young woman who quickly withdraws

from her apartment window upon seeing him. Similarly, in "Sweet Escape," residents appear to stay to themselves until drawn together by a common concern: a potential bedbug infestation.

"Sweet Escape" suggests how a yearning for community lies beneath this isolation. The first meeting of WWB, or "World Without Bedbugs," is followed by a shared meal between residents at a local restaurant, where "[t]hey [complain] about the menaces other than bedbugs that plagued them all" and promptly decide to continue meeting for purposes beyond bedbugs: "[a] world without beggars, a world without bias, a world without bullying—they thought of everything the world could do without until late into the night" (Yun). If residents have a pre-existing desire to come together, as illustrated by their willingness to form an impromptu club to eradicate any potential bedbugs from their apartment building, what prevents the formation of these local communities and why, once formed, do they dissolve so quickly? Why do characters like the businessmen in "Flag" and "Sweet Escape" feel disenfranchised from others around them despite these opportunities for connection, leading to strange behaviors?

Arjun Appadurai argues that the creation and maintenance of neighborhoods as centers of social life are discouraged by forces of globalization. One obvious force is migration, whether necessitated by war or poverty in one's homeland (these circumstances also precipitated by globalization), while another is a national interest in gathering public interest around a national, rather than local, identity. Furthermore, as Appadurai points out, any kind of social relations must be actively maintained against practical interests; citizens' priorities center on survival and quality of life. Regarding the interest in a national government in discouraging the formation of localized communities, Appadurai argues that "[t]he work of producing neighborhoods…is often at odds with the projects of the nation-state…because commitments and attachments…that characterize local subjectivities are more pressing, more continuous, and sometimes more

distracting than the nation-state can afford" (191). South Korea's interest in building a cohesive and unified nation following the Korean War is demonstrated through decades of military regimes in which ideologies discontinuous with national goals were discouraged through censorship and punishment. These decades served to strengthen vertical collectivism in South Korean society, by focusing the people's attention on hierarchy and authority for the sake of survival. In South Korea's subsequent democratization, the government has remained active in continuing to develop the nation as a global power.

The rapid industrialization of South Korea during the latter half of the twentieth century significantly changed the physical landscape, eradicating traditional housing and communities. This removal of common cultural points of identity also works against localization. Appadurai finds that "because the memories and attachments that local subjects have…are often at odds with the needs of the nation-state for regulated public life," these attachments are eventually discouraged or discarded in favor of the "spatial and social standardization that is prerequisite for the disciplined national citizen" (Appadurai 191). As I mentioned earlier, the salaryman has been an important idea to South Korea's developing economy. The disciplined worker upholds the country's identity as a capitalist nation. Contemporary Korean literature suggests how the salaryman is a standardized identity enforced by society as well as the dearth of other options. This role serves to strengthen national identity, while the top-down management of apartment complexes and the transitory nature of occupancy provides little opportunity to develop more horizontal relations such as might be engendered by and further foster communist beliefs.

"Sweet Escape" suggests tension between national interests and local tendencies in how residents are quick to form an organized society to counter the as-yet-unseen threat of bedbugs. With this catalyst, residents' homogenous living conditions are a factor that unites them, as they

temporarily transcend compartmentalized isolation. Neighbors are "brought together by the sense of fellowship that people feel when they all live at the same street number in homes with the exact same layout" down to the location of the refrigerator, stove, and toilet (Yun). The story also hints at the kinds of official discourse that discourage this formation of community in the local paper's interview with "[s]omeone from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention" who instructs that "if you discovered a bedbug in your house, you were to report it to the Center rather than just rashly getting rid of it yourself" (Yun). This wry jab at top-down management style hints at the kind of control the national government continues to exert over citizens' lives.

Scholars have noted the importance of the apartment building in the Korean literary landscape. Kimberly Chung analyzes contemporary Korean art and literature from a post-pastoral perspective, one that considers humans as "animals entwined within the biosphere" (20). Chung observes that South Korean urban redevelopment cycles not only destroy local ecologies but also keep humans in a state of constant migration, preventing them from developing local attachments. Chung describes the apartment building in literature as "a loaded site that is alternatively a dwelling, community, ecological space, urban landscape and symbol of rapid Korean urban development" (24). The Korean literary texts examined pose the apartment building as an entity that unites residents via common experiences while also compartmentalizing them, limiting the scope of their relationships and interactions with others. Chung finds that recent literature portrays "the apartment complex as a powerful symbol of loss at the heart of Korean local community" (28). While the apartment building unites residents physically, bureaucratic structures in place work against the development of localities. Like my observation of the portrayal of the Center of Disease Control's top-down management of bedbugs in "Sweet Escape," Chung finds that Kim Chongsŏng's short story "Yŏlliji Ka Innŭn

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P'unggyŏng" ("A View of Love Trees") conveys "a conflicted view of the women's society as not in tension with national programs, but in collusion with the national developmental and economic spirit" (29). This orientation toward overhead management in neighborhoods is in line with a vertical collectivist society that favors hierarchy and responsiveness to leaders over horizontal relations. The fiction problematizes how Korean social tendencies collude with modernizing and globalizing national agendas, resulting in environmental destruction and the decay of human relations.

Jieheerah Yun's historical analysis of Korean relationships with modern spaces over the twentieth century provides insight into why the apartment complex is such a problematic topic in literary texts. Two major periods of development characterize this history: Japan's colonization of Korea in early decades, and South Korea's industrialization in the latter half of the century. During the colonial era, Japan demolished and replaced historical structures with modern structures in service of the Japanese empire. However, according to Yun, the apartment building was not a significant element in the cityscape until the 1960s, when the South Korean government promoted the use of apartments as residences over single-family homes, the latter viewed as inefficient and primitive (51). Yun notes "mounting criticism of the monotonous urban landscape of Seoul, or 'apartment forests', consisting of endless rows of rectangular concrete boxes" (51) (see fig. 1). The traditional Korean home, the hanok, is a dwelling designed to accommodate extended families, comprised of wood and tile and arranged according to traditional architectural principles. After the widespread demolition of hanok neighborhoods during South Korea's industrialization and their replacement with more depersonalized dwellings, city residents began to yearn to recover hanok living.

Yun notes the relationship between hanoks and Korean identity, sharing one resident's perspective that "while members of the older generation, with the memory of hanoks, can manage to retain their Korean identity, the younger generations with no such prior experience would lose the sense of who they are if they continued to live in high-rise apartments" (55). In accommodating the extended family, hanok living means closer relations between generations that facilitate Confucian principles like filial piety. Yun finds that in addition to urban dwellers' aesthetic objections to apartment buildings, citizens have also developed greater awareness of their "methods of production and consumption," in line with Chung's observations on the apartment's centrality in Korean redevelopment cycles that take a toll on both the environment as well as social connections in neighborhoods (53). Citing Seong-nan Ha's short story "Flowers of Mold" in a footnote, Yun observes that "[b]eginning in the 1980s, the portrayal of apartment housing in popular literature discussed social alienation and distorted relationships among neighbours" (53-54). Literary texts emphasize the social effects of small, depersonalized units lacking in privacy and freedom. "Flowers of Mold" depicts the standardization of waste disposal, enforced by local committees, as well as the scrutiny and invasiveness that replaces regular face-to-face communications between neighbors.

The Summer 2020 issue of *Korean Literature Now*, an English-language journal edited by the Literature Translation Institute of Korea, examines the issue of housing in Korean literature through literary texts and articles. A caption describes the front-cover illustration as depicting "an *oktappang* on top, the *officetel* and *motel* in the middle, and the semi-basement *banjiha* room at the bottom" (Editorial Board 2). Eungyo Oh considers how, in literary texts, these various kinds of dwellings affect the life experiences of women, living alone or with other women, often posing physical hazards as well as safety threats from other people. Oh perceives

the texts in terms of "class issues inherent in a capitalist society but also problems that have gender politics and sexuality at their very core" (34). Contemporary literature critiques capitalist society through the portrayal of these compartmentalized lives. These texts are continuous with South Korea's twentieth-century social realist literary perspective in problematizing how capitalism transforms humans into workers at the expense of their freedom, leisure, and personal lives. Contemporary urban dwellings are visual portrayals of the product of this transformation, revealing how urban planning renders homes uninviting and depressing to their inhabitants. Beauty and spatial freedom, values inherent in hanok housing, are absent in favor of standardization and cost efficiency. Individuals become disinclined to spend much time in confining or unsafe conditions, pouring their earnings back into the economy as they spend their leisure time in public places.

In contrast to the expansive hanok dwelling, which accommodates extended family members and arranges rooms around a central courtyard, spaces like the banjiha and oktapbang, basement and rooftop dwellings, respectively, convey human living spaces as an afterthought in larger development projects. For instance, the oktapbang is "a small room built on the rooftop over a space that is usually cleared to install water tanks and other utilities" (Oh 35). One story excerpted in this issue of *Korean Literature Now*, Hwa Gil Kang's "Room," emphasizes the hazardous living conditions of the rooftop room, such as mold and toxic drinking water. A lesbian couple rents an oktapbang while doing temporary labor in the city cleaning up after an explosion at a residential site. The previous tenant from whom the couple rents the room has visible nerve damage, presumably from living on the site. When one of the women asks about the previous tenant's distended neck, she advises them to "[e]arn all you can then get out as quick as you can" (Kang 54). Soon, one of the women begins deteriorating physically,

presumably from the contaminated running water. The oktapbang's living conditions slowly destroy the bodies of the women while they strive to earn a living, exposing the way some individuals fall through the cracks in contemporary Korean society, even when they prioritize their roles as workers. The same-sex couple struggle to secure decent income and living conditions, cut off from supportive networks.

Strangeness disrupts the narrative of contemporary urban life through gradual, eerie disfigurement and increasing frailty for the disenfranchised women. Much like the other texts examined in this chapter, the women's progressive deterioration of health portrays a visible effect of an insidious and inescapable cause. Just as the poison is invisible to the women, the source of trauma to the man in "Sweet Escape" is unspecified. These texts are marked by silences and absences, suggesting through negative space the forbidden nature of a topic that may not be mentioned directly. These allusions heighten the sinister nature of the unspecified force.

In mainstream discourse, the oktapbang is viewed as cheap starter housing for students or young couples. Kang's portrayal of the oktapbang contrasts with those in works of popular culture. Han-Dae Cho comments that "[d]espite their cramped nature, in pop culture rooftop rooms are often described as romantic places." Popular works romanticize the oktapbang as intimate and scenic, suggesting that in South Korea, it's possible to start with little to nothing and, with savings, attain the life of your dreams. The literary texts in this chapter, however, imply otherwise by presenting a fatalistic view of Korean society—that is, one in which characters' scope of life choices is limited by their surroundings. "Room" presents a story of women who do not have safe living quarters despite their willingness to work hard to survive. Dwellings like the "endless rows of rectangular concrete boxes" noted by Yun or the makeshift

nature of oktapbang housing are key representations in these works of the lives within. The lesbian couple in "Room" are stuck with cramped living quarters built around housing utilities that reflect a social delegitimization of the couple as a family unit. Similarly, the compartmentalized nature of the salarymen's apartments in "Flag" and "Sweet Escape" suggests the limitations placed on the characters' social lives and imaginations, which revolve around work-related anxieties.

Contemporary Korean literature tends to emphasize a sense of fatalism in contrast to official discourse and popular narratives that depict Korean urban society as progressive and upwardly mobile. Cho's interviews with oktapbang residents present rooftop housing as a pathway to a better life. Inconveniences like frozen pipes and cramped quarters are taken in stride alongside the charm of intimacy and the hope for a brighter future. Lee, a young husband, comments, "'I think I will remember this place as the old good days when we could be together almost all of the time'" (Cho). Another interviewee, single, emphasizes the financial freedom the oktapbang gives him to enjoy hobbies a higher-rent place would forbid, even while he saves money for his future marriage. On the other hand, the literary texts in this chapter have presented urban life as compartmentalized and limited in scope.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Tobin Im finds that fatalistic beliefs persist in Korean society from a traditional mindset of a class system assigned from birth. Im notes that "people tended to blame or accept their own 'Palja or Unmyong', which means fate or destiny in Korean" and that the traditional proverb "'Even the king cannot save the poor'" further "illustrates a hopeless/helpless attitude toward poverty" (12). Im notes that "as the economy grew and developed, Confucian oriented culture deeply rooted in Korean mentality was also rapidly replaced by the Western way of thinking" (15). Literary texts suggest how traditional

beliefs persist or reinvent themselves in contemporary conditions of economic growth and academic and professional competition amidst young Koreans. These texts complicate the progressive image presented by South Korea's culture industries and suggest the social costs of the importation of capitalism into a traditionally vertical collectivist society whose members derive identity from their relation to the whole rather than through personal achievements that single them out.

Another issue that emerges in contemporary literary texts is that of the lack of trust and growth of enmity between residents living in close quarters. Literary texts indicate residents' struggle for privacy against keen sensory awareness of the lives around them. For instance, "Sweet Escape" suggests how the man's anxious thoughts of bedbugs are becoming increasingly entangled with the sounds of other residents around him. As he listens to a piano exercise from a room above his, the sounds overwhelm him as "[m]usical notes [are] treading all over the blanket the man had pulled up to his head" like the bedbugs that obsess him (Yun). He dreams that he is the piano student, frantically attempting to obey the teacher's commands to play the score properly. The sounds of other residents are coupled with his fear of infestation as, listening through walls "like flimsy wax paper," he wonders "if the bedbugs were somehow crawling up those sounds" (Yun). Later, as the man lies in wait for bedbugs, doused in pheromones, he becomes consumed by the sounds of another resident's sewing machine. Like the notes from the piano, the noises from the machine assault him physically as "[t]he presser foot glue[s] him to his bed, poking him with a sharp needle at several-second intervals" (Yun). The man visualizes the sounds as anxiety spreading throughout the apartment building, "residents…stuck in the bobbin case, their nerves coming undone thread by thread" as the man experiences feels he is "folded in half…and stitched up from one end to the other" (Yun). The imagery suggests the

man's increasing sense of confinement and powerlessness. The intrusion of sounds from which he cannot escape seems to exacerbate his need to escape the city. In "Sweet Escape," this stress couples with the man's anxieties toward bedbugs to produce strange outcomes. However, in other texts, forced intimacy between residents results in hostile behaviors directed toward other people, resulting in strange living spaces in which no one ever seems to be "at home."

In the previous chapter, I described how the crowded surroundings of communal spaces in Ae-ran Kim's "Prayer" (2007) result in a communication breakdown. In-yeong recalls her sister's rejection of another student's friendly offer from a crowded library where she tries to study, followed by her relocation to another library, where she receives an anonymous note complaining of her cough. In-yeong's sister moves to a shabby boardinghouse in the city to continue her studies, where In-yeong observes notes on a community bulletin board like "*Please walk on tiptoes in the hallway. – The Manager*" and "*Whoever stole my wallet, please die*" (Kim). These impersonal or hostile notes suggest surveillance practices associated with authoritarianism. In-yeong's sister plugs up a hole left by an electrical outlet with plastic foam, commenting that "'[i]t's like someone's peeping'" (Kim). In-yeong further observes that her sister keeps looking at the plugged-up hole during their visit. The text suggests how cramped and communal spaces engender paranoia and dislike between residents, increasing residents' isolation amidst social expectations of consideration and propriety. Although top-down rules and guidelines should ultimately protect residents, trust between residents erodes, as residents lose a sense of boundary about being alone or being with others.

Thus far, I have analyzed literary texts in terms of the tension between capitalism and vertical collectivist values, examining how these tensions emerge in depictions of the salaryman, social life, and urban housing. The next question I examine concerns literary portrayals of trust

between residents of contemporary South Korea urban environments, with respect to this tension between vertical collectivist values and larger nationalist projects of capitalism and globalization. Chaeyoon Lim et al. analyze survey results on the nature of trust in South Korea, noting the influence of a dynamic between the nation's collectivist culture and an increasing degree of individualism, particularly among younger people. Overall, Lim et al. describe South Koreans as having a "narrow trust radius," meaning that while they place a high degree of trust in family members and close friends, this level drops off steeply beyond the immediate social circle (151). Lim et al. note the importance of the spread of individualism in recent history, finding that this quality plays out as "individuation" rather than individualism with fully developed moral dimensions (166). Among younger people, individualism is adopted in opposition to perceived limitations of collectivistic ideology, "in which the moral dimension of interpersonal relationships is viewed as costs and constraints" (Lim et al.). The study suggests that traditional collectivistic morals are being strategically abandoned due to South Korea's recent economic and political shifts aimed toward financial growth. Collectivism is viewed as part of "the cultural package that binds people with a moralistic dictum," while the adoption of individualism means the breakage of traditional social ties and the perceived limitations toward one's future, resulting in a narrow circle of trusted individuals (Lim et al. 166). "Prayer" illustrates this dynamic in its portrayal of contrast between the close relationship between siblings and the dearth of developed relationships outside of the family circle. Anonymous messages in communal spaces like study rooms and boardinghouses illustrate the reluctance of members to communicate directly with one another, resulting in rigid social barriers in public spaces prohibiting the formation of casual connections.

This idea of alienation between boardinghouse residents is central to Kim's "No Knocking in This House" (2003). The narrator moves to a boardinghouse shared with four other girls. Due to the closeness of rooms and overall lack of privacy, the girls can hear one another's private matters, like visits to the toilet or arguments with a boyfriend. However, the girls strictly avoid meeting face-to-face, timing their movements in shared spaces according to the sounds they hear from others. The depersonalization between them is heightened by polite but cryptic written requests that read as cold or hostile. The narrator struggles with the untidiness and thoughtlessness of other residents, trying to neaten the surroundings and work around messes others have left without imposing on the unspoken but strictly held principle of privacy that guides all their actions. She comes to realize that the lack of real harmony in the boardinghouse is "likely due to the 'habits' of these five girls who had all grown up separately until now, into their twenties" and that the narrator, "who had only ever lived alone before coming here," was slow to catch on to the larger issues with the present living arrangement (Kim 50). Overall, the narrator finds something hollow in the boardinghouse experience, observing that "this house was not a home" (Kim 48). The women appear to have little experience communicating directly with strangers or developing casual connections with others. As a result, the atmosphere of the boardinghouse is one of indifference and even hostility. Their presences become obstructions to one another and suspicions between them deepen in the absence of face-to-face communication.

The absence of communication between the women results in their increasingly dehumanized assessments of each other. The women take pains to avoid seeing one another, listening carefully to avoid emerging from their rooms until the coast is clear. The narrator observes that "[a]s if we had all taken a vow, the five girls' movements were orchestrated around the sounds of closing doors" (Kim 48). As a newcomer, the narrator tries to adapt to the customs

of the others. The only resident who interacts directly with others is the landlady, who upbraids the tenants about messiness or overuse of utilities. The women respond to the landlady's accusations and criticism in a model of vertical collectivism in how the group is obedient to and organized around a central authority but have no substantial connections to one another. The close ties cultivated in family circles are absent, resulting in the residents' aversion to one another. The narrator observes that "[o]ccasionally, we missed our timing and caught a glimpse of each other's faces, becoming strangely startled and immediately shutting our respective doors" (Kim 48). As a result, all the women see of one another's faces are "fragmented halves, sometimes thirds" (Kim 48). These partial glimpses the women have of one another echo the partial constructions they have of one another as fellow humans sharing the boardinghouse. Fellow humans are diminished and rendered strange as a result of constant closeness but little to no interactions.

The narrator, not fully indoctrinated into the boardinghouse's culture, attempts a personal gesture toward one of the residents and receives a cold rebuff. When a resident leaves her laundry in the dryer, rather than dumping it to the side, the narrator takes extra care to fold the woman's clothing, believing that "she'll be happy to see her laundry so nicely folded after returning from a long day at work" (Kim 49). However, the gesture is reprimanded with a note placed at the bottom of the narrator's own basket: "'*Please don't touch my clothes*'" (Kim 49). The resident's response protects the culture of indifference in indicating that residents don't want to receive kindness from each other. While the stories examined previously portray how cultural tendencies collude with contemporary South Korean economic policies to isolate and enervate workers, "No Knocking" suggests the twenty-first century cultural shift from vertical

collectivism to "individuation" (as opposed to individualism) observed by Lim et al. by portraying the dehumanizing social culture resulting from this shift.

The story depicts a loss of empathy and connection due to an overcrowded environment where behaviors are mediated by stress and competition. The narrator observes that residents are "living too closely together and thus, too far apart" (Kim 51). The clutter of shoes at the boardinghouse entrance become a sticking point for the narrator, since they indicate how many residents are at home. She takes to hiding the shoes out of sight because she is "infuriated by the reality that at dinner time, all five rooms [are] occupied" (Kim 51). This kind of stress from overcrowding is indicated in other literary texts as well. For instance, in "Sweet Escape," the sounds from other rooms penetrate the bedbug-obsessed man's body and follow him into his dreams, while the man in "Flag" is pushed and shoved each day on the subway, his glasses knocked from his face and trampled. Stress responses in these texts are various: the narrator of "No Knocking" strives to conceal evidence that other residents are at home for her own peace of mind; in "Sweet Escape," the activities of others become indistinguishable from the man's sensory experiences and consciousness; and in "Flag," the man abdicates reality to live in a dream centered around a woman on a billboard.

Thus far, I have examined portrayals of how urban housing, labor conditions, infrastructures, and social culture in twenty-first century South Korea are problematized through strange scenarios. My analysis has focused on how the urban environment mediates human relations over how humans interact with their material surroundings. However, much may be said about how urban dwellers relate to the nonhuman or human-constructed parts of their environments. Kim's "Prayer" depicts not only people's alienation from each other but also from their surroundings. In-yeong notes the discrepancy between the sparse trees around a bus station

and its name, suggestive of green spaces. Contemplating the view, she finds that "Seoul somehow seems more impoverished from far away," noting the barren nature of the trees and boardinghouses (Kim). She has difficulties discerning the natural features of the landscape, "not sure if the name of the mountain we're on is Gwanak, just as I don't know where Sillim begins, or where 9-dong or 12-dong ends" (Kim). In-yeong's alienation from her environment parallels the sense of alienation between people in Seoul. The work is characterized by a sense of decay, communicated through the emotional distance between boardinghouse residents and family members, sparse foliage, shabby buildings, and a series of small disappointments about one's surroundings and experiences. Written in 2003, "Prayer" communicates a world that lacks energy to repair or renew itself.

In the last section of this chapter, I analyze the relationship between Seoul and its citizens in the novel *I'll Be Right There* (2010) against the background of student demonstrations in the 1980-90s. In comparison to contemporary portrayals, the novel constructs a very different picture of how residents relate to one another and to the material nature of the city, depicting close bonds amidst strife and a sense of intimacy with the city itself.

Reclaiming the City

> *I got up very early and walked to Gyeongbokgung Palace…Gyeonghoeru Pavilion looked so mysterious in the rain…this time, I spotted a wooden staircase that I had never noticed before. The stairs led up to the second floor. There was a 'no trespassing' sign, but I went up there anyway…I carefully sat down. The moment I did, all the nervousness I felt about trespassing vanished, and I relaxed…The floorboards seemed to speak—the words, muted for a hundred years, pierced through a deep silence and rose into the air…That day, I woke up on the second floor of Gyeonghoeru Pavilion to find someone shaking me. It was the groundskeeper. I must have been asleep there for forty minutes (Shin 229-31).*

I'll Be Right There describes a city in which the old and new exist side-by-side. Gyeongbok Palace lies just beyond a wall concealing it from the busy streets. The novel highlights the student demonstrations against the industrializing military governments of the 1980s-90s. The narrator, Yoon, having moved from the countryside to attend college in Seoul, takes to wandering the streets, wanting to get to know the city intimately. Yoon's yearning to know the city parallels the embodied experiences of students demonstrating against the government during this time. In these demonstrations, the streets become spaces for solidarity, resistance, and violence as students live and die on the streets for their beliefs and in search of justice for their loved ones who are dead or missing. In the moment described above, Yoon writes to Dahn, a childhood friend who has died mysteriously in military service after visiting with Yoon and her friends, involved in the demonstrations. In this moment, Yoon seeks a connection with the distant past, finding in the closed-off room a refuge from the grief and turbulence of the present. In analyzing this scene, I consider: what is the nature of Yoon's connection to the distant past in this moment, and how does Korea's pre-modern history inform this moment?

Much of Seoul's initial modernization was initiated by the Japanese colonial government in the early decades of the twentieth century. Structures important to Korean cultural identity, like Gyeongbok Palace, were destroyed or repurposed. This modernization process, which industrialized Korea to serve as a resource for the Japanese metropole, resulted in buildings and infrastructures that bore the mark of colonization. As Watson notes, the producer and consumer paradigms from the colonial era were preserved as Seoul industrialized under the South Korean military regime, a hallmark of what Watson defines as a "New Asian City" (199). While other contemporary texts emphasize the modern, urban qualities of Seoul, through cramped housing

conditions, mass transportation systems, and an existence directed toward one's job, *I'll Be Right There* emphasizes city streets as communal spaces and highlights Seoul's historical landmarks, suggesting how historical culture persists into the present despite industrialization and serve as a point of identification for Koreans. South Korean nationalism often carries the weight of official discourse emphasizing economic growth and responsibility for South Korea's financial future. However, the culturalism in the novel foregrounds a form of horizontal collectivism between students demonstrating against the military government as well as an intimacy with the structures of the city itself, suggesting a reclaiming of Seoul's spaces by its citizens.

Like Watson, Sharon Hong advocates the study of Asian cities like Seoul as distinct in their expression of modernity from Western cities. Hong argues that despite Seoul's ultra-modern appearance, its centuries of history prior to modernization are crucial to understanding its evolution (20). Seoul's streets are laid out according to traditional *pungsu* values, "a fusion of natural and cultural considerations in the processes of land evaluation and development" that considers the natural formation of land and waterways (21). Seoul's design is optimized for "promoting military security and rice production" (Hong 21). Hong notes that Japanese urban planning measures, such as the erection of a large building in front of Gyeongbok Palace, resulted in citizens' view of modernization as an encroachment on their own culture, "something not Korean" (23). South Korea's hosting of the Olympics created a flurry of urbanization activities in the early 1980s, resulting in eradication of slums that had cropped up around Seoul and rapid development of high-rise buildings and apartments "to project a modern image of Seoul to the world" (Hong 25). In the late 1990s, citizens became interested in the recovery of traditional structures, resulting in an increase of coexistence and hybridity between various cultural architecture styles. (Hong 26-27). While *I'll Be Right There* predates this period by

several years, the novel foregrounds citizen interest in preserving historical symbols of identity through students' interest in history and exploration of historical districts.

I'll Be Right There is populated with characters whose lives are bound in trauma, distant and recent, and deep empathy for one another, so that another's struggle with grief becomes one's own. For instance, Myungsuh, Yoon's boyfriend, shares the grief of his childhood friend, Miru, who cannot let go of her sister's public self-immolation and her search for her sister's missing boyfriend, for whom Miru believes her sister committed the act. In her grief, Miru shuts herself in her grandmother's home and starves herself to death, another profound loss for Yoon and Myungsuh grappling with other sources of personal or shared grief. The abiding nature of grief throughout the novel as well as how characters turn to the past to inform their present existence presents the urban environment as a trans-temporal locality like that of Perera and Tang's discussion of translocalities in Asian urbanisms. Asian cities must be characterized through Asian-centered histories and ideologies to construct a more accurate picture of modernity in all its varied forms. Therefore, my reading of the trans-temporal nature of *I'll Be Right There* is informed by Korean-centered scholarly perspectives on *han*, a Korean term used to describe a way of living with grief and suffering.

The meaning and scope of han are widely debated topics. Hellena Moon argues that han is a transcultural experience because all humans grapple with mental anguish (420). On the other hand, Kyong-ni Park finds that han is "a feeling unique to the Korean people," rooted in Korean shamanism and classical literature. Jane Im, describing han as "a collective feeling of suffering that is rooted in Korean culture," argues for an understanding of han as simultaneously past- and future-oriented, a "willful affect that conflates and collapses opposite meanings to overcome dejection" (306). Im's analysis emphasizes the constructive nature of han in literary analysis

while also acknowledging its destructive possibilities; for instance, one's accumulation of harmful emotions like anger and frustration are perceived by some Koreans to cause death (308). In the novel, Miru's self-isolation and subsequent starvation in her grandmother's home may be perceived as this kind of death.

Han dominates the emotional landscape of *I'll Be Right There*. Characters accumulate han through the loss of loved ones and grow closer to one another in shared suffering. This shared suffering is constructive in how it strengthens students' dedication to public demonstrations. Rather than being deterred by the deaths and disappearances of other protestors, students are motivated by their accumulated suffering to carry on in a collective cause. This determination is illustrated by a story that Yoon's literature professor, Professor Yoon, tells of St. Christopher, later to be retold years later by Yoon to a new generation of students. The professor describes Christopher as a strong man who carries travelers across a river on his back. One day, a child he carries becomes so heavy during the crossing that Christopher fears he will drown beneath the child's weight. At the other bank, Christopher learns that the child was Christ, who explains that in carrying him, Christopher was "'carrying the world on [his] shoulders'" (Shin 49). Professor Yoon tells the students that they are both Christopher and the child and that they "carry each other across the river" and thus must "treasure [themselves] and hold one another dear" (Shin 51). This story is deemed important to multiple characters in the novel in how Myungsuh, who carries the grief of his childhood friend Miru for Miru's sister, repeats the story in his journal, revealed as excerpts throughout the novel, and in how Yoon as a guest speaker repeats the story to a group of college students. The motif of the St. Christopher story demonstrates how han functions in the text: as a burden that one bears to carry others forward.

Yoon's friend at college, Miru, is motivated to live by her desire to carry on her deceased sister's determination to learn the fate of her sister's boyfriend, who likely died for his communist beliefs and protest of the South Korean government. Miru takes to wearing her sister's floral skirt all the time after her death, an image that haunts Yoon. Myungsuh, Miru's childhood friend, finds her obsession excessive, and he and Yoon gradually pull away from Miru. Without their knowing, Miru stops eating and wastes away in her grandmother's home, while writing letters to her estranged friends. Miru's mother gives Yoon Miru's letters and journals, as well as her beloved cat, in a gesture that suggests how Yoon will carry Miru's life and longings into her future. Myungsuh carries his burden of grief differently; he travels the world as a photographer after his relationship with Yoon fades due to his depression and excessive drinking. The narrative is informed not only by Yoon's first-person perspective, but through entries in Myungsuh's "brown notebook," some of which are authored by Miru and Yoon, and letters characters write to one another, with or without the intention of sending them.

Yoon's letter to Dahn, written after his death, communicates an understanding of Dahn's spirit surviving death, an aspect of han. Park explains the belief that "the dead have only left this world, that they are not completely dead and that they are still living somewhere in the universe" and that survivors "long ardently to communicate with the souls of the dead" as a part of the desire "to overcome the contradictions of life." Thus, death is not only a source of grief for the survivor, but also a circumstance in which a survivor may resolve the contradictory forces of life and death by communicating, or yearning to communicate, with the deceased. Park perceives this desire as an ultimate force for balance, rather than a "wish to destroy the laws of the universe," it offers a path toward "a place where there are no longer any contradictions." Thus, as a form of suffering, han does not necessarily destroy the sufferer but offers an opportunity to resolve life's

contradictions. The novel demonstrates how han unites people in shared sympathies to change their world for the better. In the novel, the students are a source of hope to the preceding generation, as glimpsed in Professor Yoon's support for and involvement with the demonstrators, and to one another. The picture of 1980s-90s Seoul presented in *I'll Be Right There* is strikingly different than that of contemporary South Korean fiction, suggesting how a collective of students, united by shared sympathies against the injustices of the military government, has been supplanted by social alienation and indifference to community formation in an increasingly democratic political environment.

The sense of han that characterizes the novel transforms Seoul's streets in a trans-temporal cityscape. Just as students carry the memories of deceased loved ones with them to protest, the distant past, visualized as Gyeongbok Palace, is close by, separated by a wall. This closeness reflects not only the proximity of departed loved ones but that of pre-modern Korean history. Yoon describes herself as trespassing in Gyeongbok Palace, a term I interpret not as an act of willful disobedience but of transcending the world's material boundaries to connect intimately with past perspectives. This connection is implied in Yoon's deep sleep on the ancient floorboards after she climbs the stairs to the closed-off room. Before losing consciousness, she hears "*words, muted for a hundred years*" that "*pierced through a deep silence and rose into the air*" (Shin 230). This moment communicates both Yoon's temporary escape from the turbulent present as well as an appeal to long-deceased ancestors and predecessors. Just as han is a force for strength and solidarity throughout the novel, motivating characters to live and die for each other, Yoon's turn toward the distant past signifies a moment of healing and refuge, suggesting Yoon's identification with the lives and longings of ancient Koreans.

Gyeongbok Palace was the residence of the royal family during the Joseon Dynasty

(1392-1910). The palace was destroyed multiple times in Japanese invasions, most recently

during the colonial period. During the 1980s-90s, the palace was open for tours but was not

completely restored. During Japan's colonization of Korea, a new capitol building was erected in

front of the old palace to signify colonial power (Chasan et al. 63). This building was demolished

in the mid-1990s; however, during the period in which the novel is set, the building was

converted into a national museum as part of the palace complex (Chasan et al. 63). In her letter to

Dahn, Yoon states that the museum and palace are the places she visits most often during her

wanderings in Seoul. She explains: "*I only go inside the museum or pay for a ticket into

Gyeongbokgung Palace on days when the things I don't want to think about have built up inside

of me and filled my head with noise* (Shin 227-228). In her momentary escape from the present,

Yoon turns to an emblem of Korea's pre-modern past, suggesting how, in South Korea's

troubled present, she identifies with a more expansive and long-standing idea of Korea. Yoon

also wonders: "*All these city dwellers live beneath the sheltering wings of this palace, so why

don't they visit it more often?*" (Shin 228). Despite the palace's neglect since the colonial era,

Yoon deems it important to city residents in considering how, as it offers her a sense of refuge,

that it would provide a similar place of reflection for others.

The palace signifies the trans-temporal nature of Seoul, offering an experience for

citizens to connect with a version of Korea beyond the official discourse of the present. Yoon's

interest in the palace demonstrates her identification as Korean beyond the contemporary limits

of South Korean nationalism. Her participation in and sympathy for student demonstrations

further suggests how her Korean identity is informed by resistance to South Korea's military

regime. Her "trespassing" into the closed-off pavilion signifies her reappropriation of Korean

national identity as a student opposed to the government. Similarly, Yoon's frequent wandering throughout the city after moving to Seoul suggests her intention to know Seoul intimately for herself, just as student demonstrators claim the city streets as spaces for activism and solidarity.

Yoon is raised in the countryside and is sent by her mother to live in Seoul with her cousin while attending college. Yoon's mother is dying and does not want Yoon to be "tied down to a sick mother" (Shin 17). However, Yoon has no wish to be apart from her mother and cloisters herself in her room in her cousin's apartment, papering the windows in black. After her mother's death, Yoon returns home for a time before resuming her studies. This time, she expresses determination to get to know the city intimately. One of Yoon's five promises to herself is to "[w]alk around the city for at least two hours every day" (Shin 17). Like the characters in Hwa Gil Kang's "Room," Yoon lives in an oktapbang, a roof-top shack, but the dwelling itself is of small consideration in the text. Yoon's eyes are always on the city and its people. Right after moving in, Yoon purchases "an atlas with detailed maps of the city" with the intention to "explore every corner of it on foot" (Shin 37). In so doing, Yoon grows familiar with the sight of strangers who "[share] conversations, [ask] one another for help, and [call] out to one another" (Shin 71). The city streets are portrayed as communal spaces where people meet and communicate freely.

Myungsuh and Miru start walking with Yoon, and she finds that she notices even more about the city around her because the friends constantly share what they see with each other. Even when on her own, she finds herself speaking to them, to point something out, because she grows so accustomed to their presence. Once Myungsuh's friend, Nak Sujang, joins them, Yoon observes that "more and more of our friends began to surreptitiously follow us until, one day, I found myself walking…with Nak Sujang and nine other people" (130-131). The scene

demonstrates a widespread interest among students in knowing and claiming city spaces for their own. In addition to demonstrations, Yoon and her friends explore the older sections of Seoul and discuss their history. Like Yoon's attraction to the palace, the students identify with the city's spaces and their histories, underscoring a view of Seoul as belonging to its citizens rather than the government. Emphasizing this point, Yoon realizes that the crowds of people are "the life force of this city" and that "[w]ithout people, the city felt dead" (Shin 89). These details suggest a portrayal of Seoul's ownership as communal, a shared space belonging to its citizens from a more communist perspective like that of earlier twentieth-century Korean literature.

Yoon's participation in the demonstrations is gradual and seemingly more motivated by her relationships than her political beliefs. The only characters described as holding strong political ideologies are Mirae, Miru's older sister, who read communist and socialist texts, and Mirae's boyfriend, from whom Mirae developed her political interests. Due to her grief over losing her sister, Miru becomes involved in demonstrations. Myungsuh follows suit, though his commitment to the demonstrations is ambivalent. At one point, Myungsuh tells Yoon that he is often drawn between skipping class to go to demonstrations and attending class to see her. Yoon herself attends demonstrations to spend time with Myungsuh.

While Myungsuh's commitment to the demonstrations themselves is ambivalent, he has a persistent interest in engaging with strangers on the street. When Myungsuh and Miru begin taking walks in the city with Yoon, Myungsuh makes a game of running between couples on the street and separating their hands. Later, after Miru vanishes mysteriously from their lives, Myungsuh tells Yoon that he wants them to randomly hug a hundred strangers on the street, stating that "'[m]aybe if we hug a hundred strangers…something will change'" (257). Myungsuh's persistent desire to engage with strangers suggests his underlying belief that

strangers should be more open to one another. Myungsuh's journal entries reveal how troubled

he is by people's indifference to one another. He is haunted by the story of the Genovese murder

of 1964 which, in the book he reads, describes the killing of a woman in the presence of 38

witnesses. Myungsuh muses that "'[i]*t was documented that thirty-eight people watched through*

their windows as Genovese was stabbed to death. Is that what it means to be human?' (Shin

122). Myungsuh's underlying ideologies lean less toward political dissidence than his actions in

demonstrations would suggest and more toward an impulse to break down the walls of

indifference that separate citizens from those outside their close circles. Myungsuh's frustration

with society indicates a strong sense of social responsibility that is realized briefly in the

community engendered by student demonstrations but fades away as the demonstrations grow

smaller and less frequent with time.

Myungsuh's underlying desire to realize connections between strangers is like the idea of

horizontal collectivism, as described by Moon and colleagues, in which relations among equals

are emphasized over relations within a hierarchy or toward a central authority. Myungsuh's

unrealized vision of unrestrained friendship among the urban community serves as an open

question in the text looking toward the decades following the demonstrations of the 1980s-early

1990s. In his journal, Myungsuh recalls how a demonstrator claimed the space of City Hall, to

the approbation of others. The demonstrator "*shimmied up the drainpipe to the cheers of the*

people gathered in the plaza and climbed onto the roof of City Hall" (Shin 264). Not only does

the demonstrator reclaim public spaces for the people, but he also does so in community with

others, who watch with excitement and anxiety. People occupy every possible surface in the

scene, "*on top of the stone wall outside Deoksugung Palace, on the stairs leading down to the*

subway, in the branches of the gingko trees planted along the streets," looking on as one of their

own climbs to the top of the building in a symbolic act (Shin 264). Thinking back on the scene, Myungsuh asks: "*Where have all of those people gone?*" (Shin 264). Myungsuh's question suggests how the moment of horizontal collectivism has dissipated due to government crackdowns, ensuing deaths and disappearances, or increasing discouragement or demotivation on the part of citizens. However, Myungsuh's question may also be applied across the other texts surveyed in this chapter which have communicated indifference between urban residents and their increasing isolation, visualized in the compartmentalization of urban housing. The question could call out the bureaucracies that have shaped contemporary South Korean culture, or it could be calling to the people themselves, questioning their complicity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed strangeness in urban spaces in 21st-century Korean literature with respect to contemporary conditions and events. Authors like Watson, Perera, Tang, and Hong argue for an understanding of Asian cities like Seoul as rooted in a form of modernity distinct from Western cities that must be understood in terms of local beliefs and histories. Watson describes Seoul as a "New Asian City," a term that acknowledges Seoul's postcolonial characteristics of rapid growth and industrialization as well as the reappropriation of colonial infrastructures that preserve colonial systems of production and consumption. The texts in this chapter portray how these industrializing forces shape lives and social relations across the 20th and 21st centuries. Under contemporary conditions, these forces result in eruptions of strangeness. Short stories like Seong-nan Ha's "Flag," Ko-eun Yun's "Sweet Escape," Ae-ran Kim's "Prayer" and "No Knocking in This House," and Hwa Gil Kang's "Room," reveal the strangeness in urban life expressed through behaviors like anxiety or estrangement as well as physical maladies from unsafe living conditions. *I'll Be Right There*, looking back at the 1980s-90s, provides a very different picture of social relations during South Korea's military regimes.

Individuals form close bonds with those outside of their immediate family and demonstrate willingness to sacrifice themselves for a community.

One important issue examined in these texts was the tension between individual and communal values. Drawing from the research of Moon and colleagues, I analyzed texts in terms of vertical and horizontal forms of collectivism. According to Moon et al., South Korea is a vertical collectivist society, an idea reflected in contemporary texts. However, *I'll Be Right There* demonstrates tendencies toward horizontal forms of collectivism, suggesting how in a spirit of activism, the bonds of hierarchy and authority may be broken in search of a more egalitarian community. Lim and colleagues note a tendency in contemporary South Korean society toward individuation: that is, the traditionally collectivist society is breaking up in favor of the individual, but in a manner devoid of a moral dimension. In present conditions of individuation, individuals act for themselves but do not hold individualistic identities. Instead, in contemporary South Korea, social circles remain small, normally limited to the immediate family, and trust are radii narrow. Contemporary texts demonstrate the effects of these narrow social circles and limited trust radii, portraying socially isolated characters who struggle with obsession or paranoia. Some texts suggest how common causes will bind neighbors together temporarily, such as the "World Without Bedbugs" society posed in "Sweet Escape." Texts like "Sweet Escape" demonstrate a potential for a more horizontal collectivist culture when the mantle of authority is lifted, like the one envisioned in *I'll Be Right There*, in which citizens are bound to one another in cooperation and common sympathy.

I have also considered the presentation of han in contemporary literary texts. Han, a sense of accumulated suffering or mental anguish, often viewed as unique to Korean culture, is a dominant force in *I'll Be Right There*, as characters suffer the loss of loved ones and grow closer

to one another through an identification with the other's suffering. Han is presented as a communal emotion that motivates citizens to act on behalf of one another through empathy. In *I'll Be Right There*, han is constructive, strengthening students' dedication to public demonstrations and motivating them to fight for each other in search of justice and freedom. Han manifests itself in the other texts examined through symptoms of obsession, paranoia, disappointment, or self-isolation because of accumulated suffering. These stories portray the more destructive nature of han, borne of the tensions between South Korea's national turn to economic growth and capitalist production and the cultural force of vertical collectivism. These expressions of han result in moments of strangeness in the texts. In *I'll Be Right There*, Myungsuh asks: "*Where have all of those people gone?*" (Shin 264). This question may be applied to all the texts in this chapter, which in various ways express the absence of a desired collective presence. Myungsuh's question suggests how one brief era of horizontal collectivism faded after government crackdowns and citizen discouragement and demotivation. However, it also suggests an underlying desire in Korean literary texts to realize a different kind of urban fabric: one of familiarity and empathy. In this vision, urban spaces and historic properties are reclaimed by the people as shared spaces, evoking a notion of communism persisting from social realist texts in the early half of the twentieth century.

Conclusion to "Asian Modernities: The Historical Unconscious in Asian and Asian-American Literatures"

Figure 16. "The Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation and The Untamed Differences." WinkBlooTeaTime. 1 August 2020. https://winkblooteatime.wordpress.com/2020/08/01/the-grandmaster-of-demonic-cultivation-and-the-untamed-differences/

Thus far, I have examined the quality of strangeness in Asian and Asian American literatures with special attention to transmodernity. The previous chapters have read instances of strangeness in texts against translocality and the Asian gothic. Just as transmodernity is characterized by cultural pluralism, translocality is characterized by temporal or spatial pluralisms. The Asian gothic is a translocal literary mode because it poses the crossing of boundaries between the distinct realms of the living and the dead. The Asian gothic is transmodern when it addresses modern problems. Thus, when modern problems are imbued with strangeness, new ideas about modernity are generated. In the dissertation's conclusion, I ask: what new products are emerging in East Asian popular culture, and how can my argument inform these products? If strangeness emanates from a cultural product from a culture exteriorized by the dominant modernity, what various strands of influence compose this cultural product?

In the dissertation's previous chapters, I have examined East Asian literature and comics, with special attention to South Korean literature and popular culture. The historical memory of Japan's colonization of Korea is important to these texts and provides additional insight into questions of coloniality and postcoloniality regarding modernity. Another reason for my attention to South Korea is the Korean Wave, a global rise of Korean popular culture initiated and promoted by the South Korean government to garner soft power. Now, a similar cultural wave is emerging from China. Chinese popular media and literature in translation are becoming increasingly popular globally. Like the Korean Wave, this wave of Chinese popular culture is backed by the state. These cultural products participate in global capitalism, the economic system of the dominant modernity, and are also mediated by censorship and promotional influences from the Chinese Communist Party. The conclusion focuses on a popular Chinese fantasy drama, *The Untamed*, that negotiates between these different influences.

The Untamed, based on a novel, *Mo Dao Zu Shi* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, is a 2019 Chinese fantasy drama centering the bond between two protagonists, Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji, amidst warring clans. Yin Iron, a natural element that gathers "resentful" energy from unquiet spirits, lies at the heart of clan strife. Yin Iron may be forged into powerful weapons or talismans that shape this dark energy to the user's will. Those capable of wielding natural energies are called cultivators due to their cultivation of a "golden core," a natural spiritual core cultivators develop with training. The golden core's power allows for superhuman feats of strength and agility in battle. The Wen clan, aiming to conquer the other clans through its accumulated fragments of Yin Iron, includes a member, Wen Zhuliu, who is capable of permanently destroying one's golden core, a powerful source of identity for cultivators.

Wei Wuxian, a member of the Jiang clan, is a happy-go-lucky individual studying with the Lan clan, the strictest of the clans. While Wei Wuxian has cultivated a strong golden core, he doesn't take lessons seriously and distracts himself and others with his antics. Wei Wuxian soon becomes interested by Lan Wangji, the younger son of the Lan clan leader notorious for his rigid temperament and self-discipline. Lan Wangji often chastises Wei Wuxian for his breaches of Lan clan protocol but, at times, is punished alongside Wei Wuxian, since their paths often collide.

Figure 17. Julia and Tania. "The Untamed (2019) Series Recap, Episodes 11 – 20." Julia and Tania Blog. 24 September 2020. https://www.juliaandtania.com/blog/?p=4914

The Untamed frequently depicts hauntings and other moments of strangeness. These incidents reflect emerging ideas on two topics censored by the Chinese national government: same-sex love and the unjustified sufferings of those in the past. I analyze both topics with my thesis: that where strangeness is present in an Asian literary or cultural text, new ideas are being generated about modernity.

The developing relationship between Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji is suspended when Wei Wuxian's adoptive family is killed by the Wen clan and his adoptive brother's golden core destroyed permanently by Wen Zhuliu. As a family scapegoat, Wei Wuxian feels responsible for these tragedies, and, with the help of Wen Qing, a skilled healer and ally within the enemy clan, Wei Wuxian transfers his own golden core to his adoptive brother, Jiang Cheng. Soon after giving up his golden core, Wei Wuxian is captured by Wen clan members who throw him from the sky to the Burial Mounds, a massive cemetery swarming with resentful spirits. Wei Wuxian

is subsumed by the spirits' invasive energies and, over a period of months, learns to utilize their demonic energy in the place of the golden core he has given up to Jiang Cheng. Figure 1 shows Wei Wuxian's use of demonic cultivation: lacking a golden core, he's unable to use his sword, instead playing a flute that summons resentful energy toward his foes.

Upon his return, Wei Wuxian uses his demonic power to overthrow the Wen clan and exact revenge for his adoptive family members. Once the other clans take power, leaders conspire to execute all members of the Wen clan, including the weak and elderly. Wishing to save his allies in the clan, Qing and Ning, as well as the frail members uninvolved in the clan war, Wei Wuxian takes the remaining members to the Burial Mounds, where they subsist on roots and greens and build a modest community in a land the clans consider tainted. Due to his demonic cultivation power and protection of Wen clan members, Wei Wuxian is declared an enemy of all clans and denounced by his brother, who has inherited Jiang clan leadership. Eventually, in skirmishes with the clans, Wei Wuxian's adoptive sister and her husband are killed. In vengeance, the clans slaughter all remaining members of the Wen clan.

Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji are scorned by other clan members for Wei Wuxian's demonic cultivation, perceived as the cause of their clan members' deaths. Their relationship is not a source of discrimination in the text; instead, they incur disapproval for Wei Wuxian's demonic cultivation. The way they are isolated from others, however, parallels real-world discrimination against queer relationships. Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji are also imbricated in the dark energies from the Yin Iron fragments but do not seek to exploit these energies for personal gain. Instead, they are motivated to stand by those who have received injustice— namely, the frail and elderly members of the Wen clan unfairly condemned.

One strange incident occurs after Wei Wuxian and other cultivators are captured by the Wen clan and sent to hunt the Tortoise of Slaughter. The *Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation* wiki site notes that this giant tortoise resembles Xuanwu, a creature from Chinese legend that resembles both a turtle and a snake. Wei Wuxian, trapped by the tortoise with Lan Wangji in the cave after the captives' attempt to overthrow the Wen clan, climbs into its shell, where he finds the mummified corpses of those the tortoise has consumed (see fig. 2). After examining the corpses, Wei Wuxian is drawn to a sword radiating dark energies, expressed through black smoke and haunting screams when he touches the sword. After being rescued from the cave, Wei Wuxian awakens still clutching the sword, suggesting his preexisting sympathies with the resentful energies of spirits prior to losing his golden core.

Strange incidents like this one reflect Andrew Hock Soon Ng's characterization of the Chinese gothic. Ng describes the re-emergence of the Chinese gothic in New Wave fiction, which responds to the heavy ideological crackdowns of the Cultural Revolution during the 1960s. Ng notes that strange elements, having a longstanding history in Chinese literature, were excluded from literature during the Cultural Revolution since they "did not support the political imperatives to glorify party leaders" (9). Thus, according to Ng, New Wave fiction expresses a re-emergence of a pre-existing gothic tradition altered to reflect the violence of the Cultural Revolution. This response is indicated by the prominence of violence to physical bodies in literary works. Ng argues the body's resistance to mutilation in New Wave fiction represents the "retaliating bodies against attempts to circumscribe them within highly limited ideological confines" (10). This analysis of *The Untamed* adapts this logic to contemporary taboos: namely, the repression of diverse identities and sexualities through state censorship and enforcement of heteronormativity expressed through resentful energies of the dead that eventually target

perpetrators of violence. Incidents of strangeness, such as Wei Wuxian's attraction to the haunted sword, a phallic symbol that invokes masculine identities, express emerging Chinese modernities mediated through the Chinese gothic, state censorship, popular culture, and state interest in increasing global soft power.

The Untamed eliminates the overt romance elements from the novel on which it is based due to state censorship requirements but makes the emotional connection between the two male characters clear through their protective behavior toward one another as well as occasional jealous sparring when Wei Wuxian suggests his liking a woman to Lan Wangji. Jocelin Chan notes that in addition to the emotional tone of their relationship, some of their behaviors mirror those from a Chinese marriage tradition. For instance, the two bow together three times to honor Wei Wuxian's deceased adoptive parents. Chan explains that this ritual reflects "the 'three bows' (or kowtows) of the marriage ceremony—one to the heavens and the earth, one to the parents (or "ancestors" by extension), and one to each other." Chan argues that the drama adaptation of *The Untamed* was noteworthy in its reverse of typical "queerbaiting" in television dramas. For instance, rather than hinting at homoerotic elements but stopping short of portraying a queer romance to avoid alienating conservative viewers, otherwise known as queerbaiting, *The Untamed*, under censorship, portrays a story that validates queer relationships.

The series is part of the *danmei* genre, a genre of same-sex romance between men primarily directed toward a female audience. Danmei has evolved alongside Japanese and Korean "boy's love" romance comics, discussed in Chapter Two, and has garnered global soft power for China as similar genres have done for Japan and South Korea. At present, several danmei series, including *The Untamed*, are syndicated through Netflix to an international audience, giving the genre even more exposure to a mainstream audience than Japanese and

Korean comics, which tend to have a more niche audience. Recently, my local Barnes and Noble bookseller featured a central display with copies of three of Mo Xiang Tong Xiu's danmei novel series in translation, two of which are also live-action and animated series on Netflix (*The Untamed* and *Heaven Official's Blessing*). Barnes and Nobles' decision to feature Chinese popular novels in translation suggests how Chinese media forms are becoming increasingly popular in other countries, especially one like the United States, where reading is in a steep decline.

Danmei drama series are normally part of much larger franchises including *manhua* (Chinese comics), *donghua* (Chinese animation), video games, and merchandise. In the case of *The Untamed*, the two male leads, Xiao Zhan and Wang Yibo, also have careers as pop singers and brand ambassadors. *The Untamed* lies at the crux of China's state censorship of queer sexuality and its participation in global popular culture. The series demonstrates China's strategic navigation between efforts to enforce heteronormative masculinity through state-controlled media and to expand its economy through global soft power. Graeme Smith notes that the Chinese government negotiates state-enforced notions of masculinity against "commercial realities" because "Chinese audiences, particularly women, want to see BL [Boy's Love] characters and storylines." Sun Jung's analysis of Asian masculinities, summarized in Chapter Two, noted the importance of women consumers in shaping Asian popular culture. Smith argues similarly that danmei is not only an influential force commercially but, more momentously, that women consumers' desires affect state censorship policies. Moreover, Smith notes, "BL ticks the soft-power box that forever eludes the CCP [Chinese Communist Party]" (Smith). In other words, danmei offers China similar cultural power that Japanese and Korean popular culture

garnered for those nations in decades past, a fact reflected in the vagueness of China's nebulous censorship stance toward danmei.

The Untamed represents soft power to China not only through the popularity of danmei but also by expressing visions of Chinese culture that communicate the "Chinese dream" to an international audience. Paola Voci and Luo Hui describe the "Chinese dream" as a recent (2014) directive of President Xi Jinping to spread "'modern Chinese values,'" particularly the "New Confucian concept of 'harmonious society'" through cultural products (3). The New Confucian harmonious society is a state-designed version of Chinese modernity, "an attempt to reconcile the contesting social values produced by neoliberal capitalism and socialism on the one hand, and European humanism and Confucianism on the other" (Fan 59). Chinese drama series, particularly danmei series, exemplify this modernity as cultural products mediated by forces of capitalism and socialism.

These New Confucian values are also presented didactically in the drama itself. Dani Madrid-Morales comments that Chinese drama series "offer lessons on what it means to be a *wenming gongmin* (civilized citizen) in an aspirationally *hexie shehui* (harmonious society): to abide by social rules and norms" (47). These values are expressed in *The Untamed*'s depiction of the Lan clan, the most severe and disciplined of the clans but also the most peaceful and with the least corrupted members. The Lan clan's guiding principle is to "eradicate evil, establish laws; then, goodness will be everlasting." Lan Wangji struggles with this principle and ultimately rebels from the clan in his disagreement with clan leadership on what is good or evil. However, the value of laws and the harmony that results from enforcing them is not called into question in the series. Rather, Lan Wangji's dilemma, the crux of the larger ideological conflict in *The*

Untamed, on what constitutes good and what constitutes evil, suggests larger debates from the extremes of capitalism and socialism that simultaneously play into New Confucianism.

Thus, *The Untamed* represents, in its contribution to the danmei genre, and within the narrative itself, emerging Chinese modernities. *The Untamed* is marked by moments of "strangeness" that complicate official discourse on Chinese modernities. The gothic mode of *The Untamed* represents an ambiguous space in which values like loyalty and justice are redirected toward victims of tyranny in connection with the gothic expressions of New Wave fiction and a historical Chinese gothic tradition. In *The Untamed*, this mode adapts to contemporary taboos: namely, the repression of diverse identities and sexualities through state censorship and enforcement of heteronormativity. Simultaneously, the story introduces elements of Xi Jinping's vision of a New Confucian harmonious society to an international audience, producing a vision of Chinese society that is peaceful, beautiful, and communal in a bid for global soft power. As a danmei drama in global circulation, *The Untamed* demonstrates a Chinese modernity mediated by consumer forces and artistic visions as well as capitalism and official state discourse that challenges dominant Western modern ideology. Like the Korean and Japanese modernities described throughout the dissertation, Chinese modernities do incorporate Western ideas. However, many of the modernities observed throughout the dissertation, like the one demonstrated in *The Untamed*, are not democratic in the Western sense of the word and are not in line with the goals of Western powers.

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