Flexible Tradition: Modern Reinterpretations of Classical Korean Literature under Japanese Colonial Rule

Eun Young Seong

The Korean folktale, *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, has been continuously reinterpreted and adapted for new forms of literature, dance, play, and film from the early twentieth century to the present. I focus on modern reinterpretations of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* that appeared under Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) in order to explore the ways in which Korean intellectuals reinvented cultural tradition in colonial Korea. As many scholars have noted, culture changes constantly; thus tradition is not an unchanging, discrete object. For example, Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin argue that tradition, as "an interpretive process," "is symbolically reinvented" in association with "the conceptual needs of the present" (Handler and Jocelyn:273, 280).[1] In addition, as Edward Said points out in "Traveling Theory," an idea or a theory that appears in a close relation to a specific historical circumstance can be transformed when it is used in different contexts.[2] Here, I show that political, social, and historical circumstances under the Japanese imperial project brought about new reading practices of classical literature in colonial Korea. Ethnic culture is not only produced by an excavation of past experiences, but reinvented with new values in relation to the current political, social, and cultural needs. I argue that the reinterpretations of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* occurred as a critical response to the Japanese colonial rule over Korea. Korean critics, including both cultural nationalists and leftist activists, presented their criticism of the Japanese government not by merely emphasizing the authentic history of the past; rather, they explored latent aspects of modernity in classical literature in order to resist the logic of the Japanese colonial rule that did not acknowledge modernity in Korean society.

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[1] Richard Handler and Joyce Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," *Journal of American Folklore 97* (1984): 273-290.

[2] Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

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Who Owns the Story? Authorship and Readership of North Korean Migrants' "Half-Biography"

Presentation Summary

Eun Ah Cho

This study examines the authorship and readership of the autobiographies of North Korean migrants that have been published in the United States. English not being the authors' first language, most of these autobiographies have been written with the aid of a coauthor or contributor. In contrast to the usual process of translation from the subject's mother tongue into the targeted language, autobiographies of North Korean migrants that have been published in the United States have been intended for publication in English from the outset. I thus refer to these migrants' autobiographies as "half-biographies," arguing that they change the concept of "auto" biography by dividing the subject's experience from its written form. Indeed, these migrants' written narratives amply demonstrate Jacques Rancière's views of biography's "falseness"—a term that here does not mean whether a migrant's testimony is true but that rather refers to a characteristic of biography that inheres in the process of selecting, rearranging, and displacing life experience in a written story. Even though these North Korean migrant authors have settled in South Korea, their stories are neither mediated by the Korean language nor aimed at the South Korean market. Accordingly, I ask who the targeted readers are and what readers intend to gain from these North Korean migrants' stories in an era marked by a Benjaminian "poverty of experience."

The Legal Construction of Love and Suffering: Proving "Good Faith" Marriage and "Significant Hardship" for Battered Asian American Immigrants.

Elizabeth Clark Rubio

Immigration laws are rife with maddeningly ambiguous legal concepts like "significant hardship," "good moral character," "credible fear," and "good faith marriage." When immigrants apply for various legal statuses based on suffering or persecution of different sorts, they are required to demonstrate that their experiences meet these vague standards. They engage in educated guesswork as to how they might narrate stories of intimate and complex hardship in ways that they hope will meet the standards of anonymous government adjudicators. In this presentation, I look to my interviews with Southern-California based legal advocates working at non-profit organizations that primarily serve Korean and South Asian American immigrant women in applying for U-Visas, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Self-Petitions, and I-751 Waivers based on their suffering of domestic and sexual violence. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) characterizes the three application processes in question as humanitarian forms of immigration relief. They are designed to provide a path to legalization for undocumented immigrant victims of crime who collaborate with law enforcement in the case of the U-Visa and for immigrants who suffer domestic violence at the hands of an abusive US Citizen (USC) or Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) spouse in the case of the VAWA and I-751. Yet in all three cases, it is not sufficient to demonstrate that the survivor experienced abuse. Survivors must also show that the suffering they endured as a result of their abuse rises to USCIS' standard of "significant hardship." In the case of the VAWA Self-Petition and the I-751 Waiver, survivors must show they initially entered the marriage in "good faith." In other words, the burden is on the applicant to demonstrate that the marriage was originally entered into for reasons Congress deems legitimate, and not for the explicit purpose of getting a green card.

Miriam Ticktin (2011) writes that humanitarianism relies on the fiction of the "imagined universal suffering body…imagined outside time and place, outside history and politics, one that can be universally recognized" (11). I work through Ticktin's notion of the "imagined universal suffering body" to argue that "significant hardship" and "good faith marriage," are based on the illusion that what counts as hardship and good faith in marriage are apolitical and somehow universally recognizable. Histories of hardship that fall outside of the purview of the imagined universal suffering body, which in the U.S. context is often coded as white, heteronormative and middle-class, are rendered illegible and illegitimate. This brings me to the central question motivating this research: *What are the legal mechanisms through which the state authorizes and delegitimizes certain motivations for entering a marriage and that arrange intimate and complicated personal suffering in a foreclosed hierarchy of deservingness?*

Through my fieldwork, I learned that proving significant hardship and good faith marriage presents particularly significant challenges for South Asian and Korean immigrant women trying to regularize their immigration status in the wake of domestic and sexual violence. These challenges have as much to do with dating and marriage conventions and stigmas around going public with domestic violence as they do with imperialist and Orientalist tropes about Asian women as manipulative seductresses taking advantage of "innocent" U.S. citizen men. The collective forms of abuse by parents-in-law that some survivors experience, reluctance in seeking intervention from law enforcement, and marital dynamics that do not always look like what one interlocutor called "the Disneyland version of love" weigh heavily against South Asian and immigrant survivors as they are forced with the task of making their intimate, complex and traumatic experiences legible within a dominant script.

Name: Chungjae Lee (CJ)

Title: Constructing a Path for the People: A Comparative Study of Constitutional Moments in Japan and South Korea from 1911~1925

While many Anglo-American political theorists have amply theorized popular sovereignty in Anglo-American contexts, relatively little attention has been paid to moments in East Asia where "the people" was imagined as the sovereign. If the meaning of the people and their sovereign power are necessarily intertwined, what might have been the conceptual resources of the notion of "the people" and the specific relationality among them in the East Asian context? Moreover, where did the conceptual resources of popular sovereignty come from? I attempt to explore these questions trough a comparative study of constitutional moments in Japan and South Korea from 1911 to 1925. Drawing on the recent scholarship on comparative political theory and popular sovereignty, this comparative study (1) traces the conceptual resources of the notion of the people and their assemblages specific to the case of Japan and South Korea, (2) re-approaches the constitutional moments in Japan and South Korea as a process of multiple learning which involved dynamic engagements of both Western and non-Western knowledge and reconsideration of their own traditions, and (3) demonstrates that the conceptual proximity between the people and their sovereign power is artificial, one that is constantly imagined, contested, and reinvented.

I suggest that this comparative study merits political theorists' scrutiny for two reasons. First, the constitutional moments in South Kore and Japan were attempts to generate anew a politicized Japanese people and Korean people assumed and made reference to an imagined people. More specifically, both Japanese legal scholars and Korean independence fighters projected a modern and imagined people of the nation-state, *koku-min*, onto the pre-modern people of the emperor, *shin-min*. A comparative historical analysis of this projection or positing of *koku-min* can shed light on the conceptual mechanics of founding moments. Second, both Korean and Japanese intellectuals' attempts to incorporate the European concept of popular sovereignty illustrates a particular, substantive moment of "Western Learning"[1]. Their attempts are not simply a product of colonized thinking, emulation or wholesale acceptance; rather, it reflects a uniquely self-critical and self-aware understanding of the historical and institutional limitations of their own theoretical practices. This paper thus seeks to make both a substantive and a methodological contribution to political theory: the former regarding the imagined terrain of popular sovereignty, and the latter regarding the possibilities for self-understanding enabled by learning from multiple sources.

[1] Leigh K. Jenco, *Changing referents: learning across space and time in China and the West* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

The Horror of Labor :
Representations of Labor in Contemporary South Korean Literature and Film

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Engaging with texts that employ the posthuman through themes of the fantastic, grotesque, and horrific, this dissertation explores representations of the laboring human subject in twenty-first century South Korean literature and film. The project demands attention to the processes in which literary and cinematic texts engage with the increasingly gendered and racialized face of labor in contemporary South Korea as I reconceptualize the way in which such texts address, incorporate, and at times, obfuscate the otherness of the laborer. From monsters to animals, the posthuman resonates as a figure through which I explore the boundaries of not only the human and nonhuman, but the self and other. Rather than viewing the posthuman as an expansion, mutation, or devolution of the human, I treat it as a discursive site through which dominant humanist binaries of the mind and body, subject and object, and self and other are deconstructed and rewired in order to gesture towards an ethics of engagement with the alterity of the other. Such engagement produces alternative modes of recognizing the labor, lived histories, and subjectivity of a marginalized other.

In this presentation, I focus on the third chapter of my project, in which I discuss how *Thirst* explores themes of speculation and financialization as they relate to the laboring subject under neoliberal governance. Here, the vampire emerges as a figure that navigates the temporality of transnational neoliberalism, expressing an insatiable thirst for a future without the limitations of biological life. This vampire emerges alongside the figure of the marriage migrant worker, a simultaneously mobile and static subject, as her movement becomes dictated conditions of race, gender, and transnational flows of labor. Thus, I explore the implications of the spectrality of feminized migrant labor, examining the slippages that occur through the simultaneous appearance of the ghostly migrant worker and monstrous vampire. Each figure, I venture, occupies different spectrums of the posthuman. On one hand, Park's vampire signals grotesque transformation: the posthuman as a desire to overcome all limits to life and the accumulation of capital. Park's migrant worker, however, reveals the limitations of such discourse, demonstrating how posthumanism without a grounding in material history and experience risks furthering oppressive humanistic state structures.

Tian Li
Title: Transplantable Screen-capitalism: On the Chinese Remakes of Korean TV Programs

Abstract: The current anti-Korean wave paradoxically accentuates the wide diffusion and the significant impacts that the Korean wave had brought into mainland China in the last two decades. The significance of the continuously popular K-wave not only lies in its successful invasion of mainland China, but also its survival and revival over the anti-Korean wave. This continuing popularity includes the factors of cultural similarity, market proximity, cultural deterritorialization, the national and the transnational, (un)translatability, cultural transplantablity, fluid boundary of censoring, and emerging new ways of people's watching and consuming, in the spread of "screen-capitalism."

In 2015, Chinese audiences encountered a wave of entertainment reality shows that were based on original Korean entertainment programs. These remakes have formed a new pattern of the Korean Wave in China. The practices of Chinese remakes of Korean TV programs in the wave of increasing cooperative works between China and Korea, and the anti-Korean wave accompanied by them, paradoxically embody "resistance" and "affinity" at the same time. In the process of this paradoxical cultural praxis, there is a new aesthetics we need to deal with; it is the aesthesis of ephemerality that bounds modern consumers. This ephemerality forces the locality to actively engage with rich practices of intertexual survival in the intercontextual relations. Both Korean and Chinese audiences across borders share affective experience within the transnational co-productions and remakes that mediate collective affects. These collective affects regard transnational relations through a relatively de-politicalized form of entertainment; this cultural consumption has its deep engagement with emotional qualities and daily life activities. Both the original and the remake seek the intertexual survival in the land of each other's "brotherhood", where the impossibility of the translatability and reconciliation is perpetuated, while the potentiality of transplantability contributes to structuring a be-coming community as we insist in our hope of its be-coming. We live in a world of screens nowadays, where "screen-capitalism" allows people to own a more intuitive method in order to depict how others view, think, and live, thus concretizing and reifying the way they imagine others as well as their membership to a certain community. The influences produced by screen-capitalism have expansively and transgressively spread to Korea's neighboring country, beyond borders and ideological disagreements. The transnational prosperity of Chinese remakes of the original Korean versions reflects the original products' transplantability that allows both the Korean version and the Chinese remake to be successfully acclimated to audiences' demands and sensibilities in the postsocialist earth. This transplantable screen-capitalism spreads, circulates, and builds a new cultural paradigm, on and off screens, in the context of coexisting nationalism and transnationalism.