

(Re)thinking Relation Through the Movement of Words  
In Response to the Notion of Contemporary Feminist Solidarity between  
Japanese Women and South Korean Women

By

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## Abstract

This thesis concerns the contemporary notion of feminist solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women, raised by the #MeToo inspired Japanese feminism. While this form of solidarity is often celebrated in the name of sisterhood through the feeling of empathy upon assumed homogeneity in the experience of oppression as a woman, Zainichi feminist critiques have warned that such form of solidarity repeats epistemic violence by flattening the historical and ongoing traces of Japanese coloniality and racism.

As a response, my thesis examines the alternative ways to think of relation without the assumption of the prior identitarian subjects who are willing to build solidarity out of empathy, out of confidence in one's knowledge, or out of conscious responsibility, and I do so by drawing on Derridean notion of the other and/as Language. By speculatively examining language or the *movement of words* as the point of reference to question ethical and political implications of relation, I turn to the instances of reading, citing, interpreting, translating the words of the other as sites of thinking.

As a site of this approach, first, I discuss relation through examining the situation of reading and translation by turning to the South Korea feminist novel *Kim Ji-young Born 1982*, which was translated into Japanese in 2018 and became a bestseller in Japan. Secondly, I discuss through the traces of words by turning to the North Korean song *Imjingawa* written in 1965 and its circulation in Japan, which has certain 'unexpected' resonance to the notion of feminist solidarity addressed in this thesis. In so doing, this thesis attempts to suggest alternative to think of relation from the impossibility, from the limitation, from the abyss.

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Finally, this thesis is owed to you, every passers-by of life I was gifted to stumble upon throughout these years.

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 24,690 words

Entire manuscript: 35,875 words

Signed : Akari Takimoto

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## I. Introduction

In front of the Tsudanuma station which is about 10 stations away from my hometown, I was standing among around 10 others, seemingly much older than myself. I was given an artificial flower and signs that said ‘#MeToo’ ‘#WithYou’ to hold while some others held ‘We don’t allow sexual violence.’ ‘Do you have a speech?’ I was asked. I did not. Before our group, I saw that there was another group standing to protest against the reconstruction of nuclear power plants, and I saw some people joining us after this protest. I did not know that Tsudanuma station could be a place like that; I mean, I never really got off here. Tsudanuma, for me, meant halfway to my errands in Tokyo. I was standing next to a person who brought their speech. I cannot remember what the speech was but it felt to be a long time and both their hands and their voice were shaking. After the whole thing, I declined the offer to be in the group picture and had a small conversation with the person who gave the speech and the older woman who told me she used to study Gender Studies in Sweden and I left. After sharing my small reflection, which, to me at least, sounded rather more distanced and undecided, with the closest person at the time, she told me that she would not dare to join such a protest because what it means to be standing for the specific cause that it was feels too much to hold. Thinking about what she might have meant caught me feeling worried if my words hurt her somehow. I was also thinking why I felt like I failed to be standing with them, then. It was almost two years ago.

One way or another, this undecided feeling which I bear on many more instances, such as having a conversation with others, listening to others, reading others’ words and writing on my own, inform my thesis, which motivates the following overall question: What does it mean that one claims a solidarity with others or one claims to be with others? – others that share different memory and experience; others whose experience and memory I can never claim to understand or know; yet the others that call me of my responsibility; the others whom I wish I am with, knowing this impossibility. As I will elaborate in what is to come, this overall question is addressed in response to the notion of feminist solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women, expressed and celebrated by the recent Japanese popular feminism. In what follows, I further contextualize my research question by introducing this specific site of thinking in relation to my overall question.

This #MeToo protest I joined two years ago was one of the Flower Demos or a protest against sexual violence which takes place 11th of every month simultaneously across many prefectures and cities in Japan since its initial demonstration which took place in front of the

Tokyo station on the evening of April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019.<sup>1</sup> It has been said that on that evening which was joined by more than 500 people, there were people going up to the microphone one after another to narrate their stories.<sup>2</sup> This initial Flower Demo took place as a reaction to the series of court cases in March 2019 which gave the verdict of innocence to the ones accused of rape.<sup>3</sup> This form of feminist movement that takes a public space to directly raise the issues of sexual violence is said to have not been seen on this large scale for a long time, and the Flower Demo is often discussed as one hallmark of the #MeToo movement in Japan.<sup>4</sup>

I remember that I came to know about the Flower Demo through my reading of academic articles. For instance, I saw Flower Demo being mentioned in the very first article in the well-established monthly academic journal *Gendai Shiso* in their 2020 March special volume featuring “Contemporary Feminism.”<sup>5</sup> There, Flower Demo was introduced and assessed somewhat uncritically as something ‘righteous’ due to its supposed activist methodology by the scholars speaking from the point of critiques on neoliberal feminism or postfeminism.<sup>6</sup> Scholars speaking from this point of view in this specific *Gendai Shiso* volume seem to, at face value, hope feminism that takes a form of certain ‘movement’ as the gateway to the situation they diagnose as postfeminism.<sup>7</sup>

Much later, I read about Flower Demo in its relation to South Korean feminism as I learned that the Flower Demo was inspired by South Korean feminist activism. Kitahara Minori who is one of the organizers of the Flower Demo and is known for her work on anti-pornography, sexual violence, and issues of ‘comfort women,’ had her inspiration for Flower Demo upon learning about the South Korean feminist movement and their form of activism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Emma Dalton and Caroline Norma, *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 23–26.

<sup>2</sup> Dalton and Norma, 23–26.

<sup>3</sup> Dalton and Norma, 23–26.

<sup>4</sup> Dalton and Norma.

<sup>5</sup> *Gendai Shisō 2020 Nen 3 Gatsu Rinji Zōkan Gō Sōtokushū = Feminizumu No Genzai*, vol. 48, 4 vols. (Seidosha, 2020). *Gendai Shiso* is a well-established monthly academic journal published by Seidosha since 1973.

<sup>6</sup> *Gendai Shisō 2020 Nen 3 Gatsu Rinji Zōkan Gō Sōtokushū = Feminizumu No Genzai*.

<sup>7</sup> Postfeminism is discussed closely with neoliberal feminism to articulate critiques to the situation where feminism is increasingly defined, in the middle class term, to mean individual and consumerist solution, such as purchasing self-care and wellness products. Japanese feminist scholar, notably, Kikuchi Natsuno discusses the situation of postfeminism and neoliberalism in Japan to criticize Japanese feminism that lacks in structural critiques. For more please see: *Nihon no posutofeminizumu ‘joshiryoku’ to neoriberarizumu* (2019) by Kikuchi Natsuno.

<sup>8</sup> Dalton and Norma, *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement*, 105-106.

\*I refer ‘comfort women’ issues as the operation of sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces before and during WWII in the occupied area, forcing and deceiving women across Asia, majority being Korean women,

In fact, one realizes that the language #WithYou used together with #MeToo in Flower Demo is a South Korean feminist language.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the symbol of the flower is said to come from the flower symbol used by the brand *Marymond* which is a South Korean company that donates half of its revenues to organizations that support the issues of ‘comfort women’ upon their sales of clothing, bags and accessories with the designs of flowers.<sup>10</sup>

To contextualize further, this reference to the issues of ‘comfort women’ is not specific to Flower Demo but some Japanese feminist activists who speak with the language of #MeToo reference ‘comfort women’ issues as something related to their activism in addressing sexual violence in contemporary Japan. This is, for instance, suggested by the following statement raised by a feminist artist-activist group whose work in Japan is known to address “social issues Japanese women face” and consists of members mainly from Japan, South Korea, and the United States.<sup>11</sup>

“Comfort Women” Issue is #MeToo  
Solidarity and Sisterhood Across Generations and Countries  
Many people may think that the issue of “comfort women” is a thing of the past. There was sexual violence. The victim spoke out. Yet, many people did not listen to their voices. Isn't this exactly the same problem as the discrimination against women that we face in our daily lives today? Now that #MeToo is spreading and many young people are paying attention to the issue of sexual violence, solidarity and sisterhood across generations and countries are spreading through the issue of “comfort women.” Would you like to think together about the “comfort women” issue that occurred in the past, the sexual violence in our lives today, and the issue of sexual violence during wartime that continues around the world?”<sup>12</sup>

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to serve them. Japanese government and major politicians have been intensely accused of making statements that deny the Japanese military’s direct role in operating ‘comfort women stations.’

\*In this thesis, I address the Japanese names and Korean names with last name in the beginning and then first name.

<sup>9</sup> Hawon Jung, *Flowers of Fire: The Inside Story of South Korea’s Feminist Movement and What It Means for Women’s Rights Worldwide* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Dalton and Norma, *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement*, 24, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Tomorrow Girls Troop, “What Is Tomorrow Girls Troop,” accessed May 9, 2024, [https://ashitashoujo.com/about\\_us](https://ashitashoujo.com/about_us). 日本の女性が抱える社会問題 (Translation by me.)

<sup>12</sup> “Ianfu Mondai Ha #metoo Da,” Tomorrow Girls Troop, accessed March 10, 2024, <https://tomorrowgirlstroop.com/ianfu>. 「慰安婦」問題は、#metoo だ。世代や国を越えた連帯、シスターフッド「慰安婦」問題は、昔の話、と思う人が多いかもしれません。性暴力があった。被害者が声をあげた。しかし、多くの人はその声に耳を貸さなかった。これは、私たちが日々直面している女性差別の問題とそっくりではないでしょうか。#metooが広がりを見せ、多くの若者が性暴力の問題に関心を寄せる今、「慰安婦」問題を通した、世代や国を越えた連帯やシスターフッドが広がっています。過去に起こった「慰安婦」問題、今私たちの生活にある性暴力、そして、世界中で続いている戦時下における性暴力の問題について一緒に考えてみませんか？ (Translation by me.)



This ‘transhistorical’ and ‘transnational’ character of the contemporary feminist movement in Japan marked by the language #MeToo is not solely observed by myself. I have encountered quite a number of academic articles making note of this tendency in the contemporary Japanese feminist movement, and in fact, such tendency seems to be supported by certain scholars, perhaps most notably by Emma Dalton and Caroline Norma in their recent publication *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement*.<sup>13</sup>

Further, speaking of transnational feminist solidarity with South Korean women, the novel *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* may come to mind of Japanese readers.<sup>14</sup> This South Korean novel narrates the story of the main character, Ji-young, and her experience of patriarchal and sexist oppression while growing up in Seoul, South Korea, and it achieved a bestseller in Japan once translated into Japanese and published in 2018.<sup>15</sup> “This is my story!” was how this foreign novel was received and celebrated in Japan as Japanese women were said to be able to build “empathy” (共感) with Ji-young based on the relatability of Ji-young’s experience to their own experiences.<sup>16</sup> After the success of this novel, the genre “K-novel” or “K-feminist-novel” became recognizable genres that one can locate in ordinary bookstores.<sup>17</sup> This trend has also been featured by media with titles such as “Why is there an unprecedented ‘South Korean novel trend’ despite Japan-South Korea political tension?” evoking the assumption that the K-feminist-novel trend is something contradictory to what is deemed as South Korea-Japan political tension.<sup>18</sup> *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* and its success is again often referenced as another hallmark of the #MeToo movement in Japan.

By now, it may be clear that the contemporary Japanese feminist movement with the language of #MeToo has a certain aspect of transnational and transhistorical solidarity with particular reference to South Korean feminism and ‘comfort women’ issue. Importantly, this

<sup>13</sup> Dalton and Norma, *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement*.

<sup>14</sup> Nam-ju Cho, *82 Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon*, trans. Mariko Saitō (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2023).

<sup>15</sup> Cho.

<sup>16</sup> Chikuma shobō, “‘82nen Umare Kimu Jiyon’ Ga Matibou No Bunkoka 'koreha Watashi No Monogatari Da' Jinbundō,” Jinbundō, February 15, 2023, <https://book.asahi.com/jinbun/article/14836726>. これは、わたしの物語だ (Translation by me.)

\*共感 (Kyokan) in Japanese means “the feeling that you have when you are able to feel and understand exactly what other people is feeling” according to the Daijisen Online Dictionary. I translated it to “empathy” rather than “sympathy” for Kyokan speaks closer to empathy, which is defined as “the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation” whereas sympathy is defined as “(an expression of) understanding and care for someone else's suffering” by Cambridge Dictionary.

<sup>17</sup> Mari Aco, “Nikkan fuwa nanoni kūzen no ‘kankoku bungaku būmu’ no naze,” Toyo Keizai Online, September 7, 2019, <https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/301306>. 「K 文学」「K フェミニズム文学」 (Translation by me.)

<sup>18</sup> Aco. 日韓不和なのに空前の「韓国文学ブーム」のなぜ (Translation by me.)

reference itself is made possible by the feeling of Me Too: the possibility to claim that your experience is mine too, transcending the differences in history – ‘comfort women’ issue is #MeToo – and transcending the differences in nation – Ji-young’s story as ‘this is my story’ –. It seems as though the contemporary Japanese feminist movement spoken in the language of #MeToo stands on this celebrated possibility of transcending the differences, the possibility to claim other’s experience of oppression as mine too through the feeling of understanding and empathy based on the relatability to my own experience, not of any experiences but *the* experience registered as oppression as a woman.

Such is the context in which my overall question I introduced earlier– what does it mean that one claims to be in solidarity with others – is being raised. This question and my undecided feeling regarding the approach taken by the contemporary Japanese feminism in relation to South Korean feminism is informed by my reading of socialist feminist, postcolonial feminist and queer of color feminist critiques.<sup>19</sup> These critiques have addressed the situations of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability that shapes and shaped by existing matrix of power situated through colonialism, imperialism, and globalized capitalism and such. These critiques have warned against the idea of women as universally and homogenously oppressed category under an assumed all-encompassing patriarchal structure that stands independently above any other operations of power – for such an assumption could have been made precisely by those who had the privilege to stand by the side of other workings of power. This form of knowledge production has led epistemic violence by naming those experience as *the* experience of women and oppression, making other’s experience unrecognizable and impossible. These critiques constitute the call that addresses me to question the Japanese contemporary feminist movement that claims transnational and transhistorical solidarity based on the assumption of the shared experience of *the* oppression as a universal woman.

Within the context of Japan, from as early as the first rise of the feminist movement in 1960, there have always been critiques that question the idea of feminism taken by the majority Japanese women, specifically from what may be referred to as the anticolonial perspective. For example, Japanese feminists have been criticized for their approach to the issue of ‘comfort women’ precisely because of their reduction of this issue to the single axis of sexual violence by claiming to work in solidarity with other Asian women such as South

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<sup>19</sup> Such that Donna Haraway: “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” Gayatri Spivak: “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gloria Anzaldua: *Borderlands/La Fronter*, Sara Ahmed: *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, and more...

Korean women as homogenous victims.<sup>20</sup> In this gesture of transcending the nations to build solidarity as an equally oppressed group of people, Japanese feminists have been accused of avoiding an engagement with Japanese imperialism and colonialism, let alone ongoing coloniality and racism within Japanese society at large.<sup>21</sup> Such tendency is also reflected by the earliest Japanese Women's History book published in the 1980s which is accused of narrating Japanese women's experience as mere victims of the patriarchal structure, lacking in any articulations on Japanese women's involvement with imperialism and colonialism.<sup>22</sup>

Much of these postcolonial feminist critiques in the context of Japan are raised by the Zainichi Korean scholars and my understanding of anticolonial critiques is owed to the works of Zainichi feminist critiques. To briefly explain, Zainichi Korean people refer to the generations of Korean people who have been residing in Japan from as early as the late 1920s during the time when the Korean peninsula was under the colonial rule of the Japanese Empire (1910-1945).<sup>23</sup> After the end of WWII, Zainichi Korean people were stripped of their entitlement to Japanese citizenship, and hence still to this day, seventh generation of Zainichi people can be born in Japan as 'state-less foreigners' with special permanent residence permits offered for the descendants of colonial-era migrants, unless they are born to naturalized parents or parents with South Korean passport.<sup>24</sup> This means exclusion from the social infrastructures that are only granted to those with citizenship. Second generation Zainichi Korean women and scholars, such as Kim Isaja, Kim Puja, Song Yŏn-ok, and Yang Chin Ja are in fact the first to raise their voice against an easy show of feminist solidarity with the Japanese women as early as the 1960 feminist movement. Simply put, while Japanese feminists could be occupied with the notion of sexual liberation and equal economic opportunities soon after the end of WWII, Zainichi Korean women were made to face structural discrimination, racism, continuing colonialism within Japanese society at large, and patriarchal discrimination within their own Zainichi activist community.<sup>25</sup> The contemporary

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<sup>20</sup> Puja Kim, "The Pitfalls of Ueno-Style Feminism Sociology : Looking Back at Ueno-Yoshimi Dispute and Its Legacy," *Shogaku ronsan* 58, no. 5·6 (March 1, 2017): 103–35.

<sup>21</sup> Kim.

<sup>22</sup> Yŏn-ok Song, "Zainichi Chosen Jin Josei to Ha Dareka," in *Keizoku Suru Shoku Min Chi Shugi Gendā / Minzoku / Jinshu / Kaikyū* (Seikyusha, 2005), 270.

<sup>23</sup> "Zainichi Korian Q&A," The History Museum of J-Koreans, accessed March 10, 2024, <http://www.j-koreans.org/etc/qna.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Tonghyon Han, "Transnational Movement Rights and the 'Nationality' of Zainichi Korean: From the Survey for Korean School Graduates," *Bulletin of Japan Institute of the Moving Image*, no. 3 (March 31, 2022): 7–37, <https://doi.org/10.50851/00000016>.

<sup>25</sup> Isaja Kim, "Zainichi Josei to Kaihō Undō Sono Sō Sei Ki Ni," *Zenya Tokushu <onna Tachi> No Ima* 4 (summer 2005).

Japanese feminist movement that celebrates solidarity with South Korean women and ‘comfort women’ through the feeling of empathy as universally oppressed women repeats this epistemic violence by making it unrecognizable this historical *and ongoing* matrix of power that Zainichi feminist critiques have always articulated.

Setting out to write a thesis as a response to what I established thus far as the uncritical form of solidarity raised by Japanese women in relation to South Korean feminism, I do not simply mean to articulate critiques. ‘Articulating critiques’ will mean that I will simply rehearse and apply the critiques given by Zainichi feminist scholars and I will be doing so problematically by citing those words as if they were mine, as if they arise from me. The critiques of Zainichi scholars, however they inform my thesis and my sense of undecidability, remain as their words. My thesis, in fact, therefore starts from this reflection. What does it mean that I set out to articulate my response to the form of solidarity raised by Japanese women in relation to South Korean feminism, and that such mode of questioning was, first of all, enabled by my reading of other’s words, i.e. Zainichi feminist critiques? In setting out this approach, am not I the one precisely attempting to form a solidarity with the other whose words, memory and experience I can never claim to understand or know? Thereby, my thesis that questions the form of solidarity between Japanese women and South Korea women must necessarily will begin by thinking the ‘situation’ of solidarity’ itself or the ‘situation of relation’ itself. What is at stake there? What kind of political and ethical question emerges at the situation of such relation? What is at stake when one makes – or perhaps one is made into – a certain relation with the other and how might the question of politics and ethics emerge?

To think with this question, I am drawing on Jacques Derrida’s discussion on Language and the other or Language as the other where Derridean notion of ethics and politics emerge. Derrida discusses that the words *uttered* by the other *drift* and make *trace* as they get *grafted* from their own context and get cited, interpreted, translated, and claimed by others in their context.<sup>26</sup> The words in the novel *Kim Ji-young Born 1982*, the words of the ‘comfort women survivors,’ and the words of the second generation Zainichi feminist critiques all weave their traces since its initial utterance as they are cited again and again by the others. Words are, therefore, said to outlive the finitude of ourselves, our memory, because while those that uttered the words initially could be long gone and forgotten, the words themselves can prolong and mature their life for as long as they are read, cited, and

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<sup>26</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context,” in *Limited Inc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1982).

interpreted and translated, enabling them to accumulate the memories of those instances, within their trace.<sup>27</sup> Hence, ‘transnational’ and ‘transhistorical’ drifting of words can be seen to be simply one possibility of the essential workings of words, as words can never be completely owned and secured by the utterer within the confinement of its specific time and space – even if, this initial situation is what constitutes the originality, or in Derrida’s words, *absolute singularity* of those specific utterances.<sup>28</sup> My question in relation to my overall question will be then: how do words – with all the traces they carry which go beyond and before myself– involve me and others into an unexpected relation at the instance of reading them, singing them, citing them, interpreting them, and translating them? What does this suggest about what it means to be in a situation of relation with the other, the other that may have been long gone, or are yet to come? How might these workings of words open up and inform us of the situation of ethics with the other? Derrida suggests that the movement of grafting the other’s words and taking them again within my words is always a violence against the other, a violence that threatens the absolute singularity of the other.<sup>29</sup> Yet, it is still a violence that the words themselves *desire* for they depend on such risk of violence to prolong and continue their trace where they are left off.<sup>30</sup> This essential violence in relation to the other and the words uttered by the other, therefore, binds those that graft, read, cite, interpret, and translate the words of the other to certain ethical responses, responsibility.<sup>31</sup> Is not this binding situation brought by the workings of words paradoxically also a certain possibility of a relation?

Speaking of ethics, Derrida says “other is secret.”<sup>32</sup> Other remains other because there is something in other that I must never claim to have completely understood.<sup>33</sup> Such absolute distance that the other keeps is also the absolute singularity of the other that my desire to get close to it, even if it were the feeling of love, empathy, or care, might threaten to its destruction. When such distance to the other is flattened out in the name of building relation with this other, the other gets destroyed making it no longer recognizable the trace this other

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<sup>27</sup> Derrida.

<sup>28</sup> Derrida, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Derrida, Évelyne Grossman, and Thomas Clément Mercier, “The Truth That Hurts, or the Corps à Corps of Tongues: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” *Parallax* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 8–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2019.1570603>.

<sup>30</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier.

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Derrida and Outi Pasanen, “Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue—Between Two Infinities, the Poem,” in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 44 (New York, NY: Fordham Univ. Press, 2005), 135–63.

<sup>32</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, “The Truth That Hurts, or the Corps à Corps of Tongues,” 19.

<sup>33</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier.

has always carried. Yet, talking about the violence of closing off the distance, the complete repulsion in the movement of distancing away from this other is also not the way because such is the attitude of irresponsibility and maybe cynicism, a pretense to shut the ear to the call that the other addresses me. This is why I must write. I must write in relation to the contemporary Japanese feminist movement not to repulse it, not necessarily to criticize it, but to respond, to be responsible with the traces of this movement that opens up for me, first of all, the situation to think.

Through such writing, I am hoping that I am able to, in some ways, suggest certain alternative ways to think about being in relation with other that do not foreclose and flatten the distance, difference and traces. I am also hoping that my methodology in centering my thinking on the *dealings of words*, and not necessarily on the dealings of human – in other words, my speculative hypothesis on *dealings of words* as that which allow the very possibility of dealings of human – to open up interesting possibility to question the agency of a human subject and the implication of openings up to such sense of *ahumanity* to think about ethical relations with other.

In what follows, I will introduce the way this thesis is organized. After this introduction, I am discussing in more detail the historical background that led to what I referred to as Japanese feminism and Zainichi feminist critiques. Then, I review the general circulation of popular culture across Japan and South Korea to further contextualize the contemporary popular consumption of South Korean feminism in Japan. What follows after this contextualization is my discussions where I develop my analysis with one chosen piece of words for each chapter.

In my first analytical chapter, I am centering my discussion on the novel *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* and its reception in Japan by focusing on the translator Saitō Mariko and her affective intervention in this novel and its reception.<sup>34</sup> As I mentioned earlier, this South Korean novel, referred as ‘feminist novel,’ was received very well in Japan once translated. It has been said that many Japanese readers were able to identify with the experience that the Ji-young, main character in the novel, goes through. Yet, some readers, including Saitō herself, did not or could not join such a celebration of identification and remained outside witnesses. In this chapter, I discuss how Saitō intervenes in this celebrated echo of empathetic identification by the Japanese readers in relation to *Kim Ji-young* by examining Saitō’s own writing within the Translator’s Notes and beyond. With my analysis on Saitō’s affective

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<sup>34</sup> Cho, 82 *Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon*.

interaction, I discuss the implication of responding to this following question: what does it mean that one remains responsible for the words uttered by the other and the traces of those words?

In my second analytical chapter, I am centering my discussion on the circulation of the song *Imjingawa* which was written by the North Korean poet in 1965 and was introduced to Japan through Zainichi Korean organization, called Chongryon.<sup>35</sup> *Imjingawa* was then discovered by the Japanese popular folk band of that time, *The Folk Crusades*, and became popular in Japan around the late 1960s.<sup>36</sup> Since then, *Imjingawa* has been sung by many artists. I am looking at the circulation of this song to finally discuss one version of *Imjingawa*, released in 2018 as sung by the South Korean artist, Lee Lang, in Japanese translation.<sup>37</sup> I am discussing her version of *Imjingawa* through my own encounter, and its ‘unexpected’ resonance with the form of transnational feminist solidarity addressed in this thesis. My discussion focuses on the memory that stays with the trace of *Imjingawa* and different narratives that *Imjingawa* has enabled in the course of its life. This discussion is focused on the workings of *Imjingawa* and the question on what it might mean that we turn to the movement of words as a *reliable reference point* to think about relation.

Finally, in conclusion, I reflect on my analysis in relation to the notion of transnational feminist solidarity as a response to Zainichi feminist critiques which have addressed the epistemic violence repeated in such form of solidarity. Given my previous two sets of analysis on the movement of words, relation and memory, I elaborate what it means to approach this epistemic violence said to have enabled by certain amnesia – the lack of recognition, the lack of engagement and the lack of knowledge – without resorting to seeking redemption in our will, confidence, commitment to finally recognize the other. From this limitation that motivates my overall question – what does it mean that one claims solidarity with others whose memory and experience one can never claim to have known, understood, or recognized – I conclude my writing in response to the contemporary notion of the transnational feminist solidarity between Japan and South Korea.

<sup>35</sup> Sunhee Koo, “‘Imjin River’ and the Transnational Consumption of Partitioned Korea,” in *Popular Culture and the Transformation of Japan–Korea Relations* (Routledge, 2020), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Yasuhi Matsuami, “【Longu Intabū】 Sakushika・Matsuyama Takeshi to sono jidai #3 / Imjingawa no koto | MEN’S EX ONLINE |,” *MEN’S EX ONLINE* (blog), September 18, 2018, <https://www.mens-ex.jp/archives/1114182>.

<sup>37</sup> [MV] 이랑 이 · 란 - 임진강 이ムジン河, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhBQinebAp0>.

## II. Historical Background and Literature Review

In this section, to contextualize Zainichi feminist critiques that inform my question, in Part I, I discuss the historical background which has given rise to the point of critiques by Zainichi Korean feminism in relation to the Japanese feminism. I do so by discussing the political situation in Japan under the U.S. occupation after the end of WWII and the struggle and resistance experienced by the Zainichi Korean people. I have chosen to discuss this through tracing the history of ‘Chosen school’ founded by the Zainichi Korean organization, Chongryon. This is to contextualize my later analysis on the circulation of a North Korean song *Imjingawa*, as its circulation in Japan leads back to Chongryon and one Chosen school. In Part II, to contextualize the contemporary popular cultural consumption of South Korean feminism and my point of questioning, I trace the circulation of popular culture across Japan and South Korea by drawing attention to the general tendency regarding what is permitted to circulate in public representation.

### Part I: Reading the Traces of Zainichi Feminist Critiques

#### 1) Japanese Colonialism, The U.S. Occupation, Korean War

By August 1945, there were more than two million Korean people residing in Japan.<sup>38</sup> Those included farmers whose land was lost to the Japanese Empire during the colonial occupation and migrated to Japan during the late 1920 to 1930 to look for work and others included those who were forcefully brought under requisition and conscription later in the 1930s.<sup>39</sup> The repatriation that immediately followed after the independence of the Korean peninsula was made difficult by the situation due to the wake of the Cold War and some people chose to prolong their return home and 600,000-700,000 Korean people are said to have remained in Japan by 1948.<sup>40</sup> Those people remained constituted the demographic group referred to as ‘first-generation Zainichi Chosen’ people, Zainichi referring to ‘residing in Japan’ and Chosen referring to the Korean peninsula, the area Japanese Empire occupied since 1910. The 97% of those remained are said to come from the Southern provinces of the Korean peninsula.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, there were some people who fled to Japan during the Korean War,

<sup>38</sup> “Zainichi Korean Q&A,” The History Museum of J-Koreans, accessed March 10, 2024, <http://www.j-koreans.org/etc/qna.html>.

<sup>39</sup> “Zainichi Korean Q&A.”

<sup>40</sup> “Zainichi Korean Q&A.”

<sup>41</sup> Sonia Ryang, “Nationalist Inclusion or Emancipatory Identity? North Korean Women in Japan,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 21, no. 6 (November 1, 1998): 582, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(98\)00074-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(98)00074-0).



especially during the Jeju April 3 incident in 1948.<sup>42</sup> These people upon arrival tried to reach Zainichi community, though some of them were caught and imprisoned in the Omura Immigration Center in Nagasaki as ‘illegal residents.’<sup>43</sup> There were also some cases where Korean people who migrated much earlier during Japan’s colonial era were imprisoned, and some of them were given the treatment of forceful deportation to where their lives were at stake.<sup>44</sup> As I will discuss further in detail in what follows, the Omura Immigration Center was built precisely to detain Korean people in the movement of expelling and isolating them from the Japanese society, and such movement of violence had to do with preparing post-war Japan in an alliance with the U.S. imperialism.

### 1a) Chōren and Chosen Schools

In what follows, I focus my discussion on the political situation in Japan under the U.S. occupation and the resistance that followed, and to do so I trace the history of Zainichi Korean community and their activism after the end of the war by discussing the organization ‘Chōren’ and its school ‘Chosen schools.’<sup>45</sup> Immediately, after the declaration of the end of WWII, the first-generation Zainichi Korean people formed an organization, called Chōren to situate their lives within post-war Japan.<sup>46</sup> Chōren mostly consisted of activists aligning themselves in support of the Northern regime against American and Japanese imperialism during the Korean War.<sup>47</sup> One of the first things that members of Chōren did was to start a school where their children could learn about themselves, including the Korean language and history, which were for long prohibited under the Japanese Empire.<sup>48</sup>

However, after the end of the war in Japan under U.S. occupation, as the GHQ reestablished Japan as their military base to prepare for the Korean War, the Zainichi Korean people and their activism were regarded as obstacles to such planning. In 1948, Chōren’s

<sup>42</sup> Kazumasa Ko, “Mikō, Minzoku, Jendā - Zainichi Chosen Jin Bungaku Ni Miru <jinryū> -,” in *Keizoku Suru Shokuminchi Shugi: Jendā/Minzoku/Jinshu/Kaikyū* (Seikyusha, 2005), <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA7093883X>.

<sup>43</sup> Ko.

<sup>44</sup> For a much more nuanced discussion on this, including the Southern regime’s response to this deportation from Japan as well as the ordinary Japanese civilians’ involvement : please see *Shutsunyūkoku kanri no shakaishi: sengo nihon no 'kyokai' kanri* (2023) by Ri Yongmi

<sup>45</sup> From now on, I use the term ‘Zainichi Korean people (Zainichi Korean in Japanglish)’ when referring Zainichi Chosen people. I am using this term because I have come to learn that this term is regarded as more inclusive as it is deemed to encompass Zainichi people with Chosen status, South Korean status, and Japanese status.

<sup>46</sup> Iruson Nakamura, Myung-ae Kim, and Sonfa Chin, “【shinpojiumu Kouenroku】 Chosen Gakkō to Nihon Shakai,” *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2 (March 31, 2023): 129.

<sup>47</sup> Ryang, “Nationalist Inclusion or Emancipatory Identity? North Korean Women in Japan,” 582-83. There is also an organization which aligned with the Southern regime and it is called Mindan. Yet, many of the Chosen schools that exist still to this day have history that leads back to the Chōren (Chongryon later.)

<sup>48</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, “【shinpojiumu Kouenroku】 Chosen Gakkō to Nihon Shakai,” 129.

schools were declared illegal by the Japanese government and GHQ who considered the associated organization, Chōren, as a ‘communist terrorist group’ and the schools were forcefully and violently shut down, even causing casualties and death at the protest.<sup>49</sup> This struggle, also joined by some Japanese leftists such as the members of the Japan Communist Party, was after all ended in vain and all the schools were shut down and Chōren was forcefully brought to disband.<sup>50</sup> By 1955 though, Chōren reestablished themselves as Chongryon and they rebuilt these schools once again.<sup>51</sup>

These Chosen schools have been run up until now almost independently with the help of donations from the Zainichi community which itself for long struggled to make ends meet amidst employment discrimination by running family factories, restaurant bars, and engaging in the illegal production of alcohol.<sup>52</sup> To this day, unlike other International Schools and the ‘Korean schools’ which are affiliated with South Korea, organized mostly for the children of temporary South Korean expats, Chosen schools are not considered legitimate schools by the Japanese government and are excluded from public financial support.<sup>53</sup> Being excluded from the consideration as legitimate schools also meant exclusion from the qualification for university entrance, any national-wide school sports competition, and student discount for public transportation.<sup>54</sup> Some of these situations were later improved due to the efforts of Zainichi activists, such as the mothers, protesting on the streets and making direct confrontations with each situation.<sup>55</sup> For these reasons, maintaining Chosen schools causes much burden on the Zainichi community, and it is said that many do not have much choice but to attend Japanese public schools. Furthermore, the public visibility of Chosen schools has made them vulnerable to attacks by racist right-wing Japanese groups such as Zaitokukai. The 2009 raid on one Chosen school in Kyoto by members of Zaitokukai and a number of reports of attacks on the Chosen school students on their commute attest to this atrocious fact.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 130–31.

<sup>50</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 130–31.

<sup>51</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 131.

<sup>52</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 132 ; Akwi Seo, “Chapter 13: Toward Postcolonial Feminist Subjectivity: Korean Women’s Redress Movement for ‘Comfort Women,’” in *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2017), 233.

<sup>53</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, “【shinpojiumu Kouenroku】 Chosen Gakkō to Nihon Shakai,” 130-133.

<sup>54</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 132-133.

<sup>55</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 132–33.

<sup>56</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 133.

Those who were born in the midst of or post economic-boom after the leftist political struggle against Japanese re-militarization under U.S. occupation such as *Anpo Tosō* tend to reduce Chosen schools in its relation to North Korea with a non-thinking attitude of repulsion just as the GHQ and Japanese government did in 1948. Such reduction not only makes unrecognizable the historical struggle led by the Zainichi people against Japanese ongoing colonialism but also deregister the fact that these schools have served not only as a place of political ideology but as a place for Zainichi community within Japan.

The traces of Chosen Schools in Japan have witnessed Japanese colonialism, the remilitarization of Japan under GHQ, and the Japanese complicity with the Korean War. While Japanese economy enjoyed the affluence through ‘the merchant of death’ or in Japanese ‘Chosen Tokuju’ from the Korean War, the resistance continued. The affluence and pleasure, scripted in detail by the post-war plannings of GHQ and the Japanese government to nourish the middle class, was made possible with the movement of violence and repression that shut down the Chosen schools in 1948. Such movement of violence is the continued violence of Japanese colonial occupation of Korean peninsula, which are not unrelated to Korean war, remilitarization of Japan, and today’s U.S. military presence in Japan.

#### 1b) Chosen Status in Japan

In December 1945, a new election law was implemented in Japan under GHQ occupation. This implementation is often remembered, in the textbook for instance, as the celebratory date when women's suffrage was recognized for the first time in Japan.<sup>57</sup> However, this new law at the same time also stripped the voting rights of the Zainichi residents in Japan.<sup>58</sup>

Technically speaking, Korean people who were in Japan under the Japanese Empire were considered to possess Japanese nationality and Zainichi men officially had the voting rights.<sup>59</sup> However, their Japanese nationality and voting rights were stripped immediately after the war, with the introduction of the ‘alien registration system’ in 1947 requiring them to register as Chosen status person and record their fingerprints.<sup>60</sup> This fingerprint requirement had met with much protest and resistance especially by the members of Chongryon and some

<sup>57</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 156.

<sup>58</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, 156.

<sup>59</sup> Seo, “Chapter 13: Toward Postcolonial Feminist Subjectivity: Korean Women’s Redress Movement for ‘Comfort Women,’” 232.

<sup>60</sup> Yongmi Ri, *Shutsunyūkoku kanri no shakaishi: sengo nihon no “kyokai” kanri*, Shohan (Tōkyō: Akashi Shoten, 2023), 29–50.

Japanese progressive left, which finally led to its abolishment in 1993.<sup>61</sup> Yet amidst the protest, this move for alienation was finalized with the ratification of the San Francisco Treaty in 1952, and Korean people who long stayed and worked for Japan as far back as 1920 were officially made to become stateless.<sup>62</sup> This meant exclusion from social welfare, voting rights and employment within governmental, political, public services, etc. Their status was somewhat compromised in 1991 with the introduction of ‘special permanent residency’ issued only to those who migrated to Japan during the Japanese colonial occupation.<sup>63</sup> Having this residential status though still suggests that, let’s say, seventh generation of Zainichi Korean people, some of them may no longer speak the Korean language, are officially ‘foreigners’ in Japan and are excluded from all the rights which are only given to ‘Japanese nationals’ including voting rights, the rights of employment in public sectors and government, and the full rights to social welfares. Furthermore, being Chosen-seki status meant that they do not have a passport to travel with, and entry into another country as well as reentering into Japan causes much trouble. In fact, it has been also said that the South Korean government for long after the war did not accept the entry of those with Chosen-seki status person for they suspected them of their affiliation with North Korea, or if not the North Korean affiliation, Zainichi person ironically appeared to be ‘pro-Japan’.<sup>64</sup> Upon signing the *Treaty on Basic Relations Between Japan and the Republic of Korea* in 1965 under U.S. pressure, it was made possible for Zainichi Korean people who changed their foreigner status from Chosen to South Korea to apply for a South Korean passport.<sup>65</sup> Though for Zainichi Korean people who parted ways with some of their relatives and community members to North Korea during the ‘repatriation project’ in 1959 - 1984, encouraged by the Japanese government, such implicit pressure to obtain South Korean passport by this treaty was experienced as “deepening the fragmentation of Zainichi Chosen community.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> After the 9.11 in 2001, the fingerprint registration is again institutionalized for foreigners; however, this does not apply for the ‘special permanent residents.’

<sup>62</sup> Seo, “Chapter 13: Toward Postcolonial Feminist Subjectivity: Korean Women’s Redress Movement for ‘Comfort Women,” 232.

<sup>63</sup> Seo, 247.

<sup>64</sup> Han, “Transnational Movement Rights and the ‘Nationality’ of Zainichi Korean,” 16.

<sup>65</sup> Han, “Transnational Movement Rights and the ‘Nationality’ of Zainichi Korean,” 15–16.

\*1952 San Francisco Treaty allowed them to modify their status from Chosen to South Korea if they wished to.

\*It is possible to obtain North Korean passport through Chongryon; however Japanese government doesn’t recognize its validity.

<sup>66</sup> Song, “Zainichi Chosen Jin Josei to Ha Dareka,” 265.

在日朝鮮人社会の分断を深くした。(Translation by me.)

By 2020, the record suggests that there are 426,908 people living in Japan with the registration of their status as South Korea while there are 27,214 people with Chosen.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, the statistics in 2012, which was the first year the status between South Korea and Chosen was counted separately, suggests that there were 40,617 people with Chosen status.<sup>68</sup> This decline in the number of Chosen status persons suggests the decline in the demographic of the aging first-generation Zainichi people, but this decline has also been discussed together with the supposed ‘end of Cold War’ and declining political significance of Chongryon in Japan.<sup>69</sup> The sociologist, Han Tonghyon who herself is a Chosen-status person, though suggests in her research that this decline may have more to do with the desire to obtain a passport, the South Korean passport, for easier mobility to travel to South Korea but also to other countries.<sup>70</sup>

To clarify, it is a common knowledge to Zainichi Korean people that many of the majority of Japanese people, myself no exception, live by without having the slightest clue about the above snippet which was put together upon my limited readings and understanding of other people’s words. To provide some minimal context, after the formation of the historical revisionist nationalist group ‘Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform’ whose core members included the former prime minister Abe Shinzo, the textbooks were widely modified.<sup>71</sup> The textbook I grew up with, for instance, had very little or no mention at all of the violence the Japanese military had done on other Asian nations including the operation of the ‘comfort stations,’ the atrocity of forced labor upon the construction of railways for the Japanese military, and the massacres that Japanese military had done across Asia, including the one right here in Kanto in 1923 and so on. It is hardly surprising that the screening of the short film *In-Mates* which included the mentioning of the massacre of Korean people after the 1923 Kanto Earthquake was censored and banned in Tokyo just in 2022, and the artist exhibition in Aichi prefecture in 2019 which exhibited a critical stance in relation to, for instance, Japanese emperor, was also banned.<sup>72</sup> Certain things are not permitted to be recognizable, hearable and seeable in public.

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<sup>67</sup> Han, “Transnational Movement Rights and the ‘Nationality’ of Zainichi Korean,” 15.

<sup>68</sup> Han, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Han, 15.

<sup>70</sup> Han.

<sup>71</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, “【shinpojiumu Kouenroku】 Chosen Gakkō to Nihon Shakai,” 134.

<sup>72</sup> Shinichi Ogawa, “Tokyo to Ga Chosen Jin Gyakusatsu Daizai No Eizō Sakuhin Wo Jōei Kinshi ... Sakusha ‘Kennetsuda’ to Hihan Toshokuin Ga Koike Chiji Ni Sontaku,” Tokyo Shinbun Web, October 28, 2022, <https://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/210760>.

## 2) Zainichi Women, Japanese Women and Feminism

Just as I mentioned earlier, Japanese women gained political rights under the U.S. occupation led by Douglas MacArthur who is said to have had the ‘liberation of Japanese women’ at the top of his to-do lists, while simultaneously Zainichi men lost their rights and Zainichi women, obscured from such picture all together.<sup>73</sup> This may very well reflect the post-war outlook of the feminist movement in Japan. For Lisa Yoneyama, this marks the nascent form of liberal feminism where feminist struggle is strictly reduced to the notion of liberation, choice, sexual freedom and equal economic opportunities between Japanese men and Japanese women.<sup>74</sup> In fact, Yoneyama continues to argue that this form of establishing ‘liberation’ in the name of Japanese women’s liberation under U.S. occupation was strategically done by GHQ and Japanese government with the aim to colonize the language of liberation by “confiscating the language with which to address...the Japanese history of colonialism and racism” and by making it impossible to imagine liberation in terms of “alternative political formations such that may bring about antiracist, anticolonial or anticapitalism agendas.”<sup>75</sup>

It may be no wonder then that Japanese women were situated in the sense of victims of the oppressed sex who must liberate themselves, as suggested by books such as *Women’s History* book published during the 1980s which have been severely critiqued for its lack of engagement with Japanese imperialism and colonialism.<sup>76</sup> Further, it may be no wonder that the feminist movement in Japan, the Women’s Liberation Movement (*ūman ribu*) in 1960 which appropriated the language of Western feminism, has been critiqued of its solo concern with the experience of the Japanese women in relation to sexual and economic freedom, choice and autonomy.<sup>77</sup>

It is among other women, the Zainichi women who expressed that this movement hardly spoke to their experience and there is a vivid record of such account in the poem written by Sō Shūgetsu. Sō Shūgetsu was a second-generation Zainichi woman born in Saga

<sup>73</sup> Lisa Yoneyama, “Liberation under Siege: U.S. Military Occupation and Japanese Women’s Enfranchisement,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2005): 886.

<sup>74</sup> Yoneyama, 899.

<sup>75</sup> Yoneyama, 899–900.

<sup>76</sup> Song, “Zainichi Chosen Jin Josei to Ha Dareka,” 270.

<sup>77</sup> Setsu Shigematsu, “Chapter 12: Rethinking Japanese Feminism and the Lessons of *Ūman Ribu*: Toward a Praxis of Critical Transnational Feminism,” in *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2017), 220–22.

in 1944. Her parents met in Osaka in 1934 after each immigrated from Jeju Island.<sup>78</sup> After graduating from middle school in Saga, in search of an employment, Sō moved to Ikanoi in Osaka, a place that held the largest Zainichi Korean community at the time.<sup>79</sup> In Ikanoi, Sō worked at multiple places, at a “sandal factory” and “door-to-door sales of make-up and contraceptive services” and finally opened up her own bars.<sup>80</sup> Many of her poems are based on her lived experience in Ikanoi. In one poem 頼母子講(*Tanomoshiko*), she draws the scene on the “second floor of the grilled hormone shop” where there is the devoured yakiniku (grilled meat) beside the “dirty” glass of beers.<sup>81</sup> This is the intense and lively scene of the monthly meeting for *Tanomoshiko*, or informal self-organizing financial organization which was said to be largely participated by Zainichi women who lacked access to the public financial institutions for differing reasons such as lack of Japanese literacy.<sup>82</sup> Yet, *Tanomoshiko* was not necessarily a place for a support group as it tends to cause harsh transaction situations of high-interest rates and debts, leading to poverty for some: this is marked in the poem as Sō writes “today/ I kill someone/alone/I am left to survive.”<sup>83</sup> Such is the scene where 10 lines in, Sō mentions the Japanese Women’s Liberation Movement (ūman ribu).<sup>84</sup>

頼母子講

三万八千円の  
現なま欲しさに  
六万二千円の  
利子つける  
テーブルの上  
聖徳太子と  
食い散らかした  
焼肉と  
しとどに汚れた  
ビールのコップ  
卑劣な応酬  
ウーマンリブ  
など  
くそたわけ  
太鼓腹の女達  
太古此の方  
ここは  
女が  
いくさに  
でた。  
思惑と  
疑心暗鬼  
火ばな散らし  
どよめきと  
かちどき

<sup>78</sup> Julia Hansell Clark, “‘Poems of Flesh’: Rethinking Zainichi Women’s Literary History Through the Works of Sō Shūgetsu,” *Transnational Asia*, February 9, 2023, 5, <https://doi.org/10.25615/TA.V5I1.73>.

<sup>79</sup> Clark, 5.

<sup>80</sup> Clark, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Shūgetsu Sō, *Sō Shūgetsu Zen Shu: Zainichi Josei Shijin No Sakigake* (Tokyo: Doyō Bijutsusha shuppan hanbai, 2016), 21–22.

<sup>82</sup> Clark, “‘Poems of Flesh’: Rethinking Zainichi Women’s Literary History Through the Works of Sō Shūgetsu,” 17.

<sup>83</sup> Sō, *Sō Shūgetsu Zen Shu: Zainichi Josei Shijin No Sakigake*, 21–22.

<sup>84</sup> Sō, 21–22.

落胆の  
 三叉路  
 ふきでる汗  
 毛穴も  
 担保に  
 ひとくち  
 十萬円の掛金  
 満載され  
 白羽の矢  
 射た女  
 僥倖と  
 苦痛の  
 両立ち おかし  
 とりあえず  
 今日  
 誰かを殺して  
 一人  
 生き残る  
 絶筆の絵巻だ。  
 ホルモン屋の二階  
 毎月の  
 頼母子講  
 寄り合う  
 縋糸  
 もつれっぱなし

obscene transaction  
 women's liberations (uman ribu)  
 etc.,  
 stupid shit  
 drum-berried women  
 from the ancient times  
 here  
 women  
 went to  
 war.

Sō ends the poem with “the second floor of the grilled hormone shop / every month / tanomoshikō / depending on together / braided threads / still entangled.”<sup>85</sup>

It may be important to mention though that besides and together with the Women's Liberation Movement, there were some Japanese women whose work is known for their commitment to the experience of other “Asian sisters.”<sup>86</sup> For instance, in some of these movements in 1970, Japanese women joined together with South Korean women to protest against the growing sex tourism by Japanese men in South Korea.<sup>87</sup> However, as Song Yōn-ok points out, these movements during 1970, which congratulated the solidarity Japanese women could show towards other Asian women, were not something that Zainichi women could have collectively participated in.<sup>88</sup> Commenting on the article in one journal published in the 1980s which concluded that women need to attain economic independence in order to tackle the problem of sex tourism between Japan and South Korea, Song writes that such

<sup>85</sup> Sō, 21–22.

<sup>86</sup> Vera Mackie, “Dialogue, Distance and Difference: Feminism in Contemporary Japan,” *Women's Studies International Forum* 21, no. 6 (November 1, 1998): 602, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(98\)00075-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(98)00075-2).

<sup>87</sup> Mackie, 603.

<sup>88</sup> Song, “Zainichi Chosen Jin Josei to Ha Dareka,” 269.



encouragement of economic independence raised by the Japanese author was much more attainable for the Japanese women than Zainichi Korean women whose economic participation often confined within family-run factory and restaurant.<sup>89</sup> The encouragement for economic independence by the Japanese feminist working in solidarity with women from other nations in addressing global sex tourism and prostitution in the 1970s may in the end reflects the experience of the Japanese majority whose idea of feminism was shaped by the liberal notion of economic achievement. Kim Isaza also criticizes the lack of understanding of class and colonialism by the Japanese women activists and says that “Japanese women might show interest in the prostitution as one simple blame of men, but they do not care about who take over the jobs they rejected. I question the Women’s Liberation Movement by the Japanese women who enjoy the consumerist society that stands upon the exploitation of others.”<sup>90</sup> Kim writes:

Even though I wished to talk about life as a woman and spend time with Japanese women, the differences in thinking, orientation, and ideas only reminded me of the differences in socio-political superiority and inferiority. What I saw was the absolute difference in our position and the figure of a woman who was clueless about her position of superiority. On the other hand, even if I had made a statement in the existing ethnic groups as a woman, I could only be perceived as a troublemaker and a complainer. It was a world where a strict patriarchal system was imposed, and women who could not conform to men were the object of scorn, cynicism, and exclusion. I could not live in such a world.<sup>91</sup>

Within the feminist activism in Japan, there was the homogenous argument of the ‘oppressed sex’ which demanded Zainichi women to speak in alignment with the experience of Japanese women. Within the anti-colonial ‘ethnic’ activism, women were not expected to

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<sup>89</sup> Song, 269.

<sup>90</sup> Kim, “Zainichi Josei to Kaihō Undō Sono Sō Sei Ki Ni,” 122.

日本の女は男たちに一方的に罪を被せる売買春問題に関心を寄せても、自らが拒否した仕事の行方は気にしない。彼らを搾取して潤う消費社会を満喫する日本の女の解放運動を疑問視する。(Translation by me.)

<sup>91</sup> Kim, 122. 同性として生を語ろうと願い、日本の女たちと時間を費やしても思考や志向、発想の違いは社会政治的優劣差異を思い知らされるだけであった。見えてくるのは決定的な立場の違いであり、優位上位に立つ自身の位置に無自覚な女の姿であった。一方、既存の民族団体に女として主張しても、ただトラブルメーカー、文句の多い女としか受け止められなかった。そこは厳密な家父長制が布かれ、男に従えない女は蔑視冷笑、排除排斥の対象でしかなく、活動家の夫を支える内助の功を認められた女だけが受容される世界だった。そうした世界で生きられる私ではない。(Translation by me.)

have a space to speak of their political agenda. Song said Zainichi Korean women “needed time to gain their words.”<sup>92</sup>

This is why it has been said that Zainichi Korean women’s collective feminist activism began ‘belatedly’ and it began with their activist work on the ‘comfort women’ issue which allowed them the language to speak about their own form of feminism that address both being a woman and being Korean in Japan. This is expressed by Song in the following way:

Zainichi Korean women were not the “comfort women” themselves but because they could share the experience of suffering under colonialism, they were able to stand by the “comfort women” as the existence where ethnicity, gender, and class converged. It is the Zainichi women who were able to give critiques to the single minded approach taken both by the South Korean women who approached the issues from the perspective of nationalism and the Japanese women who approached the issues from the perspective of sexual discrimination. This is because the hardship experienced by the Zainichi women whose existence has always been fragmented was the converged outcome of colonialism.<sup>93</sup>

Some of these second-generation Zainichi feminist activists including Kim Puja and Yang Ching-ja formed a group called Yuriseng-net to discuss the issues of ‘comfort women’ both from the perspectives of “women’s rights (josei no jinken mondai)” and “historical understanding (rekishi ninshiki no mondai).”<sup>94</sup> While Japanese feminists, including well-established scholars like Ueno Chizuko, may show interest in the ‘comfort women’ issue from the perspective of women as victims under all-encompassing patriarchy but lack interest in engaging with Japanese colonialism and racism,<sup>95</sup> Zainichi feminist activists were able to ground their approach in anti-colonial agenda simultaneously integrating their own political activism as Zainichi women in Japan.

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<sup>92</sup> Song, “Zainichi Chosen Jin Josei to Ha Dareka,” 272. 在日朝鮮人女性が闘いの言語・思想を獲得するのにかくにも長い時間を要したのである。(Translation by me.)

<sup>93</sup> Song, 271. 在日朝鮮人女性は「慰安婦」当事者ではないが、植民地主義に苦しんだ体験を共有できるところから、民族・ジェンダー・階級が輻輳する存在として「慰安婦」に寄り添うことができた。アジアの「慰安婦」の受難を韓国の女性はナショナリズムから解こうとし、日本の女性は性差別から解こうとする単眼的思考を批判しうるのは、破片化される在日朝鮮人女性の受難が植民地手具によって輻輳したものだからである。(Translation by me.)

<sup>94</sup> Ching-ja Yang, “Ianfu Mondai to No Kakawari Kara,” *Tozai Nanboku : Bulletin of the Wako Institute of Social and Cultural Sciences*, 2016, 37–38.

<sup>95</sup> More critiques on Ueno Chizuko’s approach, please see Kim Puja’s article: “The Pitfalls of Ueno-Style Feminism Sociology : Looking Back at Ueno-Yoshimi Dispute and Its Legacy.” *Shogaku ronsan* 58, no. 5・6 (March 1, 2017): 103–35.

Yet, I want to mention here that it is an activist like Yang Ching-ja who cautions against the easy show of solidarity with the issues of ‘comfort women’ on the basis of understanding upon assumed similarity in their experience. After forming Yuriseng-net and deciding to publish a book that addresses the ‘comfort women’ issue from the perspective of Zainichi feminist activists, Yang Ching-ja traveled to South Korea to speak with the survivors.<sup>96</sup> In order to travel, first of all, she changed her ‘foreigner’ status from Chosen to South Korea and applied for the South Korean passport and visited for the first time in her life to South Korea.<sup>97</sup> After listening to the violence the survivors had gone through, Yang says that she had to completely change her approach to her activism as she expressed she was “ashamed” to realize that she was thinking ‘comfort women’ issue could be a way to address her own struggle as a Zainichi woman in Japan.<sup>98</sup> Yang says:

As a Korean woman living in Japan, I thought I might have something in common with the difficulties I myself have felt in this country. However, I learned that the darkness that victims of gross human rights violations by the state faced is something that those who have only had ordinary experiences cannot possibly know. Our movement began with “knowing” the “unknowable.” I was determined that while recognizing the absolute “unknowable,” I must not give up on my efforts to know, to respect Song-san [refers to the ‘comfort women’ survivor, Song Shin-do, whom Yang was working together with]’s self-determination. I was determined to never allow myself or others to use her as a tool for the movement.<sup>99</sup>

Yang Ching-ja still to this day works as an activist to address ‘comfort women’ issues. I felt the urge to include Yang’s account not because I seek to dismiss the account that the issues of ‘comfort women’ was that which permitted Zainichi women to form their speech from the matrix of colonialism and patriarchy, but because I have felt the necessity to recognize the way Yang keeps for herself and for other this mandatory struggle in relation with the issues of ‘comfort women.’

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<sup>96</sup> Yang, “Ianfu Mondai to No Kakawari Kara,” 38.

<sup>97</sup> Yang, 38.

<sup>98</sup> Yang, 39.

<sup>99</sup> Yang, 39–40. 同じ在日朝鮮人女性として私自身がこの国で感じてきた生き難さと共通したものが何かあるのではないかと思っていた。しかし、国家による重大人権侵害の被害者が抱える闇は、通常の体験しかしたことのない者には到底知り得ないものであるということを知った。私たちの運動は、「知り得ない」ということを「知る」ことから始まった。到底「知り得ない」その闇の暗さを認識しつつ、知ろうという努力を怠らないこと、宋さんの意志を尊重し、宋さんを運動に利用することを自らにも、他者にも、決して許さないことを固く心に決めて臨んでいた。(Translation by me.)

## 2a) #MeToo Inspired Transnational Feminist Solidarity and Points of Critiques

In this manner, I have put together my unfinished records at best, of reading and listening to the words of the other. Yet, such is enough to constitute the call that makes me question the notion of contemporary Japan-South Korea feminist solidarity, the premise of ‘Comfort Women issue is #MeToo’ raised by the Japanese feminists in relation to the issues of sexual violence in contemporary Japan. The premise as such delineates perhaps the now familiar figure of Japanese women who could only show interests in the issues of ‘comfort women’ in so far as they can empathize with them as ‘the sex of the oppressed,’ i.e. in so far as they can make it relatable to their own experience of oppression as universal women.

I must also question the ways Japanese feminists interviewed in *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement* (*Voices* for short) by Norma and Delton seem to unproblematically refer to ‘comfort women’ issues in parallel with the issues of pornography and sexual violence Japanese women face in the contemporary Japan as they express feminist solidarity with South Korean women.<sup>100</sup> Norma and Delton conclude their book by arguing that:

Japan’s feminist movement in recent years has attempted to strengthen itself through drawing inspiration and practical knowledge from its South Korean counterpart...South Korean and Japan-based feminists have a long history of this kind of collaboration, but in the past, it has been more likely for Japan-resident ‘Zainichi’ feminist groups than other...*Now though, more than ethnicity, feminist collaboration across the two countries tends to occur on the basis of political and ideological alignment.* At the same time, this collaboration has a practical orientation: Japanese feminists are aware of the achievements of their Korean sisters, and learn from their tactics in hopes of bringing about similar social change in Japan.<sup>101</sup> [emphasis is mine]

As one example of such “practical orientation,” they introduce the publishing company Ajuma Books founded by Kitahara Minori in 2021, one of the feminist activists interviewed in the *Voices*.<sup>102</sup> Ajuma Books publishes so-called South Korean feminist books in Japanese translation under the name of “sisterhood publishing company.”<sup>103</sup> To share some critical responses raised to this form of sisterhood feminism, several of the books translated and published by Ajuma Books are observed by queer scholars and activists to include

<sup>100</sup> Dalton and Norma, *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement*.

<sup>101</sup> Dalton and Norma, 111.

<sup>102</sup> Dalton and Norma, 114–17.

<sup>103</sup> “ajuma books,” ajuma books, accessed March 10, 2024, <https://www.ajuma-books.com>.

harmful language against transgender people.<sup>104</sup> In fact, both queer and postcolonial scholar Fukunaga Genya and Shimizu Akiko raise their observation that the recent mainstream Japan-South Korean feminist solidarity has this tendency to align themselves in the form of so-called anti-trans feminism.<sup>105</sup> Is this the “political and ideological alignment” between Japanese women and South Korean women observed by Norma and Delton which is made possible by going “more than ethnicity?”<sup>106</sup> If such is the case, ‘more than ethnicity’ does seem to have allowed the feminist solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women to further maximize the single focus on the “liberation from the male rule that produces the sex class women” regardless of “their cultural, economic, or geographic differences.”<sup>107</sup> Zainichi feminist critiques suggest to me that one could only say going ‘more than ethnicity’ because for that one, ‘cultural, economic, or geographic differences’ as such did not have to matter from the beginning. It seems again the recurring unrecognition of the traces that led the writings of Zainichi feminist critiques that allow one to say something such as ‘more than ethnicity.’

This thesis that concerns the contemporary notion of feminist solidarity raised by the Japanese women in relation to South Korean women, therefore begins with this sense of critical questioning, informed by the words of Zainichi feminist critiques. In response, my contribution lies in thinking the alternative not to find the better ways than ‘more than ethnicity’ to justify the solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women, but to ask the more fundamental question of what is at stake at the instance of solidarity, and what are the political and ethical implications.

The scholar such as Park Sara may share a similar interest as I do in her examination on the notion of solidarity through her ethnographic research and interviews on Japanese feminists who are directly working on the issues of ‘comfort women.’<sup>108</sup> Park’s research is framed in terms of the issues of identity and intersectionality that concern the category, gender and nationality. Park concludes in favor of the possibility of solidarity on the basis that Japanese feminist activists are able to manage their intersectional identity by showing

<sup>104</sup> Genya Fukunaga, “Feminisuto to hoshu no kimyo na <rentai>,” *The Gender History Association of Japan* 18 (October 14, 2022): 75–85, <https://doi.org/10.11365/genderhistory.18.75>.

<sup>105</sup> Fukunaga. \*Fukunaga suggests that the more research needs to be done regarding the circulation of transphobic feminism in East Asia and its relation to Western TERF feminism, such as British TERF feminism.

<sup>106</sup> Dalton and Norma, *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement*, 111.

<sup>107</sup> Dalton and Norma, 110.

<sup>108</sup> Sara Park, “Colonialism and Sisterhood: Japanese Female Activists and the ‘Comfort Women’ Issue,” *Critical Sociology* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 133–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920519876078>.

empathy as “fellow women” while at the same time maintaining responsibility as the “Japanese, former colonizer and perpetrator as well as Japanese citizen.”<sup>109</sup>

My approach in thinking about the possibility of solidarity differs from approaches such as taken by Park as I start my thinking without this assumption of identitarian subjects who are willing to build solidarity, out of empathy as a fellow woman, or out of conscious responsibility as Japanese. Rather, my thesis that begins with thinking ‘the situation of relation’ itself starts with questioning what necessitates, addresses and calls certain beings to be in relation with others beyond or before the subject itself and its consciousness, its knowledge or its will. I am interested in the implication of this approach that starts from the understanding of the limitation of the subject’s will and knowledge to form and justify solidarity or relation with others. My thesis, then attempts neither to take the words of Zainichi feminist critiques and apply into my question, nor to find a better way to justify the solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women. And such margin opened by neither is where I hope my contribution lies.

### Part 2: The Circulation of Popular Culture across Japan and South Korea

In this section, I elaborate on the general circulation of popular culture across Japan and South Korea to further contextualize the representation of South Korean popular feminism in Japan. I discuss this chronologically, starting with the prohibited circulation of Japanese culture in South Korea, tracing its gradual end to the prohibition, which finally coincides with the growing popularity in South Korean cultural products in Japan.

In South Korea, up until 1998, there was an official ban on Japanese cultural products.<sup>110</sup> It was officially illegal to import, view and engage with Japanese cultural products. It was not even permitted, for instance, to broadcast songs in Korean lyrics that mildly resembled Japanese melodies, let alone Japanese lyrics.<sup>111</sup> Japanese animation was, in fact, permitted to be broadcasted on the condition that ‘Japanese-ness’ could be erased and the viewers could not tell the place of its origin.<sup>112</sup> Hence, certain Japanese animations that do not obviously rely on the cultural context of Japan such that feature robots and rather fantasy settings were permitted to be broadcasted.<sup>113</sup> Chung Younggran has raised three possible points

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<sup>109</sup> Park, 133.

<sup>110</sup> Young Kyun Han, “Cultural Exchange between Japan and Korea on the Internet : Study of Acceptance to Japanese Pop-Culture on Korea Society,” *The Waseda Journal of Social Sciences* 18 (September 24, 2011): 204.

<sup>111</sup> Han, 206.

<sup>112</sup> Han, 207.

<sup>113</sup> Han, 207.

that may explain this ban as follows 1) “concerns about ‘sentiments against Japan’ stemming from the historical fact that Korea was subjected to colonial rule in the past,” 2) “concern for ‘national sentiment’ derived from the fear and alarm that the unique Korean culture might be invaded” and 3) “concerns about the economic impact, which would put pressure on domestic cultural industries.”<sup>114</sup>

It was only after the signing of the treaty ‘New Japan–the Republic of Korea Partnership towards the Twenty-first Century’ between the former president Kim Dae-jung and then Japanese prime minister Obuchi Keizō in October 1998 that the first opening of Japanese cultural products took place, allowing limited access to certain representations such as films and some publications.<sup>115</sup> One year later in 1999, there was a second opening, and around this year, the Japanese film *Love Letter*, directed by Iwai Shunji, was publicly screened in South Korea and achieved a success. The third opening that immediately followed in 2000 further allowed access to many more products, including Japanese video games, music, and certain TV programs.<sup>116</sup>

While in Japan around this time, the South Korean cultural products were becoming increasingly popular as part of growing interests in Korean culture across Asia, referred as 韓流 or ‘Korean Wave.’ Supposedly coined by Chinese media, Korean Wave refers to the rise in popularity in Korean cultural products across Asian countries since 1990s.<sup>117</sup> Japanese experience of Korean Wave is often exemplified by the overwhelming success of the Korean TV drama series *Winter Sonata* which was broadcasted by The Japan Broadcasting

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<sup>114</sup> Youngran Chung, “Research on the Cultural and Economic Influences of Deregulation of Japanese Popular Culture in South Korea,” *Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University journal of the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies* 17 (April 2009): 18. 過去に植民地支配を受けたという歴史的事実からくる「対日感情」への懸念、韓民族固有の文化が侵略されるのではないかと不安と警戒感から派生する「国民感情」への配慮国内の文化産業が圧迫されるという「経済的影響」への危惧 (Translation by me)

<sup>115</sup> Chung, 22–24.

\* Though Han Young Kyun’s research suggests that these gradual openings of Japanese cultural products did not necessarily reflect the degree of exposure to Japanese culture among the South Korean public who had access to pirated copies and illegal copies through the spread of the internet at least since the 1990s. Hence, even though it was not officially permitted to import Japanese cultural products or broadcast the Japanese language publicly, many were able to have access to them illegally through the increasing use of the internet. For more, “Cultural Exchange between Japan and Korea on the Internet: Study of Acceptance to Japanese Pop-Culture on Korea Society” by Han Young Kyun.

<sup>116</sup> Chung, “Research on the Cultural and Economic Influences of Deregulation of Japanese Popular Culture in South Korea,” 24.

<sup>117</sup> Youngran Chung, “A Consideration on Japanese ‘Acceptance of Korean Culture’ - How have Japanese faced the ‘Korean Waves’ of TV Dramas and Movies? -” (Japanese Society for Global Social and Cultural Studies, 2014), 44, [https://doi.org/10.11424/gscs.11.1\\_44](https://doi.org/10.11424/gscs.11.1_44).

Corporation (NHK) in 2003, following the success of South Korean film *Shiri* in 2000.<sup>118</sup> This Korean Wave noticeable since 2000 in Japan had increased its popularity amidst the celebration of the 2002 FIFA World Cup which was co-hosted by Japan and South Korea, bringing together the increasing media interests in, what was celebrated as, the globalized South Korea.<sup>119</sup> The success of *Winter Sonata* and arguably the Korean Wave in general was said to largely depend on consumption by the middle class, middle-aged women who were passionately following the male actors starring in these drama series.<sup>120</sup> These financially affluent women were purchasing merchandise in relation to the actors or the series itself and traveling to South Korea to participate in the tour that go through shooting locations of *Winter Sonata*, and such.<sup>121</sup> It has been said that *Winter Sonata* and these after effects by affluent consumers alone brought much economic surplus to South Korea and Japan.<sup>122</sup> Encouraged by this success, Korean films and dramas targeting middle class women were produced one after another, and this trend was said to have lasted until around 2005.<sup>123</sup>

Observing this trend, South Korean scholar, Park Soon-ae comments “After the war, South Korea appeared to the minds of the Japanese public as the dark image associated with colonialism, dictatorship, democratic movement and protests” yet such image has been said to have “improved” through these cultural exchanges to enable a feeling of familiarity with South Korea in the minds of Japanese public.<sup>124</sup> Coupled with the aforementioned gradual lifting of a ban on Japanese cultural products by South Korean government, the popularity in South Korean culture in Japan has motivated the production of TV series *Friends* co-produced by Japan and South Korea and released in 2002.<sup>125</sup> Chung describes that this Japan-South Korea drama series, which was received very well in Japan, centers on the storyline “on the everyday and universal love story while also integrating historical and cultural

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<sup>118</sup> Jeongmee Ahn, “Reception of the Korean Mass Culture in Japan-with Special Reference to Winter Sonata,” *Studies on Humanities and Social Sciences of Chiba University* 16 (March 2008): 198.

<sup>119</sup> Chung, “A Consideration on Japanese ‘Acceptance of Korean Culture’ - How have Japanese faced the ‘Korean Waves’ of TV Dramas and Movies?-,” 49.

<sup>120</sup> Ahn, “Reception of the Korean Mass Culture in Japan-with Special Reference to Winter Sonata,” 203.

<sup>121</sup> Ahn, 201-7.

<sup>122</sup> Chung, “A Consideration on Japanese ‘Acceptance of Korean Culture’ - How have Japanese faced the ‘Korean Waves’ of TV Dramas and Movies?-,” 48.

<sup>123</sup> Chung, 53.

<sup>124</sup> Soon-Ae Park, “Nihon ni okeru kanryu jittai to nozomashii bunka kōryū hōan” *Posuto Kanryū: Kanryū Saikasseika Hōan* 2008, 1-2, as cited by Chung, 45. 「戦後日本での韓国へのイメージは、植民地、独裁 政権、民主化運動、デモなどの暗いイメージが圧倒 的であった」「改善」(Translation by me.)

<sup>125</sup> Chung, “A Consideration on Japanese ‘Acceptance of Korean Culture’ - How have Japanese faced the ‘Korean Waves’ of TV Dramas and Movies?-,” 47.



differences.”<sup>126</sup> She further observes that *Friends* was able to empower “the two countries to overcome the challenges and to sympathize with each other” “by not bringing the historical issues to the forefront.”<sup>127</sup> In other words, the flattened relationship between Japan and South Korea through the feeling of familiarity which was encouraged by Korean Wave, was brought together with the feeling of ‘overcoming the challenges’ caused by the ‘past.’ Though ironically and in a wicked manner, the reactionary nationalist anti-Korea sentiment which became visible and consumable with the publishing of the manga series *Anti-Korean Wave* in 2005 in Japan suggests the otherwise.<sup>128</sup> The manga series *Anti-Korean Wave* are known to assert Japanese history from nationalist historical revisionist perspectives.<sup>129</sup> In response, Nam Bujin, who has been writing book reviews for the book collection *Chosen Kindai Bungaku Senshu (Modern Chosen Literature)* which is put together by Chosen literature researchers and scholars in Japan, writes the following:<sup>130</sup>

At the time, the *Winter Sonata* phenomenon was at its peak and the “Korean Wave” was on trend, we hoped that interest in Korea would lead to Chosen literature as well. However, these hopes have yet to be fulfilled. ...Whenever I see beautiful, eighth-head tall men and women from my mother country, singing and dancing on Japanese TV, I often switch the channels. I knew that at some point, major cultural friction would happen and its repercussions would bring the worst. Fortunately or maybe, unfortunately, my guess was right. With the political conflict, that erupted around the summer of 2012, in relation to some islands, the “Korean wave” in Japan seems to have died down...

What we see now is the so-called “Anti-Korean boom” the discourse filled with contempt, hatred, and curses towards Korea. I see these books piled up at the entrance of ordinary bookstores (could be at convenience stores too). They are bare hatred, a curse and violent aggression.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Chung, 47.日韓の歴史や文化の差を織り込みながら、日常的でありながら普遍的な恋愛に軸を据えた脚本 (Translation by me.)

<sup>127</sup> Chung, 47.歴史的な問題を前面に出さないことで、むしろ両国が課題を乗り越え、心を通わせるための力を与えた (Translation by me.)

<sup>128</sup> Mika Furukawa, “Kinnen, nihon ni okeru kankoku bijutsu no juyō to sono ishiki,” *Koria Kenkyu* 9 (2018): 55, <https://doi.org/10.34382/00013709>.

<sup>129</sup> Chung, “A Consideration on Japanese ‘Acceptance of Korean Culture’ - How have Japanese faced the ‘Korean Waves’ of TV Dramas and Movies?-,” 51–54.

<sup>130</sup> Bujin Nam, “Bungaku shisō ni okeru taikō to zōshoku / bundan to yūgō \*: Zainichi 30 nen no genjō hōkoku,” *Honyaku no bunka / bunka no honyaku* 15 (March 30, 2020): 71–85, <https://doi.org/10.14945/00027400>.

<sup>131</sup> Nam, 73–74. 当時は「冬のソナタ」現象の絶頂期で、また「韓流」なるものも流行りだしていただけに、韓国への関心が朝鮮文学にも広がってほしいと期待した。しかし、その期待はいまだに満たされずにいる。速成乱造された「韓流」は日本で人気を博し、K-POPや韓ドラと称するものが日本の表舞台で大いに活躍したが、朝鮮文学への関心は依然として振るわないままであった。日本のテ

When one considers the fact that some so-called K-pop stars that are famous in Japan have been canceled and uncritically disapproved as ‘anti-Japan’ when they publicly show, for instance, their support for the issues of ‘comfort women’ or the acknowledgement of the independence day from Japanese colonial occupation, it is clear that certain things are disallowed from expression.<sup>132</sup> This seems to also reflect the aforementioned ban on the film screening of *In-Mates* in Tokyo in 2022. Therefore, the popularity in representing and consuming Korean cultural products in Japan does not necessarily contradict what is referred as the ‘political tension’ between Japan and South Korea even though Japanese media tends to narrate in such manner.

This rise in right wing discourse in Japan amidst the increasing popular attention on South Korean popular cultural products also coincides with the interruption in the gradual lifting of a ban on the Japanese cultural products in South Korea. The fourth lifting of the ban which was expected to happen in the year after the third lifting in 2000 was interrupted due to the contestation over the rise of Japanese historical revisionist politicians and their modifications of Japanese public textbooks.<sup>133</sup> Much later, in 2004, the fourth opening did took place yet due to another political conflict over, for instance, the major Japanese politicians’ official visit to Yasukuni shrine where World War II Japanese criminals are said to be honored and enshrined, another lifting of the ban on Japanese cultural product did not occur as smoothly as the years in the beginning.<sup>134</sup> Hence, the official agreement to lift all the bans on the Japanese cultural products never took place, and some restrictions still apply to certain degree to this day.<sup>135</sup> As may be already clear, this official ban by the South Korean

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レビで八等身の母国の美男美女が歌や踊りを見せるたびに、チャンネルを替えるなどした。いずれ大きな文化的摩擦を起こし、その反動で最悪のしっぺ返しが予想されたからである。幸いに、あるいは不幸なのかもしれないが、予感的中して 2012 年の夏から勃発した島嶼をめぐる政治問題で、日本での「韓流」はすつかり下火になった。正直、筆者はほっとしている。...いわゆる嫌韓ブームである。韓国に対する侮蔑で、憎悪で、呪詛に満ちた言説である。それが大概の書店(場合にはコンビニ)の入り口に山積みされている。それはむきだしの憎悪で、呪詛で、激しい攻撃性を帯びたものであった。(Translation by me.)

<sup>132</sup> GQ Japan, “REBEL Na Kikikata Koramu - ‘Nikkan’ No Rekishi Wo Mushi Shite K-POP Wo Kikukoto Ha Dekirunoka,” GQ, December 12, 2022, <https://www.gqjapan.jp/culture/article/20221212-kpop-japan-korea-relations>.

<sup>133</sup> Chung, “Research on the Cultural and Economic Influences of Deregulation of Japanese Popular Culture in South Korea,” 25.

<sup>134</sup> Chung, 25.

<sup>135</sup> Seo, “Korea’s Ban on Importation of Japanese Pop Culture and the Lifting of the Ban,” 246.

government seems to reflect and respond the recurring revisionist statements by the Japanese government regarding the Japanese Empire, imperialism and colonialism.

Up until now, I reviewed the overall circulation of popular culture across Japan and South Korea. In some ways, in both Japan and South Korea, the public representation of culture is shaped by prohibition, meaning visibility is granted for certain representation while disallowing others from being visible. This overall tendency about public representation is not unrelated to my points of critique on the increasing popular representation of South Korean feminism in Japan. Could one say that the popular representation of South Korean feminism is allowed its presence while disallowing certain things from being recognizable? In other words, could one say that the celebrated visibility of South Korean popular feminism in Japan is made possible by disabling something from being visible? I question what it may be that the popular representation of South Korean feminism in Japan is complicit of when one considers the overall frame of what is permitted to be recognizable, visible and hearable.

What follows is then my analysis in response to the notion of feminist solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women raised by Japanese contemporary feminism. As introduced in my Introduction, the first chapter examines the novel, *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* and its reception in Japan, reflecting on Japanese readers' empathetic identification with the novel through the translator's words. Second chapter examines the North Korean song *Imjingawa* and the narrative and relations this song has motivated within the context of Japan.

### III. The Arrival of *Kim Ji-young*: The Response as a Reader, as a Translator

The South Korean novel *Kim Ji-young Born 1982*, once translated into Japanese language by Saitō Mariko and saw its debut in front of the Japanese audience in 2018, has met with an unforeseeable reception. With the collective cry from the masses “This *is* my story!”<sup>136</sup> many Japanese readers found themselves in this novel. The novel, in fact, was received so well to the extent that it became a bestseller. For many, this was a surprise. For a foreign novel to be this successful in Japan is an odd chance. In fact, the translator, Saitō, who has been a reader of Korean literature since the 1980s described this event as a “divine’s descent.”<sup>137</sup> She explains there was no point in history when the Japanese audience had shown this much interest in Korean novels.<sup>138</sup>

The novel in question, *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* (*Kim Ji-young* for short), originally written by South Korean writer Cho Nam-ju and published in 2016 and equally achieved a bestseller in South Korea, narrates a story about a woman, Kim Ji-young, living in Seoul.<sup>139</sup> The story narrates, in an almost research-report-like manner, Ji-young’s experience of sexism, misogyny, and patriarchal oppression as she grows up in Seoul. What is particular about this novel is the fact that the storyline is ‘backed up’ with research and statistical data such as *Reports on Employment and Labor* by the Ministry of Labor, childbirth reports and OECD reports.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, it is said that the depiction of Ji-young’s individuality is kept minimal so as to make sure that the blame for the hardship she has experienced is placed on the structural system, evidenced by statistics, rather than her personal attributes and circumstances.<sup>141</sup> The translator Saitō Mariko says, Ji-young is a “strictly artificial character” who is an outcome of extensive research, strategically designed to achieve what is considered as the most “standard” and “average” person.<sup>142</sup> In other words, *Kim Ji-young* is designed to lack uniqueness or singularity in order to maximize the possibility of identification with the greatest number of people to perfect its political claim that oppression lies in the overall

<sup>136</sup> Chikuma shobō, “‘82 Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon’ Ga Matibou No Bunkoka 'koreha Watashi No Monogatari Da' Jinbundō.” これは私の物語だ (Translation by me.)

<sup>137</sup> Mariko Saitō, *Kankoku Bungaku No Chūshin Ni Arumono*, Shohan (Tōkyō: East Press, 2022), 18. 降臨 (Translation by me.)

<sup>138</sup> Saitō, 23.

<sup>139</sup> Cho, *82 Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon*.

<sup>140</sup> Cho.

<sup>141</sup> Saitō, *Kankoku Bungaku No Chūshin Ni Arumono*, 25–27.

<sup>142</sup> Saitō, 25–26. 「きわめて人工的なキャラクター」「普通」「平均」 (Translation by me.)

structure that concerns all above any individual circumstances. This may explain why *Kim Ji-young* could be translated into 32 different languages and said to have achieved a bestseller in other countries as well, forming what may be seen as a transnational echo of empathy as many readers across different languages join in the call of identification with *Kim Ji-young*.<sup>143</sup> This novel received as a bestseller in Japan, therefore, is not a singular event either.



The book cover of the Japanese edition is quite suggestive of this lack of the singular other.<sup>144</sup> It shows a headshot drawing of a woman, presumably Ji-young, yet her face is kept empty. Instead, the deserted landscape hovers over her face. The other that Ji-young is escapes my look. She does not confront me. On the back of the book cover, there is a mirror that reflects the same deserted landscape that Ji-young is, and Ji-young is in. Facing these pictures, I could seem to hear nothing but the dry breeze playing with the sand in an empty endless space that I don't know where. I seem to not be able to hear her anywhere in the breeze. There seems to be no longer any other that exists in distance, but only myself in the same landscape, becoming undistinguished with the landscape itself as if to suggest that I am ultimately also this woman, I am the Kim Ji-young.

From this line of thinking, I suggest that the original South Korean story of Kim Ji-young itself lacks originality as the original itself strives, in an almost mechanical approach,

<sup>143</sup> "82 Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon," Chikuma shōbō, n.d., <https://www.chikumashobo.co.jp/special/kimjiyoung/>.

<sup>144</sup> Cho, *82 Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon*.

to debunk the singularity, originality, and uniqueness of the story. This lack of singularity in the story seems so fundamental to this novel to the extent that the novel becomes nourished and perfected by a way of it being read in many other languages and by the greatest number of people. As the novel exists upon the promise to debunk the singularity of Ji-young's experience, such promise could only be enjoyed at the moment of the assurance from the mass 'This is my story.' Hence, even if one rightly insists that the novel *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* or in hangul 82 년생 김지영 itself remains one and only one, the kind of reception that the story and the character Kim Ji-young is able to demand seem to almost desire to lose this place of singularity with the proper name, *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* to be rather read by the common name, Kim Ji-young. If any piece of writing begins by lacking, as Derrida says, for any writing is from the beginning incomplete as it requires the readers,<sup>145</sup> *Kim Ji-young* may be seen as the artificially maximized form of this essential lack as it is engineered to demand not just one reader to another in the gradual trajectory of its life but thousands of readers all at once.

Speaking of readers, when Derrida discusses the figures such as readers, somewhat analogous, to 'translators' and 'survivors,' his discussion seems to suggest certain ethical attitudes expected of these figures when they could be seen as *carriers* of the abandoned other, such as any pieces of writing that left the pen of the author or a life of a friend abandoned at death.<sup>146</sup> The task of this *carrier* is to ensure that the life of this abandoned other be prolonging by carrying its life inside oneself. For Derrida, the responsibility for the carrier exists as a way of responding to the demand of this other that one carries since the other demands to be carried, yet to be carried in a way that its absolute singularity or the absolute alterity not be overcome.<sup>147</sup> The other that the piece of writing is demands its absolute alterity be respected even while being carried inside of another, and such is the ethical demand expected of the carriers.<sup>148</sup> For instance, this notion of the alterity of the other is explained by Derrida when he discusses a poem written by Paul Celan, where Derrida is the reader, the carrier:

<sup>145</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," in *Difference in Translation*, trans. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 184.

<sup>146</sup> Jacques Derrida and Outi Pasanen, "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue—Between Two Infinities, the Poem," in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy 44 (New York, NY: Fordham Univ. Press, 2005), 135–63.

<sup>147</sup> Derrida and Pasanen.

<sup>148</sup> Derrida and Pasanen.

If I could prove anything about a poem by Celan, say as many people do: ‘here is what it means’ – for instance, it is Auschwitz, or Celan is the Shoah (of course, it’s true!) – but, if I could prove that it is that and only that, I would immediately destroy Celan’s poem. It would be of limited interest if it could be summed up as what it [*il*] means... I therefore try to listen for [*me mettre à l’écoute de*] something that I cannot hear or understand, to be attentive to marking in my reading the limits of my reading.<sup>149</sup>

There is in every poetic text, just as in every utterance, in every manifestation outside of literature, an inaccessible secret to which no proof will ever be adequate... This is due to the fact that the other is secret... the secret is the very essence of alterity.<sup>150</sup>

The singular other that the piece of writing is will be destroyed when a reader “claimed to have exhausted” the meaning by “saturating” the speaking *mouth* of the poetry with one’s own meanings in all its clarity, and hence, finally “suturing” the *mouth* of the other altogether.<sup>151</sup> The poem must continue to speak on its own and for that the readers must not suture the mouth of a poem by completely saturating or exhausting it with one’s own meaning and interpretations. There must be something in the other that cannot be appropriated as one’s own. The complete mastering of the other marks the death of the other by claiming to have mastered the secret or the absolute alterity of the other.<sup>152</sup> Though it is the piece of writing itself that welcomes this risk of violence as the writing demands to be read for ‘being read by the other’ is the very condition for the writing’s speaking mouth to be heard in the first place, and for it to prolong its life even after leaving the author that signed it.<sup>153</sup> That is why the readers are the carriers of this life, entrusted with the task to prolong the life of the writing for it to live more and better, and this task is necessarily a struggle for the carriers as they are demanded to carry it within themselves though without the complete incorporation. Derrida in relation to his friend, Gadamer, whose death entrusted Derrida, the survivor, the carrier, with the task to continue Gadamer’s life by carrying within himself the traces of this friend says:

I must then carry it, carry *you*, there where the world gives way: that is my responsibility. But I can no longer carry the other or you, if *to carry* means to include in oneself, in the intuition of one’s own egological consciousness. It’s

<sup>149</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, “The Truth That Hurts, or the Corps à Corps of Tongues,” 19–20. [] is original

<sup>150</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 18–19.

<sup>151</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 20–21.

<sup>152</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 20.

<sup>153</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 22.

a question of carrying without appropriating to oneself. *To carry* now no longer has the meaning of “to comprise” [comporter], to include, to comprehend in the self but rather *to carry oneself for bear oneself* towards [seporter vers] the infinite inappropriability of the other, toward the encounter with its absolute transcendence in the every inside of me, that is to say, in me outside of me.<sup>154</sup>

The carrier carries those whose sustenance or prolongation of their (after)life depends, and these carriers are demanded of certain ethical struggle so as not to destroy the other by completely appropriating and mastering the other as oneself inside oneself. The carriers must carry the other inside but in the distance so its alterity be kept untouched, hence the form of *in me outside of me*.

In Derrida’s discussion, the situation of carrying assumes this prior other, this absolute other that demands its singularity not be overcome. This poses a certain difficulty when reading *Kim Ji-young* since *Kim Ji-young* may be the other that does not demand to be carried as such. Rather, this original novel that lacks originality may itself be made upon the dismissal of the singularity by a way of mastering the singular other that Ji-young may be through appropriating this other with much clarity through statistical data. How could any reader carry such a figure? Is it even possible? How could one carry in the distance when the other is, in fact, the one that tries to come as close as possible, desiring to be interpreted with ‘This is my story,’ discouraging other meanings? Suppose *Kim Ji-young* is nurtured and perfected through the promise of appropriation, desires to achieve complete identification as a form of ‘inside me *as me*’ in the closest proximity, how could a reader carry in distance, the form of ‘in me outside me?’ What is a form of reading when the other seems to come close so quickly, closing off the distance, as if this other is, in fact, the one that captures and saturates the mouth of the readers, disallowing any other interpretations except for the words of identification – finally violating the absolute alterity of the readers themselves? How can one possibly read in such closeness? It seems as if readers are interdicted from carrying *Kim Ji-young* as *Kim Ji-young* is interdicted from carrying the readers.

Though for some readers, the distance remains open, however close *Kim Ji-young* comes. While *Kim Ji-young* tries to come to saturate the reader’s mouth, desiring to fill with the words of identification, some readers remain outside witness. Those are the ones that witness the readers collapse together with *Kim Ji-young* as *each* comes close from both sides to close off that distance to saturate each other’s mouth with the formation of singularity,

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<sup>154</sup> Derrida and Pasanen, “Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue—Between Two Infinities, the Poem,” 161. [] is original



‘This is my story!’ I wonder, for those who could not join such achievement of identification, is complete repulsion the only possibility? The complete repulsion seems to have been the answer for some as the novel received much anger, hate and backlash whose voice not unlike from the ones that mark the ‘misogyny’ recorded in *Kim Ji-young*.<sup>155</sup> Yet the others have responded with something else, something perhaps more *sticky*, which may, in fact, resemble an attitude of ‘carrying’ that I discussed. Perhaps, those who could not appropriate the novel and yet, at the same time, could not repulse immediately are the ones that are, in some ways, *situated* to carry *Kim Ji-young*. Or, rather, they have no choice but to carry from the beginning because appropriation as well as repulsion are not possible.

Yet, as I mentioned previously, ‘the situation of carrying’ itself is complex when it comes to *Kim Ji-young*. In fact, carrying is almost an impossible task. The novel itself discourages the possibility of carrying, since from the beginning, *Kim Ji-young* is the engineered other that refuses to be carried in distance but desires to be incorporated within the reader self at the closest proximity. Hence, even if the situation of carrying is made available for those who could neither appropriate nor repulse *Kim Ji-young*, what it means by that situation is not immediately given. Therefore, they may resort to remaining silent for no other words seem to be welcomed by the novel except for the words of identification, leaving them with the only choice of silence. And in this silence, *Kim Ji-young* is finally left abandoned together with these readers themselves. As Derrida says, if one were to carry, one must speak: one must not remain in complete silence.<sup>156</sup> Carrying the other requires the speaking mouth of the carrier, which also means that the ‘other being carried’ must not close off the speaking mouth of the carriers either. In some ways thus, the situation of carrying must be *fought for* by these readers themselves, in a movement of forging a distance from *Kim Ji-young*, so that they can finally have the distance needed to utter their speech, to utter the ‘what cannot be appropriated nor repulsed.’ Such perhaps is an violent endeavor where the distance is forged upon capturing, naming and distancing *Kim Ji-young* as *certain* other. The translator, Saitō Mariko, who herself says she could not identify with nor repulse *Kim Ji-young*, seems to find herself committed to this task of forging the distance to frame the carrier’s speech. In what follows, I discuss Saitō’s complex task of forging that situation of carrying as she *others Kim Ji-young* by filling *Kim Ji-young* with certain meaning.

<sup>155</sup> When one K-pop idol suggests in public that she has read *Kim Ji-young*, it has been said that the video that destroys her photos and her merchandise was circulated around some triggered fan. Further, the actress who starred the film adaption of *Kim Ji-young* was said to receive similar form of hate.

<sup>156</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, “The Truth That Hurts, or the Corps à Corps of Tongues,” 20–21.

After the success of *Kim Ji-young*, Saitō Mariko uttered many words through her own essays as well as interviews in relation to *Kim Ji-young* as if something caused such necessity of words out of Saitō. In one of these essays where she reflects on her experience as an earnest Korean Literature reader, she recollects her encounter with the very first Korean novel she read in 1981 when she was 21.<sup>157</sup> It was *The Stolen Poverty* by Park Wan-suh. She describes that the experience of reading this novel was that of a smell that overwhelmed her and almost undone her. She writes; that the senses depicted in the novel were something “more than my dull teeth and throat could chew and swallow. There was the other in its full intensity before me...There was no way that I could feel the characters nor empathize with them.”<sup>158</sup> With an interesting affect that I could sense from her, Saitō reflecting on the current mass engagement with Korean novels through appropriation, incorporation and empathy, says “this intense other that the Korean novels were may have been gone by now.”<sup>159</sup> She continues to write about “the bodily smell of history” and she observes that such smell has been diluted, cleaned up, and covered up in the name of economic development and modernization,<sup>160</sup> while she writes “*Kim Ji-young born 1982* is almost a smell-less novel.”<sup>161</sup>

Smell-less though is still one form of a recognition of smell as ‘less.’ Saitō still persists in smelling *Kim Ji-young* as the smell of ‘smell-less’ because for Saitō, Korean Literature have always carried the smell that never permitted her to incorporate, to ‘chew and swallow.’ In other words, the smell that carries the ‘bodily smell of history’ is the very distance that prohibits Saitō from easy identification and incorporation of Korean literature as a reader. Her sense of hesitation and cautions is felt in her words concerning the possibility brought by *Kim Ji-young* to let this smell go in the movement of closing off the distance. Thus, ‘smell-less’ for her becomes the smell that she *names* and keeps between her and *Kim Ji-young* as a mandatory distance she seeks as a Korean literature reader. Such perhaps is a sense of the reader or the carrier of the Korean literature that must not let the distance, or the smell, be diluted even at the cost of violence that she must bring on to *Kim Ji-young* that threatens that distance. I wonder what demands her to not let go of that distance at all costs?

<sup>157</sup> Mariko Saitō, “Monogatari no Nakano 「tasya」 to 「rinzin」 ～ 「nioi」 de Yomu Kankoku Zyosei Bungaku Syōshi,” in *Bungei 2019 Nen Shūki Gō* (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2019), 200–207.

<sup>158</sup> Saitō, 201. 私のやわな歯と喉ではとうてい咀嚼嚥下できないものだった・・・ここには強烈なまでの他者がいた。感情移入も共感もしようがなかった。(Translation by me.)

<sup>159</sup> Saitō, 207. 強烈なまでの他者はいなくなったが (Translation by me.)

<sup>160</sup> Saitō, 202. 歴史の体臭 (Translation by me.)

<sup>161</sup> Saitō, 204. 『キムジヨン』はほぼ無臭の小説だ (Translation by me.)

What is that she carries, which will collapse together once she lets that distance go? Why so persisting on carrying? Why must she not let go of that which she carries?

Saitō's affective struggle and determination to name, forge and safeguard that distance may be suggested by the amount of words she has uttered in response to the success of *Kim Ji-young* in Japan. In the paperback edition of *Kim Ji-young* that came in 2023, Saitō writes in total of 15 pages of Translator's Note,<sup>162</sup> and within this Translator's Note, she introduces a whole another book written by her, titled *Kankoku Bungaku No Chushin Ni Arumono* (*What is at the Center of South Korean Literature*).<sup>163</sup> *Kankoku Bungaku No Chushin Ni Arumono* (*Kankoku* for short) which is in conversation with *Kim Ji-young* trend was published 4 years after the first publishing of *Kim Ji-young* in 2018, and 1 year before this paperback edition in 2023.<sup>164</sup> The Translator's Note together with *Kankoku*, her words in total exceeded even the words within *Kim Ji-young*. This, for Derrida, marks the complete failure of the translation in accordance with the ethics of translation. Strictly speaking, translation needs to follow the "economic law of the word," meaning translation needs to follow the ethics of the body of the word, the law of "one word by one word."<sup>165</sup> Such is a respect for the "irreducible body" and "the indivisible unity of a meaning or concept," and any attempt to do violence to this unity of word by adding extra words or explanations are a violence to this singular irreducible body of other.<sup>166</sup> Hence for Derrida, the addition of the Translation's Note "always even in the best of cases, the case of the greatest relevance, confess the impotence or failure of the translation."<sup>167</sup> In this strict sense, Saitō has performed a failure of the translation and the violence to that *quantitative* body of *Kim Ji-young* although this seems to have taken place for the *necessity* of such failure; the *necessity* caused precisely because before being a translator, she is a reader, a carrier of that which her response is demanded. This is how for Saitō, the ethics of translation and ethics of the reader conflicts where she then scarifies the ethics of translation.

In *Kankoku*, she cites about 160 writings, which include poems, novels, and essays written by South-North Korean writers, Japanese writers, and Zainichi writers, along with the

<sup>162</sup> Cho, 82 *Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon*.

<sup>163</sup> Cho.

<sup>164</sup> Saitō, *Kankoku Bungaku No Chūshin Ni Arumono*.

<sup>165</sup> Jacques Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?," trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (2001): 180–81.

<sup>166</sup> Derrida, 181.

<sup>167</sup> Derrida, 181.

novel *Kim Ji-young*.<sup>168</sup> She organizes these writings in the framework that traces ‘general’ history of South Korea departing from the novel *Kim Ji-young*, moving back in time across following chapters as she let these writings lead her into such trace.<sup>169</sup>

Preface	
Chapter 1:	What <i>Kim Ji-young</i> Has Gifted to Us キム・ジヨンが私たちにくれたもの
Chapter 2	Literature after MV Sewol and Candlelight Demonstration セウォル号以後文学とキャンドル革命
Chapter 3	Unprecedented Experience: IMF Crisis IMF 危機という未曾有の体験
Chapter 4	Guangzhou Uprising is Alive 光州事件は生きている
Chapter 5	The Era of the Ishin [維新] and <i>A Little Ball Launched By a Dwarf</i> [by Cho Se-hui] 維新の時代と『こびとが打ち上げた小さなボール』
Chapter 6	The Symbol of ‘Division Literature’ <i>Square</i> [by Choi In-hoon] 「分断文学」の代表『広場』
Chapter 7	Korean War is the Backbone of Korean Literature 朝鮮戦争は韓国文学の背景である
Chapter 8	Writers Who Lived in the ‘Liberated Space’ 「開放空間」を生きた文学者たち
Final Chapter	While Rereading One Japanese Novel ある日本の小説を読み直しながら
Postscript	
Korean Historical Timeline and Japanese Historical Timeline [in table]	
List of Literature Introduced in the Book	
References (Without the Literatures)	

Some already mentioned in the chapter title, 160 literature cited by her include novels such as *A Little Ball Launched by a Dwarf* by Cho Se-hui, *The Square* by Choi In-hoon, *The Boy is Coming* by Han Kang, *The Guilt of Our People* by Chae Man-sik, *Live the New Woman* by Park Wan-suh, *Before and After Liberation* by Lee Tae-jun, and *The Tae Baek Mountains* by Jo Jeong-rae, etc.<sup>170</sup> She introduces these novels, often quoting a passage, and in so doing, she discusses how certain political, social and economic situation of the time is

<sup>168</sup> Saitō, *Kankoku Bungaku No Chūshin Ni Arumono*.

<sup>169</sup> Saitō, 7–14.

<sup>170</sup> Saitō, 319–22. Find the full list in the page 319–322 in *Kankoku*.

reflected and approached in the affective narration in the novels. Many of the writings cited have the Japanese translation, including those done by Saitō herself as she says in the Preface “I would like to excuse that I ended up introducing many literature that I translated, i.e. literature that I read thoroughly, as an act of translation comes with an act of thorough reading.”<sup>171</sup> All the 160 novels cited, therefore, are the ones Saitō has read before and hence she excuses again that “this book is not one of literary history nor comprehensive literature guide as I am not a researcher and my knowledge and interests are limited.”<sup>172</sup> She suggests this book should rather be read as her “reading record of Korean Literature,” for she is ‘simply just’ a *reader*, a carrier.<sup>173</sup>

Through such performance of following the traces of *Kim Ji-young*, Saitō takes *Kim Ji-young* with her and grafts it into what she may call the smell-full record of literature that she has read and carried all along since her first encounter with *The Stolen Poverty* by Park Wan-suh in 1981. Her performance at times becomes quite literal as in passing, she mentions ‘This is the period where Ji-young’s grandma would have gone through.’<sup>174</sup> The achievement of identification with *Kim Ji-young* is interrupted by Saitō as she organizes and names the traces of smell that follow after/before/through Ji-young, the smell that she can never “chew and swallow,” the smell that guards the distance.<sup>175</sup>

One encounters such gesture of interruption first time in the Translator’s Note as she emphasizes in a rather straightforward manner the specificity of the ‘misogyny’ that *Kim Ji-young* experiences in the novel in the following way:

I think that it is also very important to acknowledge that behind the lives of Ji-young, there is certainly the existence of mandatory military service. Korean War has only been in a state of armistice; it is not over. Patriarchy, capitalism, and finally mandatory military services. Because of this last fact, there is a misogyny in South Korea that is unlike in Japan...I discuss this in detail in

<sup>171</sup> Saitō, 4. 翻訳という行為は精読するという行為を伴うため、自分が読み込んだ＝翻訳した作品を多く取り上げる結果となったこともお断りしておく。(Translation by me.)

<sup>172</sup> Saitō, 4. 私は研究者ではなく、知識と関心が限られているため、この本は文学史でもなく、網羅的な文学案内でもないということを最初にお断りしておきたい。(Translation by me.)

<sup>173</sup> Saitō, 304. 韓国文学の読書の記録 (Translation by me.)

<sup>174</sup> Saitō, 41.

<sup>175</sup> Saitō, “Monogatari no Nakano 「tasya」 to 「rinzin」 ～ 「nioi」 de Yomu Kankoku Zyosei Bungaku Syōsi,” 201. 咀嚼嚥下 (Translation by me.)

*Kankoku Bungaku No Chushin Ni Arumono* (East Press). If you are interested, you could take a look at it.<sup>176</sup>

And when one reads her *Kankoku* as suggested by her in the Translator's Note, in her very first chapter 'What *Kim Ji-young* Has Gifted to Us,' she further stresses the mandatory military services in South Korea in a way that hints at why chapters that follow are organized in the way they are.

What is at stake is vastly different in South Korea where [the military service] is the norm, and in Japan where it is far from the norm. In fact, this point is my *biggest worry* when publishing *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* in Japanese version.<sup>177</sup> [emphasis is mine]

In Japan, after the war, men were no longer made into soldiers against their will. If the situation in South Korea could be explained that women are expected to be patient because men are in charge of the national security, in Japan, both men and women were able to live *indifferently* while the national security is left to the Self-Defense Forces [military in Japan, established after the WWII, causing ambiguous relation to constitution Article 9] under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, pushing most of the military bases in Okinawa. In fact, the birth of the Self-Defense Forces is closely related to the Korean War, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.<sup>178</sup> [emphasis is mine]

She shows a gesture of interrupting the possibility of appropriation and identification with *Kim Ji-young* by the Japanese readers by marking what seems for her the crucial difference between what is behind the current situation of 'average' misogyny in South Korea and that of Japan. Her remarks suggest the impossibility of appropriation or the possibility only upon the amnesia of the trace that go beyond and before the novel *Kim Ji-young* itself. Such perhaps constitutes her *biggest worry* that has necessitated her to introduce

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<sup>176</sup> Cho, 82 *Nen Umare Kimu Jiyon*, 177. 同時に、徴兵制の存在がジヨンの背景に広がっていることも、たいへん重要だと思います。朝鮮戦争は休戦状態であっていまだに終わっていません。家父長制、資本主義、そして最後に徴兵制。この最後の項目のために国には日本にはないミソジニーがあり・・・このあたりは『韓国文学の中心にあるもの』（イースト・プレス）に詳しく書いたので、興味のある方は読んでいただければと思います。(Translation by me.)

<sup>177</sup> Saitō, *Kankoku Bungaku No Chūshin Ni Arumono*, 35. それが当たり前の韓国と、ないのが当たり前の日本とでは前提が違いすぎる。実は『キム・ジヨン』の日本語版を出すにあたって最も心配したのはこの点だった。(Translation by me.)

<sup>178</sup> Saitō, 37–38. 日本では戦後、男たちが自分の意志とは関係なく兵士にされることはなくなった。国家の安全保障は男が担うから女はがまんしろというのが韓国なら、アメリカの核の傘の下で安保は自衛隊に任せ、基地のほとんどを沖縄に押しつけ、男女そろって無関心でも生きてこられたのが、日本である。そして自衛隊の誕生は、第七章で触れるが、朝鮮戦争と深い関わりがある。(Translation by me.)

her *Kankoku* within her Translator's Note. What is implied here then is that the *worry* for Saitō is motivated by the suspected amnesia or the “indifferen[ce],” in her words, of Japanese readers.<sup>179</sup>

It is not accidental that her performance in interrupting the identification by the Japanese readers takes a form of recognizing the ‘historical’ traces of Ji-young and that such performance seems to echo the critiques given by Zainichi feminist scholars who have always warned against flattening the distance between Korean women and Japanese women. Zainichi scholars such as Han Tonhyon has commented specifically in relation to the celebration of *Kim Ji-young* that “in the narrative of South Korea - Japan feminist solidarity through empathy, it is particularly these historical contexts and the backgrounds that are to be forgotten” where she refers “these historical contexts and backgrounds” as that which explain her Chosen-seki status in Japan, that is, “the ongoing ideological conflict between the South and the North, East-West Cold War, and the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea.”<sup>180</sup> Saitō's writings speak at times as if she carries Zainichi critiques as she calls them again and again, explicitly and implicitly, throughout her writing, as if to *pledge* them to speak through her mouth, for her words alone necessarily fail.

What is interesting about her writing is then less of her ‘words of acknowledgment about the other’ in the Translator's Note itself or the empirical accuracy or lack thereof of her statement about the South Korean military services and its causality with misogyny. Rather, it is the way her ‘words of acknowledgment about the other’ are not completely finished, nor completely stated and signed by Saitō alone and are opened to another sea of citations in *Kankoku* that consists of 160 citations of novels, poems, and essays – the writings that are themselves opened. Thus, her movement of ‘acknowledgment about the other’ exceeds the available pages within the Translator's Note as if to suggest the impossibility of such tasks or its beyond-ness or before-ness of Saitō's individual signature. As mentioned previously, Derrida discusses that the other cannot be saturated, mastered and explained with all its clarity for that marks the destruction of this other by completely appropriating it as one's meaning.<sup>181</sup> One must “write while letting the other speak or in order to let the other

<sup>179</sup> Saitō, 38. 無関心 (Translation by me.)

<sup>180</sup> Tonghyon Han, “Chigau to Iukoto to Onazi to Iukoto,” in *Kanzenban Kakoku, Femiizumu, Nion* (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2019), 191. 「このような背景、歴史的経緯についての文脈は、日韓のフェミニズム的な共感のなかで、とくに忘れられがちな部分だろう。」「南北のイデオロギー対立と東西冷戦、朝鮮に対する日本の植民地支配」 (Translation by me.)

<sup>181</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, “The Truth That Hurts, or the Corps à Corps of Tongues,” 21.

speak.”<sup>182</sup> Saitō could not have ‘acknowledged’ the other by the completion of the ‘acknowledgment about the other’ upon signing the Translator’s Note. Such acknowledgment about the other must fail, remain unfinished, and open for the other itself to speak on its own. Opening to *Kankoku* and then to the 160 other writings and to her affective records of readings of those writings, is in some ways, a necessary excess that ensures the trace of the other that goes before Saitō, through her, and beyond her. *Kankoku* is in some sense, then, may be described as the detailed organization of the openings of the other as they speak through her; the form of *speaking* “while letting the others to speak.”<sup>183</sup>

This is also why *Kankoku* should not be read as one of comprehensive ‘Korean Literature Reader’ or ‘Introduction to Korean Literature,’ but rather it is an accumulation of Saitō’s affective reading records. In other words, *Kankoku* is the ‘smell-full’ accumulations of Korean Literature that Saitō as a reader carries inside all along, as they open up themselves through Saitō’s writing, Saitō’s speaking mouth. Hence, *Kankoku* reveals as much about the writings of the other as about Saitō herself as the carrier, the reader. *Kankoku* is as much about the writings of the other as about Saitō’s melancholic relation with the writings of other that she is bound to carry without incorporation, without ‘chew and swallow.’ Perhaps, the ample amount of words that Saitō has written after *Kim Ji-young* suggests the extent of the danger Saitō must have felt *Kim Ji-young* could bring to that which she carries. She must protect that which she carries against the threat of *Kim Ji-young* that easily gives to the identification by the Japanese readers through the feeling of relatability, understanding and empathy, threatening to flatten the distance. Yet, the more protective Saitō must become, the more Saitō must utter so the speaking mouth of that accumulated other inside herself find ways to utter their words. Though the more protective Saitō must become, there is a danger that the carrier’s speech starts to speak less of the other but more of the carrier herself. Such precariousness may already be present in *Kankoku* as she, in the end, frames the other that she carries in her ways of organization of the speaking mouth of the other under the definable title *Kankoku Bungaku No Chusni Ni Arumono or What is at the Center of Korean Literature*. The carrier must not “be speaking too much and imposing silence upon the other” but at the same time must not remain “too silent.”<sup>184</sup> Derrida says it is a question of “rhythm.”<sup>185</sup> That

<sup>182</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 19–20.

<sup>183</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 21.

<sup>184</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 21.

<sup>185</sup> Derrida, Grossman, and Mercier, 21.



rhythm may have been upset by the arrival of *Kim Ji-young* that came too quickly inside readers beyond anyone's expectations.

Lastly, why is it that she must be so persistent on protecting that which she carries? What prohibits her from simply letting *Kim Ji-young* be? What necessitates her words? What necessitates this sense of responsibility? What mandates her response? In the discussion on the situation of responsibility and response, Derrida infers that responsibility presupposes the subject.

Even before having taken responsibility in our name, to each one of us, for this or that affirmation, we are already taken or caught up, each and any one of us, in a kind of asymmetrical and heteronomical curvature of the social space, more precisely, in the relation to the other prior to any organized socius, to any determined "government," to any "law." [...] We are already caught, we are already surprised, in a certain responsibility, and the most ineluctable of responsibilities [...] [The responsibility] is assigned to us by the other, from the other, even before any hope of reappropriation permits us to assume this responsibility in the space of what could be called autonomy [...] What comes before autonomy must, then also *exceed* it, that is to say, succeed it, survive it, and indefinitely overrun it.<sup>186</sup>

Responsibility, therefore then exists, before one's will to take responsibility and before one assumes autonomous subject. Responsibility exists presupposing the autonomous subject, its will, its consciousness and its knowledge because this responsibility exists precisely for the other that first allows the possibility of subject as such. Thereby, this responsibility that comes before autonomy could only exist in a way that exceeds us, and such is why the responsibility does not take a form of willful movement, but exists somewhat passively in relation to "time," "voice," and to "listening" as Derrida says.<sup>187</sup> Hence, responsibility exists, in a way passively and compulsorily, as a situation of *response* mandated by the *voice* of the other that makes us into a subject by addressing us, interpellating our name, demanding us, and making a claim upon us. For Saitō, reading is experienced as that which informs her, allows her to reflect on something that has existed before her, her subject, and her will. In the final concluding chapter in *Kankoku*, Saitō quotes one passage from the Japanese novel *Saredo Wareraga Hibi* (1964), a scene where one Japanese character in the novel, who is a high school student at the times of Korean War, recalls his memory:

<sup>186</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Politics of Friendship," *American Imago* 50, no. 3 (1993): 365. The emphasis is original.

<sup>187</sup> Derrida, 380.

At the time, we were always threatened by the war, or rather, we were sure that the war then being fought in Chosen would eventually spill over to Japan. And when that happened, we definitely did not want to be a bulletproof shield for U.S. capitalism. We were determined to become partisans then. No, actually, we thought that Japan was already more than half a battlefield, with bombers flying over to Chosen, air raid warnings issued, and rumors flying wildly that some [Japanese soldiers] had died in Chosen as mercenaries. Then, the total independence, revolution, peace, and partisan activities were all felt to be one thing.<sup>188</sup>

As a way of introducing this novel, she explains that when she was about to finish writing *Kankoku*, she was reminded about this novel by one of her “acquaintance who is a second generation Zainichi Korean born in 1948.”<sup>189</sup> Saitō did not remember the references to Korean War in this novel, until reminded by this acquaintance of hers and read this novel again in 46 years.<sup>190</sup> This part of her personal narrative is discussed in parallel with her remarks regarding general indifference and amnesia about Korean War among Japanese public, about the “shameful” affluence brought to Japan by this war (Chosen *Tokuju*) and about the Japanese complicity in war since from the colonial occupation of Korean peninsula.<sup>191</sup> And with much honesty, she suggests in her writing that Saitō herself was no exception to this amnesia. This novel, and Korean Literature read by her, as well as this remainder by her acquaintance are all *voices* that arrive at Saitō, reminding her of what she has forgotten, what has existed before her, and how ‘what has existed before her’ constitutes and allows the very possibility of her. Her responsibility therefore exists by a way of mandatory response to these voices she hears, these speaking mouth of the other. And thereby, her task is to ensure that those voices find ways to speak themselves through her and to protect them from any harm that threatens their voices to be unheard. Even at the cost of the violence she incurs onto *Kim Ji-young* by failing the translation and capturing it within her words in Translator’s Notes and *Kankoku*, it was the excess that was necessary for Saitō to fulfil her responsibility as listener, a reader, a carrier of Korean Literature. Yet ultimately,

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<sup>188</sup> Saitō, *Kankoku Bungaku No Chūshin Ni Arumono*, 276. ぼくらはあの頃、いつも戦争の危機感に脅かされていた、というより、むしろ、その時朝鮮で戦われていた戦争が、やがて日本に波及するだろうことは、確実なことだと思っていました。そして、そうなった時、アメリカ資本主義の弾よけになることは、絶対いやでした。ぼくらは、その時はパルチザンになるのだと決心していました。いや、ぼくらは、爆撃機が朝鮮に向かって飛び立ち、空襲警報が発令され、何人かが傭兵として朝鮮で死んだという噂がみだれ飛んでいる日本は、もう半ば以上、戦場だと思っていました。そこでは、完全な独立も、革命も、平和も、パルチザン活動も、みな一つのことなのです。(Translation by me.)

<sup>189</sup> Saitō, 282. 一九四八年生まれの在日コリアン二世 (Translation by me.)

<sup>190</sup> Saitō, 272–73.

<sup>191</sup> Saitō, 281–304. 特需の恥 (Translation by me.)

Saitō, the reader, the carrier herself could be a threat to that which she carries for once the ‘rhythm’ gets upset and under the heightened need of protection, the complete incorporation into the safety of inside herself feels tempting, finally appropriating that distance to herself, or the complete repulsion feels equally tempting so to give up on one’s ability to carry, abandoning this other all together with one’s responsibility.

In this chapter, I have discussed the situation of reading and translating *Kim Ji-young*. The paradox examined in this chapter is that suppose *Kim Ji-young* prohibits any experience of readings except with the words of identification, such prohibition is also what has given rise to so many more words and writings. This is because some, such as the translator Saitō herself, remain witnesses to the foreclosure of distance when Japanese readers and *Kim Ji-young* collapse together into one singular voice, and in witnessing this, they simultaneously also see how the traces of certain lives become impossible, unrecognizable, and unhearable in that distance foreclosed. Those witnesses are demanded to not let that foreclosure happen for that is the task of those who are entrusted to carry this trace of the other, otherwise forgotten in the abyss foreclosed. So, they must write and seek speech, for the carrier’s speech is that which enables the openings of the speaking mouth of the other inside the carrier. Such was the task of Saitō Mariko as a reader, the carrier. This speech fought for and sought by the carrier is always precarious, a struggle, and could end unfaithful, as I suggested throughout my writing. The excess writings and words that never cease to stop after the arrival of *Kim Ji-young* suggest that this speech can never be concluded and should always be a struggle, for if the speech of the carrier is undecided and opened, it can be carried as well, finding again the rhythms – the speech and silence with the other, as they carry in distance while being carried in distance. One must carry and one must let the other to carry you.

## IV. The Gift of *Imjingawa*, the Keen Ear, the Invitation of Relation

*Imjingawa* – The version produced by the Japanese band, The Folk Crusades<sup>192</sup>

Lyricist: Pak Se-yong (朴世永)

Composer: Ko Jong-hwan (高宗煥)

Translation/Adaptation: Matsuyama Takeshi

Imjingawa, the pure water	イムジン河 水清く
Flows swiftly	とうとうと流る
A flock of waterfowl flies free	水鳥自由にむらがり飛びかうよ
Our homeland, the Southern land	我が祖国 南の地
Thoughts are beyond	おもいははるか
Imjingawa, the pure water	イムジン河 水清く
flows swiftly	とうとうと流る
From the Northern land	北の大地から
To the Southern sky	南の空へ
The birds fly, the messengers of freedom	飛びゆく鳥よ 自由の使者よ
Who separated the homeland in two	だれが祖国を
Who separated the homeland	二つにわけてしまったの 誰が祖国をわけてしまったの
Imjingawa, the sky so far	イムジン河 空遠く
Let there be a rainbow	虹よかかっておくれ
Let our thoughts travel	河よ おもいを伝えておくれ
Homeland will forever	ふるさとをいつまでも
Be remembered	忘れはしない
Imjingawa, the pure water	イムジン河 水清く
Flows swiftly	とうとうと流る

*Rimjingan* – The version produced by Chongryon<sup>193</sup>

Lyricist: Pak Se-yong (朴世永)

Composer: Ko Jong-hwan (高宗煥)

Translation/Adaptation: 李錦玉

Rimjingan, the pure water	リムジンガン水清く
Flows quietly	静かに流れ行き
The birds fly free over the river	鳥は川を自由に飛び交うよ
The southern home, why can't I go back	南の故郷へ なぜに帰れぬ
Rimjingan flow	リムジンの流れよ
Please answer me	答えておくれ

<sup>192</sup> The Folk Crusaders, *Imjingawa*, 1968, 1968, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFOv8mP57RY>. (English Translation by me.)

<sup>193</sup> The Four Shriek, *Rimjingan*, 1968, 1968, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sA5SPLxr164>. (English Translation by me.)

Waterfowl, grieving  
Chirping on the Southern shore  
On the barren field  
The wind blows, feeling void

水鳥悲しく  
南の岸で鳴き  
荒れた畑に  
空しく風が立つ

Where the flower of happiness blooms  
The song of the Northern land  
Rimjingan flow  
Please tell them

幸せの花咲く  
祖国の北の歌  
リムジンの流れよ  
伝えておくれ

The southern home, why can't I go back  
Rimjingan flow  
Please answer me  
Rimjingan flow  
Please answer me

南の故郷へ なぜに帰れぬ  
リムジンの流れよ  
答えておくれ  
リムジンの流れよ  
答えておくれ

***Rimjin*** – *The more 'literal' translation of the original poem*<sup>194</sup>

Lyricist: Pak Se-yong (朴世永)

Composer: Ko Jong-hwan (高宗煥)

Translation: 世良砂湖

The clear waters of the Rimjin  
Flowing down and down  
Even though waterfowls freely come and go  
and fly away,  
My hometown, the land of the South  
Even if I wanted to go there, I could not  
O stream of the Rimjin that flows  
Are you carrying my enmity

臨津江の澄んだ水は  
流れ流れて下り  
水鳥たちは自由に 行き来して  
飛んでいくにもかかわらず  
わたしの故郷 南の地  
行きたくても 行けないから  
臨津江の流れよ  
恨みをのせて  
流れるのか

In the reed fields beyond the river  
Only the birds chirp sadly  
In the dry fields, despite the roots of the  
grass digs themselves  
In the collective farm, the sea of ears of rice  
is dancing like a rippling wave  
So even if one tries to  
tear the flow of Rimjin,  
It would not be possible to tear it apart

河を越えた葦原では  
鳥だけが悲しげに鳴き  
乾ききった野では 草の根を  
掘っているにもかかわらず  
共同農場の稲穂の海は  
波打つように踊っているから  
臨津江の流れを  
引き裂こうとしても  
引き裂けないであろう

<sup>194</sup> Isako Sera, trans., "Imjingan," Zainichi Kankoku Seinen Dōmei, accessed May 13, 2024, <http://hanchung.org/chuo26/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/fc14eb5ed855c78f922ee2c6ad031889.pdf>. (English Translation by me.)

Some call it the most famous and only known North Korean song in Japan. While the Japanese media and major politicians make sure of the general hostility among the public against North Korea, keeping what must not be heard under its control, this song uniquely survives through such forms of censorship. Written by the same poet who wrote the North Korean anthem *Patriotic Song* (愛国歌) as well as the *Welcome Song for Our People's Return* (帰国同胞歓迎曲) for the Zainichi Korean people during the 'infamous' repatriation project to North Korea in 1959 - 1984, the song, *Imjingawa*, seems to speak the poet himself as a person who went to the North, leaving his home in the South amidst the wake of Korean War. This song was first introduced to Japan through Chongryon, the Northern aligning Zainichi Korean organization in Japan.<sup>195</sup> In 1960, the publishing company under Chongryon introduced the song in one of the volume of its anthology.<sup>196</sup> Since then, *Imjingawa* has been sung by the Zainichi communities and in Chosen schools.<sup>197</sup> It has been said that around 1960, one Japanese student Matsuyama Takeshi, at the time only 8th grade in school, heard this song in the neighboring Chosen school in Kyoto.<sup>198</sup> Liking the melody as a music student himself, he asked about this song to one student from Chosen school, remembered by Matsuyama as "Bun kun (文君.)"<sup>199</sup> Then he was given the handwritten music sheet and the lyrics and translation for the first verse as well as the Chosen-Japanese dictionary.<sup>200</sup> Later as a university student, Matsuyama introduced this song to his friend's band group *The Folk Crusaders*, a college student band, quite well known in Kansai area at the time. For Matsuyama only knew the lyrics to the first verse, he wrote additional lyrics for the next two verses on his own for the sake of the song's length concerning its release by the band.<sup>201</sup> He narrates his story in the following way, referring to his friends who left for North Korea during the repatriation project:

I guess the original lyrics of *Imjingawa* were a bit like political propaganda, saying something like that rice is growing in the north but the south is desolate. But, I sort of interpreted it as somewhat like a newly composed folk song, or I mean at least that's how I assumed the song was about. That's why I turned it into a more universal

<sup>195</sup> Koo, "'Imjin River' and the Transnational Consumption of Partitioned Korea," 4.

<sup>196</sup> Koo, 4.

<sup>197</sup> Koo, 4.

<sup>198</sup> Matsuami, "【Longu Intabū】 Sakushika・Matsuyama Takeshi to sono jidai #3 / Imjingawa no koto | MEN'S EX ONLINE |."

<sup>199</sup> Matsuami.

<sup>200</sup> Matsuami.

<sup>201</sup> Matsuami.

message about what separates people and like the feeling of wanting to go home but cannot, to put it plainly. Well, it just happened, you know, by accident. I honestly did not know much about what was at stake. In a way, I was being nosy. But still, I was quite close to the Oyama sisters [his friends from Chosen school], and because they had returned to the North, I could no longer meet them and that reality did leave a certain feeling in me. So, I sort of borrowed some of that feeling while writing lyrics.<sup>202</sup>

Imjingawa was then regularly played in the local radio in Kansai area and has also been sung together with songs such as “We Shall Overcome,” “The Internationale,” “My Friends,” and “Let’s Join the Self-Defense Force,” during the student anti-Vietnam War protest in around the year of 1968.<sup>203</sup> This student movement opposed the war as well as the remilitarization of Japan and Japanese collaboration with the U.S.

However, the official nation-wide release of this song from The Folk Crusades by a company Tōshiba Records was interrupted by Chongryon demanding that the credit to the place of its origin, the name of the original poet and the composer be included.<sup>204</sup> It is said that Tōshiba, not knowing the status of crediting the song from a place the Japanese government does not officially recognize, with the additional concern for any negative impact on the relation with South Korea, finally decided to abruptly cancel the release altogether in 1968.<sup>205</sup> During this time until the early 1990s in South Korea, songs originated in North Korea, often with pro-communist lyrics such as perhaps *Imjingawa*’s, were prohibited under Anticommunism law,<sup>206</sup> not to mention any songs in Japanese and from Japan were also prohibited under Anti-National Behavior Punishment Act.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Matsuami. 「イムジン河」の原曲の歌詞は、北は稲が実ってるけど、南は荒れ果ててるよみたいな、ちょっと政治的なプロパガンダを含んだような内容ではあったんです。それを僕は、新しく作られた民謡みたいなものという解釈というか、そういうふうに思い込んだっていうのもあるんだけど。それで、帰りたいのに帰れない、であるとか、もうちょっと普遍的な、どこにでもある人と人を隔てる何かに対するメッセージにしちゃったんだよね、わかりやすく言えば。まあ、偶然といえば偶然、そうなっちゃったんだ。だって、僕にとってはあまり知らない世界だったし、ある意味お節介なことをしちゃったわけだけど。でも、大山さん姉妹と仲良かったのに、彼女たちが北へ帰っちゃったことで、もう会えないっていう現実だとか、そういうのが心の中に残ってたので、そういう気持ちを借りたような歌詞になったんだね。(Translation by me.)

<sup>203</sup> Tōru Mitsui, “Music and Protest in Japan: The Rise of Underground Folk Song in ‘1968,’” in *Music and Protest in 1968*, ed. Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 81–96, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139051682.006>.

<sup>204</sup> Koo, “‘Imjin River’ and the Transnational Consumption of Partitioned Korea,” 9.

<sup>205</sup> Yoshihiro Kita, *Imjingawa Monogatari “Huuin Sareta Uta” no Shinjitsu* (Tōkyō: Alphabetabooks, 2016).

<sup>206</sup> Koo, “‘Imjin River’ and the Transnational Consumption of Partitioned Korea,” 6.

<sup>207</sup> Chung, “Research on the Cultural and Economic Influences of Deregulation of Japanese Popular Culture in South Korea.”

Soon after this interruption of the official release though, Chongryon itself released the song in its own Japanese translation,<sup>208</sup> and in the decades to come, contrary to this initial interruption, many different versions of this song with titles *Imjingawa*, *Rimjigan*, *Rimjingawa*, *Imjingang* were released with various different lyrics and compositions.<sup>209</sup> Some of them were more ‘accurate’ with the original lyrics while some of them were closer to Matsuyama’s adaptation.

In this chapter, I follow such traces of this song *Imjingawa* to finally discuss one version of *Imjingawa*, sung by the South Korean artist, Lee Lang in Japanese translation, released only in 2018.<sup>210</sup> As I mentioned, the instance of South Korean artist singing a song from North Korea in Japanese translation would have been a subject of censorship, not so long ago. Some of the readers who follow the K-feminist-novel trend in Japan might recognize Lee’s name as her essay appears in the literary zine, titled *Kankoku Feminizumu Nihon (South Korea Feminism Japan)*, published in response to the K-feminism trend after the success of *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* in 2018.<sup>211</sup> As my thesis questions the recent notion of feminist relation between South Korean women and Japanese women from the point of the movement of words, my responses in this chapter seeks to speculate what it means to think about such relation from and with the traces of *Imjingawa*. To open up to such questioning, I will first start by discussing again, Saitō Mariko’s *Kankoku Bungaku No Chushin Ni Arumono (What is at the Center of Korean Literature)* where *Imjingawa* is cited as follows:

The concern regarding the Korean War was worn out amidst the Tokuju (特需) and the time passed. In 1965, Japan recognized South Korea as the sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula and signed The Treaty on Basic Relations with Park Chung-hee [a former President of South Korea]. In South Korea, this was called "disgraceful diplomacy" and a furious opposition movement arose, while in Japan, the opposition to this treaty that appeared to settle past colonial domination with money was not insignificant as well.

But even then, and even when the anti-Vietnam War movement spread among the public, the Korean War [1950-1953] did not receive much attention and has remained so ever since.

In the long span of time, the only exception may have been the song *Imjingawa*. As is well known, this song, written in North Korea, was discovered by Matsuyama Takeshi and The Folk Crusaders, those who had not yet been born in the year of the defeat, referred to as “the child who does not know war.” Although the

<sup>208</sup> The Four Shriek, *Rimjingan*, 1968, 1968, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sA5SPLxr164>.

<sup>209</sup> Kita, *Imjingawa Monogatari “Huuin Sareta Uta” no Shinjitsu*.

<sup>210</sup> [MV] *이랑 이 · 란 - 임진강 이ムジン河*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhBQinebAp0>.

<sup>211</sup> *Bungei 2019 Nen Shūki Gō: “Kankoku, Feminizumu, Nihon”* (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2019).



song was troubled by the politics of that time, with its release being canceled in 1965, one may say that their kind of "naiveness" helped the song survive the sadness contained in this poem, of the division between North and South.

Both Pak Se-yong, the lyricist of *Imjingawa*, and Ko Jong-Hwan, the composer, left their families in the South before the war and moved to the North... During the Korean War, Pyongyang was heavily attacked by B-29s that flew from Japan, and the city was destroyed to the point where there was nothing left of its prewar appearance. The people of North Korea also experienced displacement, occupation, and genocide as a result of this war, but we have virtually no opportunity to be exposed to this fact. In a reality where even the discourse on the war has been split in two, the *Imjingawa* has served as an icon to remind us of the Korean War and the division of North and South Korea, with a peculiar sense of innocence.<sup>212</sup>

In Saitō's narrative, *Imjingawa* is introduced as that which "has served as an icon to remind us of the Korean War and the division of North and South Korea," attributing this song the status of "exception" to the general amnesia shared among the Japanese public, concerning Korean War.<sup>213</sup> Saitō's narrative in *Kankoku* at times reads as if an attempt to gather past memories as she urges us to remind ourselves of the past from the accused amnesia. As I have described in the previous chapter, she does so by citing and introducing Korean Literature under the framework such as "The Korean War is the Backbone of Korean Literature."<sup>214</sup> Her recalling of *Imjingawa* seems to appear as one instance of such gestures. *Imjingawa* is referenced as that which has *naively* survived our amnesia to remind us of the

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<sup>212</sup> Saitō, *Kankoku Bungaku No Chūshin Ni Arumono*, 289–91. 朝鮮戦争をめぐる純情さは特需の中で擦り切れ、時が流れた。一九六五年、日本は、韓国を朝鮮半島における唯一の合法的政府と認め、朴正熙との間で日韓基本条約を結んだ。韓国ではこれを「屈辱外交」と呼び、激烈な反対運動が起きたし、日本でも、過去の植民地支配を金で精算するかのようこの条約への反対運動は小さなものではなかった。だが、そのときも、またベトナム反戦運動が市民の間に広まったときも、人々の反戦感情の中でさえ、朝鮮戦争のことは棚上げになったまま、その後に至ったのではないか。長いスパンで見たとき、唯一の例外が「イムジン河」という歌だったかもしれない。よく知られているように、北朝鮮で作られたこのうたは、敗戦の年にまだ生まれていない「戦争を知らない子供たち」であった松山猛とザ・フォーククルセダーズによって見出された。一九六五年に発売中止になるなど時代に大きく翻弄された歌だが、彼らの一種の「子供らしさ」が、この歌に込められた南北分断の悲しみを生き延びさせたといえる。「イムジン河」の作者朴世永も作曲者高宗煥も、戦争前に南に家族を置いて越北した人だ・・・朝鮮戦争の際に平壤は、日本から飛びたった B29 による猛攻撃を受け、戦前の面影が何一つ残らないほどに破壊されたという。北朝鮮の人々もこの戦争によって避難・占領・虐殺を経験したわけだが、そのことに私たちが触れることのできる機会もほぼ皆無である。戦争をめぐる言説も二つに割れてしまう現実の中で、「イムジン河」は特異なイノセンスをたたえて、朝鮮戦争と南北分断を想起させるアイコンとして機能してきた。(Translation by me.)

<sup>213</sup> Saitō, 290-291. 「朝鮮戦争と南北分断を想起させるアイコンとして機能してきた」 「例外」(Translation by me.)

<sup>214</sup> Saitō, 177. 朝鮮戦争は韓国文学の背景である (Translation by me.)

“sadness” “of the division between North and South.”<sup>215</sup> By citing *Imjingawa* as a way of a reminder, Saitō simultaneously interprets and delineates what *Imjingawa* “serve[s]” for us, for Saitō and her promised attempt to narrate “The Korean War is the Backbone of Korean Literature.”<sup>216</sup>

While Saitō promises to remind the readers of the past buried in amnesia in her framework by introducing Korean literature, the risk of *totalization of the other* is felt near. As we have seen previously, Derrida discusses that when one reads and writes about other’s words, one must not exhaust the meaning with one’s own interpretations: one must not totalize the other to make it serve for our purpose, our framework, and our promise. In writing *Kankoku* which tries to address *What is at the Center of Korean Literature* in an attempt to intervene in the reception of *Kim Ji-young*, Saitō risks determining, capturing and totalizing the meaning of the other that *Kim Ji-young* is as well as Korean literature cited such as *Imjingawa*. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, this gesture may be seen as Saitō’s hurried and urgent attempt as an earnest Korean Literature reader to reinstall the folds of Korean Literature which was felt to be under threat of being flattened by the overwhelming celebration of *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* through an easy identification by the Japanese readers. Through the intentional organization of these writings she cites, she *promises* that the writings introduced by her can save the readers from the depth of amnesia, in the hope that we can finally cease forgetting, and potentially, reflect on our reading of *Kim Ji-young*. Yet, talking about my willful commitment to remind myself of the past in accordance with her framework, keeping my promise to Saitō as a committed reader, the seeming paradox is felt in her very words. This is because as Saitō herself suggests in this paragraph, it was from the beginning *impossible* to remind ourselves of the past for “there is virtually no opportunity” *except* that there was *Imjingawa* to naively survive ourselves, our amnesia, our will to forget, to arrive back at us in this manner.<sup>217</sup> Is not it precisely that *Imjingawa* escapes any willful totalization without being captured and defined by anyone, be it Matsuyama’s naïve adaptation, Anti-Vietnam War student protest adaptation, Chongryon’s intervention, or even within the place of its origin in North Korea, that it survives the finitude of ourselves? How paradoxical it seems that the “naivete” of Matsuyama, i.e. his amnesia as a “child who does not know war” is that which, 50 years later, gives to the possibility for

<sup>215</sup> Saitō, 290. この歌に込められた南北分断の悲しみ (Translation by me.)

<sup>216</sup> Saitō, 177. 朝鮮戦争は韓国文学の背景である (Translation by me.)

<sup>217</sup> Saitō, 290. 「そのことに私たちが触れることのできる機会もほぼ皆無である。」「子供らしさ」 (Translation by me.)

Saitō to cite the very song as that which interrupts amnesia by serving “as an icon to remind us of the Korean War?”<sup>218</sup> This tendency then must mean that *Imjingawa* will necessarily escape this round of totalization and framing of *Imjingawa* by Saitō in her promised framework “The Korean War is the Backbone of Korean Literature” as well.<sup>219</sup> This tendency observed within the traces of *Imjingawa* echoes Derrida as he suggests that we can never possess, appropriate, nor totalize language, for language always “returns to the other.”<sup>220</sup> He writes:

[Language] returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other.<sup>221</sup>

The other that it returns here does not suggest the original North Korean poet, nor the Chongryon that introduced it to Japan, nor Matsuyama and The Folk Crusades that made it popular in Japan. *Imjingawa* returns to the other, that is the working of language itself or in Derridean term the “Law as Language,” – that exists before any of our laws – prohibiting anyone from the complete appropriation and totalization of language.<sup>222</sup> Thus, the complete gathering of past memories through gatherings of the words uttered by the other under the title ‘The Korean War is the Backbone of Korean Literature’ is interrupted from the beginning precisely by this workings of language, the “Law as Language” which prohibits any human attempt to totalize language – or else, such impossible claim of totalization becomes only a sign of “madness” “jealousy” or “colonial impulse.”<sup>223</sup>

This is why it is hardly surprising that one finds *Imjingawa* being cited and framed by the revisionist nationalist promise, in a seeming opposition to Saitō’s framing which is perhaps to dismantle the very historical revisionist nationalism. Setting out to learn more about what has been spoken about *Imjingawa* in Japan, I stumbled upon one book, titled *Imjingawa Monogatari “Huuin Sareta Uta” no Shinjitsu (Imjingawa Story: The Truth about the Sealed Song.)*<sup>224</sup> The book narrates the traces of *Imjingawa* in detail, providing an

<sup>218</sup> Saitō, 290–91. 「子供らしさ」「戦争を知らない子供たち」「朝鮮戦争と南北分断を想起させるアイコン」 (Translation by me.)

<sup>219</sup> Saitō, 177. 朝鮮戦争は韓国文学の背景である (Translation by me.)

<sup>220</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other: The Prosthesis of Origin*, Cultural Sitings (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998), 40.

<sup>221</sup> Derrida, 40.

<sup>222</sup> Derrida, 39.

<sup>223</sup> Derrida, 24, 40.

<sup>224</sup> Kita, *Imjingawa Monogatari “Huuin Sareta Uta” no Shinjitsu*.

overview that covers the story from North Korea to Chongryon to Matsuyama and so on, including the interviews with Lee Cheol-woo (李喆雨), one of the responsible person from Chongryon at the times of interruption in 1968.<sup>225</sup> I could not find any more detailed written account of *Imjingawa* anywhere else, yet my impulsive suspicion arose as I found out that the author has been writing for a journal known for rather more right-wing discourse, and his other books are published with titles, suggesting now the familiar revisionist type of language.<sup>226</sup> After all, this book, in question, about *Imjingawa* is introduced with the following catchlines which might well suggest the overall narrative I have come to sense from the book: “It was the Japanese that gave life to this song forgotten in the place of its origin North Korea” and “The abductees were so touched by it.”<sup>227</sup> This somewhat abrupt reference to ‘abductees’ refers to the memory articulated by the Japanese abductees in North Korea who heard this song on North Korean TV sung by Kim Yonja, the South Korean singer based in Japan at the time, who was invited by the music show in North Korea and sang *Imjingawa*.<sup>228</sup> The North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens refers to the unsolved incidence happened during 1970-1980. When the North Korean government officially recognized this abduction in 2002, Japanese media intensely condemned North Korea, feeding the nationalism, as if to *use* the incidence of abduction to justify it, for some call it “anti-North Korean nationalism.”<sup>229</sup> It has also been said that such intense media propaganda coincided with the growing racism against Zainichi Korean people in Japan.<sup>230</sup> The narrative in the book is sympathetic to the Zainichi Korean community on the grounds of aligning Japanese abductees with the Zainichi Korean people who left to North during the repatriation project. However, such alignment seems to be enabled and enables certain revisionist impulses as it makes unrecognizable the Japanese government’s role in the repatriation project in the movement of expelling Zainichi Korean people, let alone the structural

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<sup>225</sup> Kita.

<sup>226</sup> such as *Japanese were Great in South Korea: The Great Achievement of Chosen Occupation Revealed by Testimonies and Historical Materials* (*Kankoku demo nihonjin ha rippa datta. Shōgen to shiryō ga shimesu Chōsen tōchi no igyō*).

<sup>227</sup> Kita, *Imjingawa Monogatari “Huuin Sareta Uta” no Shinjitsu*. 母国「北朝鮮」で忘れ去られた歌に命を与えた日本人、魂を揺さぶられた拉致被害者 (Translation by me.)

<sup>228</sup> Kita.

<sup>229</sup> Osamu Aoki, *Rupo Rachi to Hitobito* (Iwanami Shoten, 2011), <http://www.iwanami.co.jp/book/b263966.html>. 反北朝鮮ナショナリズム (Translation by me.)

<sup>230</sup> Nakamura, Kim, and Chin, “【shinpojiumu Kouenroku】 Chosen Gakkō to Nihon Shakai.”

discrimination and racism that created the initial ground for some to decide to leave Japan.<sup>231</sup> Thus, in accordance with the catchlines, the narrative in this book frames *Imjingawa* as that which saw its life bloom in Japan by Matsuyama and The Folk Crusades while evoking sympathy for the homogenized sadness of abductees and Zainichi Korean people who left for the North, dramatically concluding the book by calling *Imjingawa* the Asian version of *Imagine* by the Beatles.<sup>232</sup>

While the text in this book can be read and carried by the readers in numerous different ways, I see that this totalization of *Imjingawa* in this framework of dramatized narrative of abduction and its feeling of pride in its adaptation in Japan gives to the possibility of reading that assures the nationalist impulse. As I infer earlier that the claim to totalize and appropriate language within one's determined framework to mean and serve for certain narrative and framework, is a sign of "madness" "jealousy" or "colonial impulse."<sup>233</sup> Derrida suggests that the attempt to possess essentially unpossessable language within one's secured narrative while reducing "language to the One, that is to the hegemony of the homogenous" reveals the "jealous rage of an essential coloniality."<sup>234</sup> For Derrida, though, precisely the fact that language is able to reveal this "essential coloniality" is what makes the workings of language *a reliable referential point* for politics and ethics.<sup>235</sup> After referring again to where the language returns, the Law as Language that prohibits anyone from possessing and totalizing language, he writes:

Where neither natural property nor the law of property in general exists, where this de-proprietation is recognized, it is possible and it becomes more necessary than ever occasionally to identify, *in order to combat them*, impulses, phantasms, "ideologies," "fetishizations," and symbolics of appropriation. Such a reminder permits one at once to analyze the historical phenomena of appropriation and to treat them politically by avoiding, above all, the reconstitution of what these phantasms managed to motivate: "nationalist" aggressions (which are always more or less "naturalist") or monoculturalist homo-hegemony.<sup>236</sup>

It is precisely because language can never be kept within determined narrative and can never be possessed by ourselves but always kept by and returns to this Law, that the multiple

<sup>231</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War*, Asian Voices (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

<sup>232</sup> Kita, *Imjingawa Monogatari "Huuin Sareta Uta" no Shinjitsu*.

<sup>233</sup> Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other*, 24, 40.

<sup>234</sup> Derrida, 24, 40.

<sup>235</sup> Derrida, 24.

<sup>236</sup> Derrida, 64.

narratives of *Imjingawa* with the promise of Japanese revisionist nationalism on the one hand, and with the promise of anti-revisionist nationalism on the other hand can emerge. Yet, as Derrida suggests importantly, in both narratives, the colonial impulse and terror are equally at stake. In other words, the colonial and nationalist impulse *inherent* in language is what gives rise to both nationalist and anti-nationalist promises. And such ‘undecidability’ is the condition where the political decision must arise:

It is at each instance of writing or reading, at each movement of poetic experience that the decision must arise against a background of the undecidable. It is often a political decision – and often a decision regarding the political side of things. As a condition of the decision as well as that of responsibility, the undecidable inscribes threat in chance, and terror in the ipseity of the host.<sup>237</sup>

As a carrier or a reader or a host, this terror exists for the fear of one’s mad jealousy, temptation and impulses that desire to make the language decidable in order to promise certain narrative and framework.

What follows is yet another narrative about *Imjingawa*, about how *Imjingawa* happened to me. Contrary to Saitō Mariko’s assumption that this song is a widely known song, I never heard of this song before. If Matsuyama could be introduced by Saitō as a ‘child who does not know war,’ then I am a child of a child of a ‘child who does not know war,’ – however this might entail. I never heard of The Folk Crusades or Matsuyama Takeshi until this time. So, here is how the narrative goes: on one of those ordinary evenings at my desk, I was looking for some music to listen to just as I sometimes do. In fact, I cannot remember very well but I can say that it was out of nowhere that this one version of *Imjingawa* randomly appeared on my suggestion.<sup>238</sup> I say ‘randomly,’ reckoning the workings of algorithms, because I was not looking for any specific songs, and it was far from my conscious intention that I stumbled upon this song. I never heard of this song or a singer. This song sung in Japanese was monotonous and quiet. It was beautiful as simple as it was. I see the quiet scenery in the music video, and my eyes follow as her sign language makes traces melodiously. I like it. From the title that included hangul, I was guessing that the singer may be a South Korean person, and I was also hearing a slight Korean accent in Japanese. It was only released in 2018. A somewhat newer song? Since the word *Imjingawa* did not ring any

<sup>237</sup> Derrida, 62.

<sup>238</sup> [MV] *이랑* 이 · 란 - 임진강 *イムジン河*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhBQinebAp0>.

bells to me without knowing any of what I had written thus far, I was naively thinking how come she is singing in Japanese, a Japanese song? This is why, when I looked up about this song, I found myself surprised to find Han Tonghyon's article in Japanese which expressed her appreciation for this song as well as her interview article with Lee Lang, the South Korean artist who was singing *Imjingawa* in this video. Indeed, a naïve surprise, yet, frankly speaking, I was taken aback to find myself in such intertwined waves of relations opened by my unintended encounter with *Imjingawa* on this just another random evening. It felt as though something led me to *Imjingawa* which then led me to the words exchanged between the two just as perhaps Han Tonghyon was addressed by *Imjingawa* to reach Lee Lang. It was as if each of us were summoned and made involved by the trace of *Imjingawa* to meet this way, to lend an ear. Han frames *Imjingawa* by Lee in the following narration in her article:

This song made in the North, thinking of the South, the song once forbidden in Japan, is now sung by a person from the South in Japanese with sign language at this precise river. And this is happening just now. One can only admire the choice and critical sense of the multiple layers of meanings that are incorporated in the work, which extends beyond East Asia and beyond words.

To me personally, this music video felt as if an attempt to overcome various borders that exist near my very life in order to come closer to freedom. I was so touched to be presented with such beautiful sublimation in the form of music and visuality before my eyes.

From North Korea to Japan, and now half a century later, the series of response sent from South Korea reminds me once again of the power of songs.<sup>239</sup>

The adaptation of *Imjingawa* by Lee arrives at Han like an unexpected 'response.' Unexpected, because perhaps it has been forgotten for some time. Unexpected, because *Imjingawa* arrives at Han by addressing her "personally," by *responding* to her, by *gifting* her a reminder what it might mean for her to "come closer to freedom."<sup>240</sup> Han concludes her article by writing that the arrival of this song "reminds her of the power of songs" or in the

<sup>239</sup> Tonhyon Han, "Lee Lang No Imjigawa -- Bōdā Wo, Kotoba Wo Koete, --Ikue Ni Mo Orikasa Natta Imi Ni Omoi Wo Aseru," Yahoo! JAPAN, January 3, 2018, <https://www.newsweekjapan.jp/stories/world/2018/03/post-9719.php>. 南を思い北で作られた歌を、日本で歌おうとして禁じられたその歌を、南で生きる人が日本語で手話をまじえて歌う、その題材となったまさにその川辺で。しかも今。東アジア、さらに言葉を越えた広がりや射程に、幾重にも折り重なった意味が込められたその選択と批評的センスには敬服するしかない。あらゆるボーダー、いや私にとっては私自身の人生の近くにある様々なボーダーを乗り越え自由に近づく試みのようなものが、音楽と映像というかたちで、しかも美しく昇華されたかたちで目の前に提示されたことに年初から心が震えた。北朝鮮から日本へ、そして半世紀を経て、こうして韓国から届いた一連のリアクションに、改めて歌の持つ力を思う。(Translation by me.)

<sup>240</sup> Han. 「私にとっては」「自由に近づく」(Translation by me.)

Derridean sense this “power” may echo the Law as Language.<sup>241</sup> The way *Imjingawa* is able to *come* to Han after series of interruption and prohibition in both Japan and South Korea, may exemplify how ultimately *Imjingawa* is kept by the other that the Law as Language is, prohibiting the total appropriation by human attempts. This instance of *arrival* of *Imjingawa* may be seen as a gift, in Derridean sense. For Derrida, a gift is always ‘to come,’ always engages the future; a gift is never present.<sup>242</sup> This ‘response’ enabled by this other, the law, which arrives to Han unexpectedly is a gift that blesses her as the *right address*. And in her response to this ‘response,’ *thanks* is promised under her signature: not necessarily addressed to the artist Lee, but rather to the “power of songs” i.e. the Law, expressing her respect for the language which is ‘always to come’ from the other, a gift.<sup>243</sup>

This instance of gift was made possible because *Imjingawa* has never been owned and possessed by anyone but returns to the working of Language, the Law, so it can *come* again and again from the places one never expected. *Imjingawa* cannot be and have never been owned and possessed by certain individuals to safely store neither the defined memory of ‘the sadness of the division between South and the North’ nor the memory of ‘abductees by North Korea,’ though this does not deny those memories. Memories only remain weaved in its incalculable, undetermined trace, together with its trace, independently of our jealousy to decide, to appropriate it, to totalize it within our determined narratives. The memory of the other is not to be stored but *is always to come*, unexpectedly. It is the trace of the other that memory stays, that arrives at us unexpectedly, like the way *Imjingawa* arrives to me, to Lee Lang, to Han Tonhyon, carrying a certain *reminder*.

The memory stays with traces, in order to “preserve” them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which themselves never occupy the form of presence and always remain, as it were, to come – come from the future, from the *to come*.<sup>244</sup>

And this is why, Derrida suggests that memories of ourselves, are necessarily bound by certain finitude or amnesia, as a condition that prohibits totalizing and owning of memory, the memory of the Other, which always comes from the other and returns to the other.

<sup>241</sup> Han. 韓国から届いた一連のリアクションに、改めて歌の持つ力を思う (Translation by me.)

<sup>242</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires: For Paul de Man*, Rev. ed, The Wellek Library Lectures (New York: Columbia university press, 1989), 146–47.

<sup>243</sup> Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other*, 64, 67.

<sup>244</sup> Derrida, *Mémoires*, 58.



This finitude, which is also that of memory, does not at first take the form of a limit, of a limited ability, aptitude or faculty, of a circumscribed power. Nor does it assume the form of a limit which would move us to multiply testamentary signs, traces, hypograms, hypomnemata, signatures and epigraphs, or autobiographical “memoirs.” No, this finitude can only take that form through the trace of the other in us, the others’ irreducible precedence; in other words, simply the trace, which is always the trace of the other, the finitude of memory, and thus the approach or reembrace of the future. If there is a finitude of memory, it is because there is something of the other, and of memory as a memory of the other, which comes from the other and comes back to the other. It defies any totalization...<sup>245</sup>

This probably explains why Derrida suggests “amnesia” from this point of memory of the other does not simply suggest negativity or a loss but “remains, in a way, active, dynamic, powerful something other than a mere forgetfulness.”<sup>246</sup> Though perhaps, the condition for amnesia to remain other than a mere forgetfulness is that one remains a “keen ear”<sup>247</sup> that is attuned enough to hear the unexpected coming of the other that arrives and blesses one’s ear, invites one to touch its traces where memory stays and gives us over to thinking.

Next to Han’s articles, I also stumbled upon an open letter written by Lee, addressed to Han: another writing that *Imjingawa* led me to on that evening. As she explains, Lee wrote her letter in Korean and translated into Japanese with the help of AI. Following is the part of the letter and my English translation of that translation.

Dear The Loud Talker, Han Tonhyon unnie

When I think of you, this phrase from you comes to my mind.  
“As unnie should, it is my treat.”

The time you visited Seoul after you had passed through a difficult hurdle and when I visited Tokyo before covid, you said “as unnie should” and treated me to a delicious meal and drinks. When I met you for the first time, I was just finding your loud voice and unfamiliar Chosen speech –something I don’t usually hear in Japan – quite funny. I remember the glances around us when we were having a conversation in cafes and bars in Tokyo. I wonder if it is because of our loud voice or the way we spoke in South Korean and Chosen.

I am ashamed to admit that before I met you, I was the person who knew nothing about Zainichi Korean. All I knew was that one play featuring a Chosen school and one documentary film. I remember watching the film while thinking about why it is that the students in Chosen School use the “North Korean” style of language. In 2017,

<sup>245</sup> Derrida, 29.

<sup>246</sup> Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other*, 31.

<sup>247</sup> Christie McDonald and Jacques Derrida, eds., *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation; Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida*, 1. pr, Bison Book (Lincoln, Neb.: Univ. of Nebraska Pr, 1988), 51.

I learned about *Imjingawa* for the first time, and after releasing my *Imjingawa* music video in 2018 January which I sang in Japanese with South Korean sign language, you contacted me from Tokyo where you live. You wrote an article on Yahoo! Japan about the history of *Imjingawa* and your feedback about my music video, and you also wrote an additional article when you interviewed me upon my visit to Japan for my performance.

It makes my head sweat to think of how many inconsiderate remarks I made at that time, knowing nothing about Zainichi Koreans, but you never once accused me or tried to teach me a lesson. You helped me as you say "as unnie should" to find my questions.

[...]

When I learned about "Chosen Seki" status for the first time, I asked you "Do you think about changing your nationality for easier mobility?" Now, I am ashamed that I asked such an inconsiderate question, but you answered me with no hesitation "Why is it up to me to change it?" Hearing your answer, I thought "Well? That's right!" and my head was ringing. I understood then that one must be able to move freely without having to have to change nationality.

[...]

Han Tonhyon unnie, let's meet again while we are alive. When we meet in Tokyo again, let's talk loud in our Chosen and South Korean, so that our voice echoes the entire bar. I miss you.

2021 July  
From Seoul, Lang<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Lee Lang, "Dai san kai: koeno de kai chosenjin, han tonhyon unnie (onēsan) he," *Shobunsha Scrap Book* (blog), July 14, 2021, <http://s-scrap.com/6014>. 声のでかい朝鮮人、ハン・トンヒョンオンニ（お姉さん）へ オンニを思い浮かべると、いつも一緒に思い浮かぶセリフがあります。「オンニとして、当然おごる」オンニが難関をくぐって訪問したソウルで会った時も、コロナ以前に私が東京に訪問して会った時も、オンニは「オンニとして、当然」おいしいご飯とお酒をおごってくれました。初めてオンニに会った時は、日本ではあまり聞こえなかった大きなボリュームの声と不慣れな朝鮮語の話し方がただ面白いと思いました。オンニと東京のカフェや飲み屋で会話をしている時、周りのチラチラ見る視線たちを思い出しますね。それはオンニと私の大きな声のせいでしょうか、朝鮮語と韓国語の話し方のせいでしょうか。恥ずかしながら私はオンニに会う前までは在日コリアンについて何も知らない人でした。朝鮮学校が登場する1本の劇映画、ドキュメンタリー映画を1本観たのがすべてでした。映画に出てきた朝鮮学校の生徒らがなぜ「朝鮮民主主義人民共和国」風の言葉を使うのか考えながら、映画を観た記憶があります。2017年に「イムジン河」という歌を初めて知り、2018年1月に日本語と韓国手話で歌った「イムジン河」MVを発表した後、東京に住んでいるオンニから連絡がありましたね。オンニは「イムジン河」の曲の歴史と私のMVに対する感想などをヤフージャパンに記事で書き、以後私が公演のため日本を訪問した時、インタビューをして追加記事を書きました。あの時、在日コリアンについて何も知らない私が、いかに多くの失言をしたかと思うと頭から汗が出てくるようですが、オンニは一度も私を非難したり、教えようとしたりすることはありませんでした。私が自然に質問することを探すために「オンニとして、当然」手伝ってくれました。[...]「朝鮮籍」が何なのか初めて知った時、「移動の便宜のために国籍を変える気はないか」とオンニに聞いたことがあります。そんな失礼な質問をしたことも恥ずかしいですが、その時オンニはとても堂々と「なぜ私を変える？」と答えました。答えを聞いて「え？ そうだね！」と頭ががんがんしました。国籍を変えなくても自

*Imjingawa* has summoned Han and Lee into contact while its traces and the memory it stays with invited them to utter their words, to meet, to exchange words. Lee's letter speaks as if the memory that stays together with the traces of *Imjingawa* – memory that involves Han in its fold – gives itself over to Lee to be *thought*, as if an invitation by the gift of *Imjingawa*. Derrida says borrowing the words of Paul de Man:

[Memory] thinks only by giving what is to be thought or in thinking what calls and gives to be thought.<sup>249</sup>

[Gift] never gives anything that is a “present” or that is gathered in a present; it calls as a promise, it calls itself a promise, a commitment, an invitation.<sup>250</sup>

Totalization and appropriation of *Imjingawa* are prohibited because it is *Imjingawa* itself that initially dictates me, calls me, gives me what is there to respond, and invites me what is there to think even before my intention, even before I knew what is there to totalize or appropriate. ‘Even before I knew what is there to totalize or appropriate’ precisely because of certain amnesia I share with Lee as she honestly expresses in the letter. Beyond any conscious intention, it is *Imjingawa* that summons us into relation, invites us to think, to be involved in its folds that carry memory. And such is a gift that I, and Han Tonhyon and Lee Lang, owe our thanks. Yet, *Imjingawa* does not stay with the relation it has summoned among us, it will return to the other, for *Imjingawa* is never ours, never speaks for us, our thinking, our relations, our memory even if it initiates: it must not stay with us. And since I owe my thanks, my responsibility is to mourn its return to the other against my jealousy for it to stay with us, so that it gives its blessings to many more others await in its lasting future.

Lastly, reflecting on my experience in watching Lee Lang's music video, I think of the lingering sounds that come from Lee's mouth, the traces that her hands make in the air, and how they all felt like melodies – that are not yet language to me – that my body wants to hum along. Can the Law as Language solely explain the way *Imjingawa* has been carried by so many others from Chongryon, to Matsuyama and The Folk Crusades to the Japanese students protesters, to Saitō's *Kankoku*, to revisionist nationalist narrative of Japanese

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由に移動できる権利を得るのが当然だということをあの時分かりました。[...] ハン・トンヒョンオンニ、生きてまた会いましょう。会って大声で東京のどこかの酒屋に響き渡るように朝鮮語と韓国語で話しましょう。とても会いたいです。2021年7月 ソウルから、ランより (Translation by me.)

<sup>249</sup> Derrida, *Mémoires*, 146.

<sup>250</sup> Derrida, 146–47.

abductees, to Lee Lang's music video? Before *Imjingawa* is received as lyrics and poem, it must have touched people's ear. Before they become words, people heard how its melody touches their ear. Before one knows, understands, decides, determines, captures what *Imjingawa* is, what *Imjingawa* should mean and what ideological promise it should serve for us, many of us found ourselves touched by its melody. Such was my experience, Matsuyama's experience as well as what I discussed as the revisionist nationalist's experience. Is this yet another form of amnesia that allows all of us, nationalists, anti-nationalists and 'children who do not know war' to be vulnerably and naively open enough to feel and to be blessed by this other, the gift of the melody? Is this also what motivates our jealousy to know more, to understand more, to examine it in detail, to finally own it? If Law as Language enables *Imjingawa* to escape being owned by individuals and comes back again and again, *Imjingawa* enjoys this law to an exemplary extent not necessarily because it is the poem that particularly allows the possibility of many interpretations and framing. Before a question of words carried by the poem, *Imjingawa* enjoys this law because of its materiality, the prosthesis of musical body that gives to naïve, vulnerable, affective, innocent encounter for many. Musicality and the affective feeling it is able to arouse among many are that which seem to excite the workings of the law and to agitate the jealousy for its blessings to stay, even more.

To conclude; in 2019, *Bungei*, the well-established literary magazine, featured the title *Kankoku Feminizumu Nihon* (*South Korea Feminism Japan*) in its autumn edition, given the success of *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* and the following popularity in the so-called South Korean feminist literature.<sup>251</sup> This magazine was sold very well to the extent that, for the first time in 86 years, the responsible company, Kawade Shobō Shinsha had to print out additional copies to meet the demand.<sup>252</sup> This autumn edition was put together under the supervision of Saitō Mariko and writers from both Japan and South Korea, and the translators contribute their short stories and essays, centering around the title *South Korea Feminism Japan*.

Among other writers in this magazine, both Han Tonhyon and Lee Lang contribute their writings: Lee's essay originally written in Korean was translated by Saitō. My ear cannot help but to hear the echo of *Imjingawa* as it haunts their words, their relation like a phantasm and echoes through the entire magazine. It is as if *Imjingawa* summons itself

<sup>251</sup> *Bungei 2019 Nen Shūki Gō*: "Kankoku, Feminizumu, Nihon."

<sup>252</sup> *Bungei 2019 Nen Shūki Gō*: "Kankoku, Feminizumu, Nihon."

through their words to remark its fold through them, prohibiting and resisting the totalization of the relation under the title *South Korea Feminism Japan* by staying right at the abyss, echoing itself out to deconstruct this framing.

To add, this zine is where Han Tonhyon writes an essay that she critically reflects on the notion of feminist solidarity between South Korean women and Japanese women in response to *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* by drawing on her personal experience,<sup>253</sup> and it is also where Saitō Mariko writes her essay on her reading experience of Korean Literature through the sense of smell.<sup>254</sup> What has invited all of their words together in this zine? *Imjingawa* is simply one of such working. What else haunts our meeting? To whom we owe our thanks? What has given us over to thinking? Perhaps we just only need to attune our ear to it because such working of Language must be always already happening to and within *South Korea Feminism Japan* without necessarily needing ourselves, just like the way the phantasm of *Imjingawa* is doing.

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<sup>253</sup> Han, “Chigau to Iukoto to Onazi to Iukoto.”

<sup>254</sup> Saitō, “Monogatarino Nakano 「tasya」 to 「rinzin」 ～ 「nioi」 de Yomu Kankoku Zyosei Bungaku Syōsi.”

## V. Conclusion

Last summer marked the 100 years since the Kanto Earthquake and the massacre against Korean, Chinese, non-Tokyo Japanese, deaf people, and socialist, anarchist rebels. I was in the memorial and the protest in front of the National Diet against the Japanese government that actively refuses this violence and censors any attempts by the people such as artists and archivists to acknowledge this violence in public. After the protest, I was dining with the journalists and writers whom I met there coincidentally. One journalist, Ishibashi Gaku-san, who was there then with us, was at the time caught in trial for critiquing the obvious racism in the speech made by one politician running for the Kawasaki city council and thereby ‘damaging the fame’ of this politician, the plaintiff.<sup>255</sup> The charge was later falsified in favor of Ishibashi.<sup>256</sup>

The first time I acknowledged this massacre was when I was 19 upon being assigned a text by Ryang Sonia “The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Massacre of Koreans in 1923: Notes on Japan's Modern National Sovereignty” in my class on Anthropology at Leiden University College.<sup>257</sup> One might read this thesis and think, after all, it is a writing of another ignorant ‘child who does not know war,’ seeking for her redemption. In a way, it is, perhaps not for redemption but for thinking about ways to approach it. Amnesia has left me many feelings, something perhaps resembles rage, shame, anxiety and distrust. It has made me to stutter or else shun my speech in front of others. It has also caused me the compulsive urge to wait, and to listen and read the words of the other. Yet, what do I mean by that? I do not deny that such has motivated my overall question: what does it mean that one builds relation with others whose experience and memory one can never claim to know or understand? and that my investigation on this question involves discussion on ear and mouth – reading, listening, speaking, writing.

This overall question was addressed in response to the contemporary notion of feminist solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women through the feeling of understanding, relatability and empathy raised by the contemporary #MeToo inspired Japanese feminism. Simultaneously, it was also addressed in response to the existing critiques by Zainichi feminist scholars who have articulated how such form of homogenization of

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<sup>255</sup> Kyōko Andō, “‘Heito Wo Tomenagara Shuzai Suru’ Kanagawashinbun Ishibashi Gaku Kisha No Kyōji Kisonimo... Reishisuto Wo Tetteiteki Ni Hinan Suru Riyū,” *Tokyo Shinbun*, October 15, 2023, <https://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/283804>.

<sup>256</sup> Andō.

<sup>257</sup> Sonia Ryang, “The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Massacre of Koreans in 1923: Notes on Japan’s Modern National Sovereignty,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2003): 731–48.

experience as a woman in the name of sisterhood does epistemic violence by flattening the historical and ongoing traces of Japanese coloniality and racism.

My approach in examining the situation of this relation took the form of thinking with the *movement of words* through looking at the instance of reading, citing, interpreting and translating the words uttered by the other. This approach informed by Derrida – that starts with words that circulate exceeding our will to control – has enabled me to think of relation without assuming prior identitarian subjects who are willing to build relation with others based on understanding, relatability, and empathy. As a site of such questioning, I firstly examined the novel *Kim Ji-young Born 1982* which directly responds the empathetic feminist relation raised by Japanese women in relation to South Korean women, and the second site was *Imjingawa* which has rather subtle resonance with such notion of feminist solidarity.

In my analysis on *Kim Ji-young Born 1982*, I elaborated on the situation of translating and reading *Kim Ji-young* in Japanese. I did so through looking at the translator Saitō Mariko's affective intervention into *Kim Ji-young* and its reception in the gesture of interrupting the echo of empathetic identification with Ji-young by the Japanese readers. I have speculatively discussed how this seemingly autonomous intervention by Saitō can be seen as *a response* she is bound to make before the folds of Korean Literature she *carries* as a dedicated reader of Korean Literature since the 1980s. I have discussed how the words carried inside her as a long time reader addresses her, demands her and mandates her to be in this position of responsibility before the other. I have also discussed the ethical tension between translating and reading the words of the other, and how both must necessarily fail.

In my analysis on *Imjingawa*, I have examined how the movement of words could be seen as *reliable reference point* to think of relation. I have discussed, through reflecting on my own encounter with *Imjingawa*, how the traces that the words weave through could involve us into relation before our consciousness, knowledge and our will, while inviting us to be touched by its trace where memory stays and finally giving us over to thinking. This was partly discussed in response to the notion of amnesia that Saitō Mariko as well as Zainichi feminist critiques have pointed out as that which enables epistemic violence and finally gives to the flattened and uncritical feminist solidarity between Japanese women and Korean women. I have inferred that what amnesia (should) motivates is a keen ear, attuned enough to hear the reminder of the other.

The lack of recognition, the lack of engagement, and the lack of knowledge – the amnesia – have been felt and raised. These have been felt precisely because what has been buried in amnesia for many remains to constitute the lives of some today. As I discussed with

Saitō Mariko's intervention in my first analytical chapter, those that refuse amnesia hurry to cause interruption by reading the words of the other and then citing them, and framing them, by remembering in the hope of reminding ourselves of our collective amnesia. Yet, I have discussed how such affective intervention into amnesia is always precarious. In an attempt to recognize our amnesia, to recognize what has been forgotten, there is a risk of totalizing the memories of other. My thesis has seen the impossibility of such intervention. As we have seen in my second analysis on *Imjingawa*, the memory is bound to amnesia for it must not be safely kept and possessed in certain determined frame by willful individuals but kept by the other and return to the other. We are bound to fail to recognize and remember upon our will to recognize and to remember. The 'what must be recognized and remembered' is hence *to come*. Such requires certain passivity, the *keen ear*, that awaits the reminder, the voice of the other *to come*. There is perhaps no recognition, no remembrance in an active, willful confidence or commitment, only a jealousy to grasp what must return to the other. Recognition or a remembrance are *to come* precariously and anxiously and to return, and we are to be surprised, to be touched and to be undone, to be made involved by what we have already always been part of, by what we owe ourselves *lastingly*.

There is much to think further. In this thesis, I have emphasized this situation of 'to come' in relation to various 'events,' such as the tune of *Imjingawa* that touched Matsuyama Takeshi as he passed by the neighboring Chosen school, the reminder of Saitō Mariko's acquaintance that finally led Saitō to discuss a paragraph from the Japanese novel *Saredo Warera ga Hibi* in her *Kankoku*, my unexpected encounter with *Imjingawa* on one evening and the words exchanged between Lee Lang and Han Tonhyon. These, what may be seen as, 'off-stage events' in the margin that I emphasized throughout my thesis do not need to be simplified by my overall framing of the 'movement of words' or Derridean Law as/and Language. The situation of 'to come' can be complicated by further consideration on, for instance, the musical body of *Imjingawa* and the closer attention on the affective and embodied encounter at each instance of the situation of 'to come.'

Finally, in response to the notion of transnational feminist solidarity between Japanese women and South Korean women, my thesis then is a call to question not only the flattened identitarian form of solidarity based on the assumed homogenized oppression as women, but also to simultaneously question the mode of critiquing, the mode of responding to critiques, and the mode of intervention itself. It is also a reminder – concerning the noticeable practice of citing the testimonies of 'comfort women survivors' in an attempt to remember and make a claim, or the recent accounts of South Korean feminist novels in an attempt to claim the



sameness, or the Zainichi Korean feminist critiques in an attempt to recognize – that every instance of reading the words of the other, citing and framing them again through one's own words is political that comes with ethical limitation, limitation precisely bestowed by the other that prohibits our confidence, our will to recognize, to grasp, and finally to totalize other. So, one must read the margin, so that what cannot be read by reading, what cannot be recognized by recognizing, what cannot be understood by understanding, what cannot be heard by listening, can *come to* you and to give you over to thinking.

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