

THE IDENTITY OF A YOUNG INTELLECTUAL IN COLONIAL KOREA

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Abstract

This article explores the theme of diasporic identity as represented in *Into the Light* (1933), a novel written in the Japanese language by the Korean writer Sa-ryang Kim (1914-1950). The story is set in the days of Japanese imperialism and revolves around the relationship between Minami sensei, a young Korean intellectual studying abroad at the University of Tokyo, and Haruo Yamada, a boy of mixed heritage who was born to a Japanese father and a Korean mother. Like reflections in a mirror, the two figures portray certain contradictions within the empire with their “virtual” identities, which refer to identities borrowed or imagined by the colonized self. While briefly introducing Sa-ryang Kim’s literary achievements, this paper discusses the writings of Koreans during the era of Japanese imperialism. And by delving into the two characters, the paper examines how their identities are defined by Japanese imperialism. Then, as the analysis reveals that the two are complementary figures reflecting each other’s hybrid identity, this study explores how the identity of imperialist diaspora during the colonial period was represented. The protagonist eventually accepts the Korean title Nam sensei together with the Japanese title Minami sensei, and confirms his membership in the colonial diaspora. In contrast, Haruo Yamada identifies his projected self as Japanese, deriding the Korean teacher. This inconsistency is a testament to the wide spectrum of types of identities internalized within the people in “colonial diaspora,” who are, in this case, Koreans who had dispersed outside their colonized homeland and settled in the empire of Japan. The novel demonstrates how the virtual identities held by the members of colonial diaspora are liable to fall apart at any moment.

Keywords

colonial diaspora, colonized self, diasporic identity, hybrid identity, Japanese imperialism, Korean writers in Japan, virtual identities

About the Author

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In the novel which is set in the days of the Japanese Empire's colonial rule of Korea, a young intellectual studying at the Imperial University of Tokyo has no choice but to live in constant tension. While undergoing training in an elite educational institution at the heart of the empire, the narrator, "I," teaches at a night school where he is addressed "Minami sensei." Minami is the Japanese for "Nam," a Korean surname, whereas *sensei* is a Japanese noun for teacher. If the narrator were not a diasporic individual living under the Japanese imperial rule, he would have been called "Nam sensei" by the Japanese people ("Nam Sunseongnim" in Korean, which means Mr. Nam), as was normally used in the post-colonial era. *Into the Light* by Sa-ryang Kim is a novel that explores the diasporic identity of a young intellectual defined by the two different ways by which he is addressed: "Minami sensei" and "Nam sensei."

Korea was ruled as a colony of Japan between 1910 and 1945. As a result, various forms of "fissures" were rife in the Korean peninsula during this period of transition to modernity. Politically, the Korean people could not exercise their sovereignty under the Japanese Government-General of Korea, which was the organ of colonial exploitation that replaced the Korean government. Economically, numerous restrictions stunted the country's growth due to its incorporation into the economic system of the empire (Kang 148-309). Culturally, Koreans struggled to reject or embrace certain colonial policies which had been set in place. For instance, the Korean people at the time were forced to use the Japanese language and Japanese names. In education, they were required to follow the Japanese educational system and curriculum. The Japanese colonial policymakers attempted to thoroughly "Japanize" the Korean people.

Sa-ryang Kim, a novelist, was educated in the Japanese language and wanted to live as a Japanese citizen. Many Korean intellectuals of this era tended to either imitate their counterparts in the Japanese Empire or battle censure and constant inner conflict in their rebellious efforts to protect their native culture from Japanese influence. The main motifs of this novel were drawn from such inner conflicts. The story is set in Tokyo and features Koreans in the diasporic communities in Japan who had emigrated from the colony to the mainland of the empire. These people were without a land to call home, and formed out of the relationship between domination and subjugation. Members of this diaspora would have had to choose between two options: create a "virtual" identity in the new country or keep their native identity—thorny roads to navigate for Koreans at that time. "Virtual" identity here refers to the attributes of the Japanese (the colonizer) that the Korean (the colonized) imagines and wishes to imitate, borrow, for the sake of survival or convenience. Although they might not have felt torn between the countries they immigrated from and the country they migrated to, they were also felt split up psychologically.

A basic introduction about the author along with an explanation on the context of the novel might help clarify its significant aspects. Sa-ryang Kim was a Korean writer of the early modern period who went to Japan to study and wrote novels there in the Japanese language. Under Japanese colonial rule, many Korean intellectuals went to Japan to study, including the writers. Kim is famous for the nomination of his novel *Into the Light* for the Akutagawa Prize, the most prestigious Japanese literary award presented semi-annually. Kim's nomination for the Akutagawa is proof of his remarkable command of the Japanese language among the Korean intellectuals of his time. It is of great significance that he wrote literary works in Japanese, competing with the mainstream writers of Japanese literature. Although ultimately he did not win the Akutagawa Prize, his nomination was in itself an impressive feat. With the novel, Kim came to be regarded as "a Japanese *littérateur*" within Japan, together with another writer named Hyuk-joo Jang (Kubota 206-8).

Precaution must be taken not to interpret the act of writing in Japanese as necessarily an act of glorifying imperialism (Kweon 197-203). To be sure, there was a conflict between choosing to write in Japanese and the native language. In addition, it should be mentioned that authors were allowed to write in the Korean language for literary works in Korea. However, during the colonial period, the Korean literary world aimed to model itself after Japanese literature, which was regarded by some as the pinnacle of mainstream culture. With this, it may be said that the Korean literary world had already defined its limitations by being a colony that saw the world, including the West, through the eyes of Japan. To put it bluntly, there was an uncritical acceptance of the superior status of Japanese culture even in the literature written in the Korean language. It was in these circumstances that Sa-ryang Kim and Hyuk-joo Jang migrated to Japan in the 1930s and became pioneering authors who wrote literary works in the Japanese language.

Contemporary to Sa-ryang Kim, Hyuk-joo Jang wrote novels in the Japanese language that justified the Japanese invasion of Korea. Moving a step beyond merely imitating the Japanese people, he wished to deny that he himself was Korean. As such, Jang may be criticized for having abandoned a critical reflection of Korea's condition as a colonized society. Ultimately, after the liberation of Korea, he was naturalized in Japan and lived the rest of his life as a Japanese citizen.

On the other side of the spectrum, Korean diasporic writers like Dal-soo Kim (1919-97) remained in Japan after the downfall of Japanese imperialism and strove to re-contemplate the identity of Koreans that continued to exist as remnants of colonialism. Writers with outstanding talents such as Seok-bum Kim (1925-) and Hoesung Lee (1935-) sought to re-write the history of Korean settlement in Japan and the complex circumstances of the Korean diaspora there. They wanted to redefine their situation around the question of identity. Following in the footsteps

of Sa-ryang Kim who artistically rendered the diaspora of the imperialist era in literature, these Korean writers in Japan tended to be more critical about the historical problem of colonialism.

The significance of Sa-ryang Kim as an intellectual during the colonial era cannot be understated. Sa-ryang Kim grew up in a well-to-do Christian family in Pyongyang and was expelled from school in 1931 for participating in a students' strike against Japanese imperialism. He joined the movement for the communist revolution of Korea in 1945 and, after the division of the Korean Peninsula, wrote novels in North Korea that glorified the proletarian revolution. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, he enlisted as a war writer and presumably died during the conflict. The audacity of his career and life raised his reputation as a writer to an almost legendary status (Yum 298).

Yet the assessment of the literary achievements of Sa-ryang Kim is still underway in Korea (Kim and Kwak). Several reasons for the difficulty of literary and critical evaluation derive partially from certain ambiguities in his life. For instance, despite being expelled from school for his anti-Japanese boycott, he later on entered an Imperial University, which was an icon of Japanese imperialism. Paradoxical, too, was the fact that he wrote literary works in the Japanese language. Ongoing criticisms highlight how he was inclined toward Japanese imperialism (H. Kim 197-200), which at the time was seen ironically as the source of colonial oppression and wellspring of advanced culture, even as discussion continues today among scholars concerning the problem of Koreans writing in the Japanese language, drawing on the post-colonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha.¹ The delay in the critical assessment of writers who defected to the North is caused in part by the fact that, currently, Korea is still in the midst of an ideological war after being divided into the South and North. Finally, it does not help that most previous studies on the issue are based on the perspective of colonialism. In other words, these studies tend to simplify the complexities of the conflict as merely a case of coercion by a ruling state (Japan) and the resistance of the subjugated (Korea). By doing so, they are unable to explore the historical problems and the difficult choices the protagonists in Sa-ryang Kim's stories have to face, which frequently do not dovetail with well-knit theories.

As an autobiographical novel, *Into the Light* has often been read with the image of the author in mind. This can be an advantage in textual analysis, but sometimes it can prove to be a drawback. Focusing more on the novel itself rather than its relation to the author, we need to imagine more broadly the reality of a young intellectual's situation in a colonial setting and the kinds of ethical anxieties he must have experienced.

The narrator of the novel is a young Korean studying at an Imperial university in Japan who also teaches at a night school. His peers are the elite youths of Japan. As the novel begins, the protagonist is depicted to be a young member of the elite who studies in an institute and volunteers at a night school in which those who are destined to run the empire someday were being trained. What is problematic about this setting-up of his identity is that his background in colonial Korea is omitted. Instead, what is foregrounded is the image of the top educational institute in Japan.

Imperial Universities are the top educational institutions established during the Japanese colonial era in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Tohoku, Kyushu, Nagoya, Hokkaido, Taiwan, and Korea. Amongst them, the Imperial University of Tokyo was the “brain” of colonial rule located at the center of the empire. The portrayal of a young man with colonial roots rubbing shoulders with the top intelligentsia of the ruling state of Japan is remarkable. That the protagonist attends the Imperial University of Tokyo reflects the reality of the era in which intellectuals from the colony of Korea strived to reach the center of the ruling nation’s cultural power. The truth was the Korean colonial intellectuals of the time had no choice but to be drawn toward the culturally advanced Japan.² They chose to “use the colonial system itself as a means to improve and develop the life of the colonized in the face of oppression from the colonial power” (Yamaji 27). Formal education was one such path. The following passage is illustrative of the instability of the virtual identity of the narrator. On one hand, he confidently identifies himself as a student at an Imperial University; on the other hand, his confidence in his borrowed identity is easily shaken by the problem of how he is to be addressed:

I don’t know when, but I passed for Minami (南) sensei within the association.³ As you may know, my surname *should be pronounced as Nam (南), but for various reasons, I was known by a Japanese name. Above all, it must have been because my colleagues called me so.* It weighed heavily on my mind at first. But later on I thought to myself that it might be better this way for the sake of playing together with these innocent children. And so I used to repeat to myself time and time again that I had no inclination towards *hypocrisy* neither had I a reason to be *servile*. Certainly, I found myself preparing an *excuse* that if there had been a Korean child in this class, I would have forcefully asked him to call me by the name *Nam*. And that would have had a bad emotional effect on both the Korean and the Japanese students. (S. Kim 7, italics mine)

Naturally, people of colonial Korea had their own ethnic surnames, but they were forced by the Japanese to use Japanese surnames. For the narrator Minami sensei, both as a student of an imperial college and as a teacher at a night school, there is a Korean form of address that is absent: Nam. He consciously finds the title Minami sensei problematic. In his mind, it is associated with expressions of self-justification that imply hypocrisy, servility, and excuses. His virtual identity

as defined by the Japanese name, Minami, is the very manifestation of these expressions of self-justification. Moreover, it implies the attitude to assimilate into the empire and embrace Japanese culture.

The narrator's surname is Minami which "should be pronounced as Nam (南), but for various reasons I was known by a Japanese name" (S. Kim 7). Perhaps the reason why Minami does not mean any less vaguely than "for various reasons" lies in his inability to produce justifiable reasons for the name Minami. He is conscious of how it "weighed heavily on [his] mind at first." (S. Kim 7) As such, the narrator is unable to fully connect his identity with the sign Minami, which is, in fact, borrowed or concocted. This is the dilemma surrounding the Korean surname Nam and the virtual identity of Minami.

Yet what could possibly be the reason for going as far as to prepare an excuse for why he accepts the title Minami? For a young man from a colony, to be called Nam sensei at the very heart of the empire, it would have most certainly entailed restrictions of activity. The assimilation policy of Japan admitted many Koreans into the fold of the empire as citizens; however, ethnic discrimination continued to exist. Nam sensei is a literary device used to expose such ethnic discrimination. The protagonist is aware of the consequences of insisting on the use of his Korean name. He is aware that accepting Minami sensei is, in truth, a form of defeat, so he buries these thoughts under an excuse by saying that "it might be better this way for the sake of playing together with these innocent children. And so I used to repeat to myself time and time again that I had no inclination towards *hypocrisy* neither had I a reason to be *servile*." (S. Kim 7)

That the narrator is unable to boldly state that his surname is Nam whenever he is called Minami sensei cannot simply be seen as an ethical matter of hypocrisy. The clash between Minami and Nam is a complex dissension that is symbolic of fission within the empire. The story presents the conflict of the narrator as if he regrets what he has done as a hypocrite. Yet, it reveals the paradox that the existence of Korea, although subjugated by the Japanese empire, was the very crack in the colonial state, undermining its status. The conflict between Nam and Minami is in fact the conflict between the Japanese Empire and colonial Korea. As will be discussed later, this is confirmed by Lee's protest, "But then why would even a person like you try to hide the surname?" (S. Kim 8). The paradigm of imperialism designed to incorporate the colonized into the empire is bound to be seriously undercut.

The core of the conflict in this novel is the inability to anchor the identity of "I" between Nam and Minami; in other words, Nam sensei's issue is the question of self-identification (Lee 232). The identity of the narrator would have seemed

complete as a member of the empire if he had accepted the Japanese name Minami sensei. Yet such a self-definition that hides the Korean identity (Nam sensei) only ends up paradoxically revealing the coercion, direct or indirect, of the empire. In other words, the very situation that compels one to have two identities itself undermines the borrowed identity that the person adopts to secure an identity in the empire (J. Kim 36). Even as the “I” of the narrator is the point of convergence of the different signifiers Minami and Nam, the two monikers cannot truly combine to form a concrete identity. Instead, they make the signified himself unstable in a constant struggle for dominance.

This microcosm of the greater struggle aptly presents an aspect of colonial diaspora. For instance, uttering his Japanese name Minami himself or hearing himself addressed by that name means that he is continuously reminded in daily life that he belongs to the Japanese empire. The colleagues in the earlier passage refer to the Japanese co-workers who call him Minami. Although his colleagues call him by this name to express that they do not discriminate against him, “I” is bound to be put in a situation in which he is under constant scrutiny about his identity. Such a scrutiny eventually pushes him to accept his virtual identity under the Japanese empire; as a consequence, it leads him to further imitate his Japanese intellectual peers from the imperial college. Significantly, this form of address buries under it a remnant of his native country. Just as the original culture and customs of the colony were swept aside by imperialistic doctrine, Nam is covered by Minami.

In many cases, members of a diaspora live in the newly settled country with their homeland still in their mind as a place where they can return to one day. In this sense, the two places are not necessarily antagonistic to each other. Yet people in a colonial diaspora who lose their country and have no choice but to reside in the land of the empire have no place to return to. In such a situation, they are faced with a reality in which they could only imagine their lost homeland while living in the empire in reality.

The virtual identity of a diasporic person in the Japanese empire imitates the logic of the empire itself. In the name of maintaining his relationship with the “innocent children” (i.e., the Japanese children), the narrator tries to internally rationalize his assimilation into the empire. The narrator’s presupposition that there is no Korean child in his class is a kind of excuse because it is derived from a motivation to have a Japanese identity instead of a Korean one. This is an acceptance of the destiny that people under the empire must integrate into Japanese society. An important question is now asked: What would happen if there was a Korean child from the colony? As an answer to this, the novel introduces a surprising twist, introducing Haruo Yamada.

Haruo Yamada has a Japanese name, yet he is only one-quarter Japanese. His father, Hanbe Yamada, is an unlawful man of Korean visage, born of a Japanese grandfather and a Korean grandmother. His mother, Teizun Yamada, is Korean. Thus, Haruo Yamada's bloodline is thick with Korean, not Japanese, origins. He has a Japanese surname according to the patrilineal succession in Japanese society, yet his name cannot represent who he is, so he, too, could only have an unstable identity. Haruo Yamada himself knows this better than anyone else. Although he desires to be Japanese, the boy could never be integrally whole and has to conceal the Korean blood flowing within him.

In the novel, Minami sensei observes Haruo Yamada, whom he has been teaching in a children's class. The story uses the soliloquy as a literary device; with it, the narrator confesses his agony upon discerning his identity in Haruo Yamada, which he sees as one would see a reflection in a mirror.

Haruo Yamada, whom I try to describe now, was indeed a strange boy. He did not attempt to mingle with his peers, but instead, always moved outside of their circle as if in fear. Always a victim to bullying, he himself also tried to disrupt a girl or other small children behind the lines. And if someone happened to trip and fall, he made a great fuss of it just as if he were waiting for that moment. The child did not want to love nor was he loved. Even at first glance, *he invoked an unpleasant sensation with his sparse hair, big ears, and pale dull eyes. And his clothes were always dirtier than those of any children in his vicinity; he was wearing a ragged grey Shimofuri outerwear this late into autumn. Whether this was the cause or not, his gaze appeared all the more gloomy and skeptical.* Oddly enough though, he would never expose his address to anybody. I ran into him two or three times in front of the Oshiage Station whilst I was returning to the S Association from the university. Considering his direction of walking, he seemed to live near the wetlands behind the station. So I asked him on one such occasion:

"Living behind the station?"

He shook his head in consternation.

"No, my house is just next to the association." (S. Kim 6, italics mine)

Minami describes the image of Yamada as a boy who cannot get along with the people around him and who "invoked an unpleasant sensation with his sparse hair, big ears, and pale dull eyes." In physiognomic terms, he has a typical look of inferiority. The narrator continues to further describe the poor boy's shabby clothes, the economic implications of "the wetlands behind the station," along with the boy's "gloomy and skeptical" character. By going so far as to imply discrimination due to the differences in economic background and place of residence, this description completes an overall negative image of Haruo Yamada.

There are almost persistent descriptions of the physiognomy of Koreans in the novel. Eugenic ideas underscoring the superiority of the Japanese people became the ideological basis of the empire (Oguma 235-270). This ultimately spawned discrimination based on physical characteristics (Tanaka 46). The eyes of the Japanese empire saw filth and bodily imperfections when they were trained upon Koreans (Kato 33-69). The perspective of the narrator, who is a colonial student attending an Imperial University, shows that some Koreans were also internalizing the logic of the empire. The novel represents here, perhaps inadvertently, the stereotype of colonialism that has so deeply indoctrinated the colonized in that resistance seems almost futile.

But there is a third player coming in. Another Korean youth, Mr. Lee, makes an entrance and inflicts a crack in the protagonist's virtual identity. Minami is visited by the Korean youth Lee, who takes the night course. On Lee's visit, Minami's virtual identity cannot but fall apart and collapse; the Korean identity is exposed exactly as it is. Lee is a vigorous youth who is working as an automobile assistant during the day and learning English and math at night. He interrogates "I" about his virtual identity.

"Sunsengnim." It was *Korean*. (. . .)

"Come, sit down." When we were left alone, I spoke to him quietly in *Korean*. "Until now, we haven't had the opportunity to talk to each other."

"That's right," Mr. Lee shouted whilst standing, "to be honest, I couldn't have known *with which language* I should have spoken to you." His words were full of youthful indignation. (S. Kim 8, italics mine)

Upon Lee's statement that he could not decide which language—Japanese or Korean—to use, the narrator begins to talk in his native tongue (i.e., Korean). Lee is unaccustomed to using the colonial system to his advantage as a means of improving his life under the oppression of imperialism, and Lee's inability to create his own virtual identity may have unsettled Minami's virtual identity. Upon witnessing the rawness of Lee's identity, the narrator comes to doubt himself. He confesses, "My answering voice was trembling slightly. In my encounter with him, the question of surname must have troubled my mind. That I was unable to keep my composure must have been another unmistakable proof of something subservient within myself." (S. Kim 8)

Haruo Yamada overhears the conversation and begins to overreact to the fact that his teacher is a Korean. The sequence of events starting with "my" observation of Yamada continues with the exposure of "my" secret to Yamada and burgeons into a crisis of "my" identity through this revelation.

“Hey, Josenjing!”⁴ he said, sticking his tongue out and then frantically running away as if chased. (. . .)

Looking back, it seems that he had always watched and followed me suspiciously. When I stammered, it was always he who never missed the chance to mimic me and laugh mockingly. There is no doubt that he suspected that I was from Korea. (. . .)His poor family has until now continued the lives of immigrants in Korea. He must have, even back then, returned to Korea with a distorted sense of superiority as is the case with many children returning from Japan. (S. Kim 9-10)

Haruo Yamada is persistent in his efforts to expose Minami sensei as a Korean. He believes that exposing the Korean identity of Minami and differentiating himself from the teacher is a way to prove that he is Japanese. It may be said that Minami sensei has formed a virtual identity mirroring the Japanese. He feels uncomfortable when he describes himself as Minami sensei because he knows there is a lack that cannot be overcome by mere imitation. He personifies the problem of people living in colonial diaspora whose mentality is oriented toward the Japanese, ending up unable to perfectly complete their identities.

After the encounter, the relationship between Minami and Haruo expands into a triangular interrelation that includes Lee. In other words, the author presents a sort of crossroad to Minami: In front of him is Haruo, who wishes to adhere to the Japanese identity, and Lee, who has none but his Korean identity. Minami oscillates between the two identities.

However, we must acknowledge the added complexity of how Haruo is suffering from his own identity crisis as a second-generation immigrant. This is due to the fact that, in terms of lineage, he can form neither a Japanese identity nor that of a Korean. This obsession is suggestive of the peculiar culture of Korea and Japan that puts great emphasis on blood. The two cultures share the myth of a single-race nation and cling unusually strongly to blood relations. Even today these countries have not broken free from this irrational view about races.

Although Haruo Yamada is called by a Japanese name, he is treated as a Korean because his mother is Korean. The meanness and pettiness in Haruo’s behavior stem from his effort to not be treated as a Korean. The beastly depravity of Hanbe, Haruo’s father, is also rooted in something similar. The narrator, Haruo, and Hanbe are all products of the imperial rule of Japan. It is significant to know that Hanbe’s father came to Korea and impregnated a Korean woman who later gave birth to a villain like Hanbe. It is in the same context that Hanbe forced Jeongsoon, Haruo’s mother-to-be, to marry him and bear Haruo. These incidents cannot be explained without imperial Japan’s rape-like relationship with Korea.⁵ Haruo, with three

quarters of Korean blood, cannot hope to reach a significant status in the empire. Hanbe, whose lineage is probably half-Korean, is also called by the Japanese name of Yamada; as a vagrant man, he is also not able to integrate into the empire (J. Kim 49).

Haruo, the son of Hanbe, lacks the memory of what can be called his homeland. He cannot truly define himself as Korean because his parents, who had colonial backgrounds, passed on to him meager information about his native country. He is incapable of forming a coherent idea of Korea from the perspective of a single culture, as Minami sensei can.

Haruo denies his Korean roots by disavowing that his mother was Korean. In order to avoid the disdain of the Japanese for his being Korean, his mother had to be renounced. Taunting Minami sensei for being Korean could be seen as a defense mechanism in order to prevent his own Korean identity from being exposed.

Even so, Haruo circles Minami's vicinity, never truly cutting ties with him. This illustrates the finer details of the novel. Despite Haruo's hostility toward Minami, he remains intuitively aware of their homogeneity. Haruo looks to Minami sensei as a model that can resolve the confusion of his identity. Haruo is treated as a Korean within the Japanese community. He is Japanese, but not quite Japanese; he is Korean, but not quite Korean. It is difficult for the boy to rationally understand this hybrid identity. Therefore, Minami, who has rationally formed a virtual identity through the separation of the Japanese empire from his homeland, is seen by Haruo as an ambivalent figure that simultaneously attracts him and repulses him.

Eventually, the narrative questions whether Haruo can accept the anguish suffered by colonial diaspora due to their conflicting identities—a burden that Minami has thus far carried upon his shoulders. In addition, Minami's obsession over the troubled Haruo may be due to his desire to peer into his own subconscious mind through this child. As is evident, the narrator formulates an excuse for his being called Minami sensei, yet subconsciously, he remains fully aware of the absurdity of the excuse.

On the other hand, Haruo knows of the cultural ambiguity of his identity, neither Japanese nor Korean. Unlike Minami, however, the child is not capable of explaining the irrationality of his situation with the same train of logic. In the end, in the same way that Minami is obsessed with Haruo, Haruo himself is also straining to define his existence through Minami.

An important incident occurs for Haruo resulting from his mother's injuries as a victim of his father's domestic violence. In an unexpected turn of events, the same

Haruo, who refuses to acknowledge his own mother attempts to steal Minami's cigarettes, gives them to her. Wishing for his mother's quick recovery, this moment is suggestive of his return to his maternal roots. Thus, his acknowledgement of his mother is, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the Korean blood that runs through his veins and can be read as the moment of his acceptance of his interracial identity.

At the end of the novel, Haruo Yamada himself comes to understand to some extent his own interracial identity, and the conflict between the two figures reaches a friendly compromise. In addition, when Minami sensei permits Lee to call him Mr. Nam, the tension between them eases and their relationship returns to that of a calm daily routine.

Ultimately, when living in the empire as a diasporic individual, one is bound to a vast spectrum of types of projected identities due to the fact that the monster that is the empire is also a system that produces countless and various forms of oppression and discrimination (Anthony 10-22). This is distinctively revealed by the figure of Haruo Yamada, who is registered as a resident of Japan with a Japanese name, yet is keenly aware of the reality of discrimination. The narrator "I" discovers the truth about Haruo Yamada later in the novel and comes to "think of the tragedy caused by the schism of jarring dualism taking place within a boy who has both Japanese and Korean blood." The protagonist then says euphemistically, "I may seem to understand, if vaguely, the mind of the boy who had to mock aloud 'Korean, Korean!' almost impulsively whenever he saw a Korean" (J. Kim 41). The boy shows blatant contempt for Koreans, yet as subsequently revealed, he turns out to be of a mixed heritage born from a Japanese father and a Korean mother. Hence, he identifies himself as being Japanese, cursing and hurling contempt toward the Korean.

The protagonist eventually accepts the title Nam sensei together with the usual Minami sensei, a name that was absent before, and confirms his membership in the colonial diaspora. Yet many problems are raised without being resolved. Although Haruo Yamada eventually becomes aware of the nature of his interracial background, the boy's future is far from bright. In addition, it is quite obvious that Mr. Lee, despite putting earnest effort into his daily work and developing his own identity as a Korean, will be faced with discrimination if he continues to live at the center of the empire. On the surface, both Haruo Yamada and Minami sensei are subsumed under the paradigm of nation and ethnicity in the political context of Japanese imperialism; yet it is impossible in terms of culture. These are identities that have been born out of a mixture of blood as well as a mixture of the culture of the motherland and the colonizer. The novel demonstrates the identities held by

people in colonial diaspora, which are distorted due to the fear and wounds due to the harsh social and historical reality.

Notes

1. For a summary of the history of research on the author in Korea and Japan, see Seok-hee Kim, *Journal of the Japanese Language and Literature*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2006, pp. 191-207.
2. For instance, the only options available for the people in the colony at that time were to live as a citizen of the Japanese empire or move to a foreign country (e.g., China or Russia). Living as a Japanese citizen includes both living in the colony and living on the mainland of the Japanese empire. Of course, some people chose to reside in Korea and mount a resistance against colonial Japan, and some took refuge overseas for the same cause. The point here is not to distinguish between what was right and wrong about one's political choice, but to demonstrate that the assimilation of colonial intellectuals into the culture of the ruling state was a reality of this era.
3. The voluntary service organizer who runs the night school.
4. "*Josenjing*" is a derogatory term that Japanese people used for Korean nationals at that time.
5. This is a metaphor, but it certainly implies a very specific historical aspect, just like the mixed-blood relationship between Japanese and Korean royal families.

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