

Assimilation through Resistance: Language and Ethnicity in Kim Saryang’s “Hikari no naka ni”

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In the short story “Hikari no naka ni” 光の中に (In the light, 1939), Kim Saryang (1914–50) critiques the desire of colonized Koreans to participate in the colonial policy of assimilation through such acts as adopting Japanese names. Ironically, this resistance to assimilatory policies ultimately leads to a different path toward assimilation. Similar to Kim’s own success in life as an author of works written in the language of his colonizers (Japanese), the resolution his text offers—resistance to assimilation through acceptance of one’s Korean ethnicity—results in assimilation through this very act of resistance, suggesting that resistance through the use of the colonizer’s tools inevitably produces complicity.

Assimilation through Resistance: Chang Hyök-ju & Kim Saryang

In 1910, Korea was officially annexed by Japan into the burgeoning Japanese Empire, marking a significant shift in Korean efforts to modernize. With the focus of modernization efforts now placed almost entirely on Japan, the debate over which modernization model to follow subsided. This focus on Japan led to a particular form of “colonial modernity,” where modern institutions—often imported from the West into Japan—were then relayed to Korea through a Japanese filter. In order to gain access to these modern institutions, many young Korean students made their way to Japan and partook of the “modern” education available there. Because few institutions of higher learning existed on the Korean peninsula, this migration continued until the end of the colonial period in 1945. The education these young scholars received was in the language of their colonizers, Japanese; and, even for those who remained in Korea, the curricula were primarily offered in Japanese. In the field of literature, modern Japanese literature had been firmly established by 1910, and Japanese translations of Western texts from such languages as Russian, French, and German were abundant. Korean students of modern literature during the colonial period, then, engaged with texts that were, for the most part, written in Japanese.

Young Korean writers who had received their formal education in Japanese faced the dilemma of whether to write in Korean, their “native” language, or Japanese, the language of their colonizers. Because Japanese colonial policy centered on the promotion of assimilation, the issue of language became particularly controversial. Slogans such as “same language, same race” (*dōbun dōshu* 同文同種) emphasized a shared cultural heritage with Japan’s East Asian neighbors. As Kazuki Sato points out, this claim to “similarity,” however, often served as a justification for Japanese imperial advances into neighboring countries: “*dōbun dōshu* had already come to reflect the vision conveyed by a term like the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere (*Dai-Tōa Kyōeiken* [大東亜共栄圏]), namely, the expulsion of Western powers from Asia and the establishment of Japanese hegemony.”¹

Chang Hyök-ju 張赫宙 (장혁주, 1905–98) and Kim Saryang 金史良 (김사랑, 1914–50), two representative colonial-period Korean authors, chose to write in Japanese.² Although educated in Korea, Chang felt that writing in Japanese provided the best platform to inform the world about Korea: “There are few peoples in the world more unfortunate than Koreans. I somehow want to make an appeal to the world about this situation, but the Korean-language sphere is too small. With this in mind, I felt it was necessary to enter to enter the Japanese literary establishment, as there are many more opportunities for translation.”³ For Chang, at least in theory, the Japanese language represented a means of resistance to Japanese colonialism. Also, writing in Japanese allowed much more leeway in addressing controversial topics, since the censorship policies for Korean-language texts were far stricter than those used for Japanese publications.

Kim Saryang’s position on writing in Japanese was a little more ambiguous than that of Chang. Although Kim published mostly in Japanese, some of his works, such as the short story “Tenba” 天馬 (1940), present a negative stance toward Korean authors who write only in Japanese.⁴ “Tenba” narrates the story of a Korean author, Genryū, who is attacked by a fellow Korean author for his collaboration with the Japanese literary establishment. Mirroring the tone of the fictional narrative in “Tenba,” Kim supported Korean authors’ claims for the necessity of writing in Korean and not just the “national language” (*kokugo* 國語), Japanese.⁵

Regardless of the positions taken in his writings and views expressed in literary debates, Kim Saryang still chose to write in Japanese. Yun Tae-sök argues that Kim had two main reasons for writing in Japanese: the first, similar to Chang Hyök-ju’s position, was that Japanese provided a larger platform for which to inform others about Korea; and the second was that Kim was not accustomed to using Korean as a “literary language” (*munhagō* 文學語).⁶ In other words, Kim’s use of Japanese represents the conflation of an act of resistance (criticism of Japanese colonial policies) and the process

of assimilation (greater ease in the use of Japanese in comparison to his "native" language of Korean as a literary language).

Kim's most famous work, "Hikari no naka ni" 光の中に (In the light, 1939), provides a particularly striking example of this paradox of assimilation through resistance to assimilation.⁷ This work can be read as a critique of Japan's "name-change policy" (*sōshikaimēi* 創氏改名) and of the Koreans who adopted Japanese names. Enacted in 1939, the name-change policy required Koreans to adopt Japanese names as part of Imperial Japan's attempt to construct Korean subjectivity as that of imperial subject (*kōmin* 皇民). In this text, then, Kim uses the language of his colonizers, Japanese, to criticize Japan's colonial policies. It is through this very act of resistance—presenting a positive endorsement for the use of Korean names over the adoption of Japanese names—that Kim Saryang made a name for himself in Japanese literary circles, as "Hikari no naka ni" received critical acclaim and was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize, Japan's most prestigious literary award. It is ironic, therefore, that Kim, in his attempt to shed light on the negative aspects of Japan's name-change policy, achieved success in Japan. Through his fluency in the language of his colonizer and ability to succeed in the metropole, Kim symbolically represents the successful fulfillment of the colonial policy of assimilation (*dōka* 同化)—marking Kim's participation in the seemingly contradictory process of assimilation through *resistance to* assimilation.

Reflecting Kim's own life as a successful writer in Japan, "Hikari no naka ni" narrates the story of a young Korean teacher (concurrently a student at a prestigious university) living in Japan who is faced with the dilemma of how to handle societal pressures to assimilate. My analysis focuses on how the text designates ethnic difference (i.e., the distinction between Japanese and Korean) and then proposes a solution to the assimilation dilemma. I examine the different types of ethnic ambivalence that the text presents and the ways in which the characters maneuver through the complex ethnic landscape of the metropole, carving out a place for Korean ethnicity in the modern terrain of Tokyo. I argue, however, that similar to Kim's own assimilation through success as an author of Japanese texts, the resolution reached in the text is achieved only through assimilation into Japanese society. Thus, I suggest that resistance by using the colonizer's "tools" (language, education, economy) can lead to absorption by the very forces one is attempting to resist.

Ethnic Markers

Kim Saryang's writings reveal a highly complex interaction with the racial discourse of Imperial Japan. In particular, "Hikari no naka ni" presents a narrative that meticulously addresses the themes of assimilation and multi-

ethnicity. In the text, assimilation is anything but a simple process, as the desire to assimilate and become an imperial subject fiercely competes with divergent notions of ethnicity.⁸ The narrative revolves around the relationship between its two main characters, Haruo, a young boy, and his teacher Minami (or Nan). Filtered through the first-person perspective of Minami, the narrative opens as follows: “The person I want to tell you about, Yamada Haruo, was a strange kid.”⁹ The opening line, then, establishes Minami as the observer of Haruo, filtering almost all information about Haruo through Minami.

Neither Haruo nor Minami is entirely ethnically “Japanese” as defined by the text. The text constructs the ethnic identity of the characters as one that is unchanging and determined by blood. Minami is Korean—“Of course, I [Minami] am Korean,”¹⁰ while Haruo is described as “a young boy who has received [*uketa* 受けた] both Japanese [*Naichijin* 内地人] and Korean [*Chōsenjin* 朝鮮人] blood.”¹¹ Since both Minami and Haruo live in a space that essentializes ethnicity on the basis of blood, their status, as either non-Japanese ethnicity (Minami) or “partial” Japanese ethnicity (Haruo), places them in the precarious position of being “ethnically” attached to colonized Korea while living in colonizing Japan. However, although the text essentializes ethnicity based on blood, the actual ethnic markers in the text—language, names, family relations, physical features, and the like—provide room for Haruo and Minami to resist the simple definition of ethnicity that the text endorses. The characters’ ethnic ambivalence clashes with the unchanging, essentialized definition of ethnicity established by the text, creating tension between the text and the characters’ negotiations with their own ethnic identities.

Minami, although clearly defined as Korean in the text, possesses the ability to perform both Korean and Japanese ethnicity due to the malleable nature of his name. The character for his family name is 南, which can be read in Japanese as either “Minami” or “Nan.” This character is a crucial element in the construction of Minami’s ethnic identity, because the reading can mark Minami as either ethnically “Japanese” (Minami) or ethnically “Korean” (Nan).¹² In contrast, the characters for the family names of other Koreans in the text, such as 李 (Ri) and 尹 (Yun), are immediately recognizable as Korean surnames. Thus, the readings used by the text serve as Japanese-language ethnic markers, creating ambivalence in Minami’s surname that, in turn, encourages ambivalence in his ethnic identity.

Minami’s Korean ethnicity is also marked in the text by his physical appearance. Ri, one of Minami’s Korean students, identifies Minami as a fellow ethnic Korean by looking at his face: “Looking at your eyes, cheekbones, and nose, I thought that for sure you were Korean.”¹³ Haruo’s ethnic markings, though, are different from Minami’s. First, Haruo’s name, Yamada Haruo, is a very “typical” Japanese name that cannot be read as an

ethnically "Korean" name. He is, however, ethnically marked as "partially" Korean by his mother, who is Korean. Haruo's parents become the embodiment of Haruo's ethnic ambivalence—an Orientalist relationship between the colonizer and the colonized other, or, as Said states, "between a strong and a weak partner."¹⁴ In the story, Haruo's father attacks his mother, clearly showing this weak-strong, victim-perpetrator relationship, which is amplified by the narrator's descriptions of Haruo's mother: "She was a weak-looking, small-bodied woman."¹⁵ Haruo's parents further personify the colonial relationship when Haruo's father recounts his "stealing" of Haruo's mother from her parents: "I told them, hand this woman over. I will not accept it, if you don't. I threatened to light their walls [*shōji* 障子] on fire, and then her father, turning pale, gave her to me."¹⁶

Haruo's parents, therefore, personify the ethnic ambivalence of the "mixed blood" that flows through Haruo's body. In reference to Haruo's ethnically "mixed" parentage, the narrator states, "I thought about the tragedy of the split between the irreconcilable sides found in a boy with both Korean and Japanese blood."¹⁷ Haruo's ethnically unharmonious parents' blood mixes in him to create an ethnically ambivalent person. Yet, once again, the characters resist the essentialized definition of ethnicity that is established by the text, as Haruo's father is also of mixed parentage. Positioning Haruo's father as the colonizing Japanese "perpetrator" is therefore a contradiction to the definition of ethnicity presented by the text.

Mimicry, Ambivalence & the Construction of "Hiding Places"

The colonial policy of assimilation relies on mimicry, where colonized subjects are encouraged to mimic the colonizer. Yet this mimicry is limited to "almost but not quite," since complete mimicry would elide the division between colonizer and colonized. According to Homi Bhabha, "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."¹⁸ The ambivalence necessary for "mimicry" is present in the text's construction of the main characters' ethnic identities, as the "slippage," "excess," and "difference" are inherent in the text's construction of Minami and Haruo's ethnicities.

The necessity of *difference*, however, requires limitation. To construct mimicry, difference needs to be limited to "almost but not quite," for, if the difference is constructed as "almost total," the colonial relationship will convert to "menace," separating the colonizer and the colonized with veritable ethnic polarity.¹⁹ Thus, for Minami and Haruo to pass as Japanese, assimilation—the "difference" of their ethnic identity—must be contracted.

As an ethnic marker, Minami's name already represents a large area of potential ambivalence in Minami's ethnic identity. This ambiguity is fur-

ther magnified by Minami's status as an educated elite, which conceals his status as colonized, ethnic other. He is a student at "Imperial University" (*Teikoku Daigaku* 帝国大学, most certainly a reference to Tokyo Imperial University, the most prestigious university at the time). His connection to the university also provides a job as a teacher at a night school run by "S Association" (*S Kyōkai* 協会). "Originally, 'S' Association was a neighborhood operation with Imperial University at the center."²⁰ Not only is Minami an intellectual elite but, through his association with the prestigious university, he is also placed in a position where he teaches the colonizing Japanese as a colonized Korean. The ambivalence, although always present, is limited by his privilege, which allows Minami to "pass" as Japanese.

Another source of power for Minami is his relationship to the "West." Although Japanese characters are given little to no voice, they are still present in the text. The "West," on the other hand, is almost entirely absent, except for its presence in Minami. Minami is an English teacher; as such, his ability to "know" and "teach" the "West" gives him the power to teach his Japanese colonizers. Indeed, his position as an English teacher makes it difficult for his students to see him as anything other than "Japanese," since the Japanese, as colonizers, "brought" the "West" to Korea and "modernized" Korea. Therefore, Minami's proximity to the modern "West" makes his ethnicity even more ambivalent, putting Minami in a relationship of "mimicry" with his colonizers. Here, then, modernity is presented as a means to overcome the status of "colonized," since Minami—by consuming and then bestowing knowledge of the modern "West"—obtains a high social position in the metropole that erases his ethnic background. This ethnic ambivalence contrasts sharply with the "ethnicity-determined-by-blood" definition established in the text.

The state of mimicry, however, is not a stable one for Minami. His name, as an ethnic marker, possesses the power to relocate his relationship with colonial authority to that of menace, or "almost total difference." If the people with whom Minami associates use the reading "Minami," he will be ethnically marked as Japanese, whereas being called "Nan" marks him as Korean. In order to maintain an identity of "almost but not quite," the ethnically Japanese reading of the character for Minami's name must be used. "Before I realized it, everyone was referring to me as Mr. 'Minami' at the association. As you know, the character for my last name should be read [*yomu beki da* 読むべきだ] as 'Nan,' but for various reasons the Japanese version of my name was used."²¹ Here, by using the phrasing "should be pronounced/read" (*yomu beki da*), the text establishes the Korean reading as correct or proper.

Although the text privileges the Korean reading as the way the character "should be read," the narrator also endorses his colleagues' use of the Japanese reading. "To begin with, my colleagues did me the favor [*yonde*

kureru 読んでくれる] of referring to me in that way.”²² The narrator’s usage of the word *kureru* (“doing a favor”) in this passage clearly reflects Minami’s position that being referred to as “Japanese” (meaning with a Japanese name) is a benefit bestowed by the Japanese or the colonizing power that they represent. The narrator uses the same expression *kureru* at another point in the text when discussing how Japanese people chose to refer to him: “everyone just did me the favor [*yonde kureru*] of referring to me in this way.”²³

By using the reading that marks Minami as ethnically Japanese, the colonizing Japanese endorse the colonial strategy of “mimicry,” which allows Minami to construct a “hiding place” where his Korean ethnicity is concealed. Yet this hiding place is extremely fragile. If Minami’s colleagues suddenly decided to use the character reading of “Nan,” the slippage would then become great, exposing Minami’s hiding place, constructing him as ethnically different, and preventing him from assimilating. Minami has no control over whether his relationship with the colonizing power is that of ethnic difference or ethnic similitude, as he can hope only to maintain his hiding place that would be destroyed instantly if those around him started calling him “Nan.”

Haruo is a young boy who attends the night school where Minami teaches. The narrator describes Haruo as a “strange child” (*fushigi na kodomo* 不思議な子供) who “does not try to love, and also is not loved.”²⁴ Haruo’s completely Japanese-sounding name, Yamada Haruo, does not trigger doubt about his ethnicity and thus does not cause slippage in his ambivalent ethnic identity, as in Minami’s case. But Haruo’s low economic status marginalizes him and threatens his own hiding place. Haruo’s class status is established early in the text: Haruo, “more than any other child in the neighborhood, had a dirty appearance”; and “It seemed that he lived in the swampy area [*numachi atari* 沼地辺り] behind the station.”²⁵ By pointing out Haruo’s dirty appearance and lowly living quarters, the narrator places Haruo in the economically underprivileged class, which contrasts starkly with Minami’s position as an educated elite. In the early stages of the text, no mention is made of Haruo’s ethnic ambivalence—his mixed blood, demonstrating that Haruo has successfully constructed a hiding place that conceals his ethnic ambivalence from Minami. The narrator even speculates that Haruo acquired a “superiority complex” (*yūetsukan* 優越感) while living in Korea.²⁶

Haruo’s method of concealment is different from that of Minami in that he does not use privilege, as he is privy to none; rather, Haruo uses the logic of inclusive exclusion. He “attacks” evidences of Korean ethnicity in others, placing him in the category of “ethnic Japanese” through his exclusion of “the other.” He simultaneously denies or conceals his own connection to a Korean ethnicity. After hearing Minami and one of his Korean

students, Ri, speak in Korean, Haruo seizes the opportunity and says, “Hey Korean [*Chōsenjin* 朝鮮人]!” to Minami.²⁷ Instead of “receiving permission” to pass as Japanese (like Minami), then, he usurps the “colonial authority” his name gives him, discriminating against colonized Koreans and consequently raising himself to the position of colonizer.

Both Haruo and Minami successfully mimic Japanese ethnicity, allowing them to assimilate into the society of their colonizers while concealing their own Korean ethnicity with carefully constructed hiding places. The means through which they construct their hiding places are vastly different, as Minami has his Japanese ethnic identity “bestowed upon” him by his coworkers (who use the Japanese reading of his name), and Haruo actively portrays himself as Japanese through his abuse of Koreans. Herein lies the conflict that the text attempts to resolve: the inability to both maintain a Korean ethnicity and thrive in the modern landscape of Tokyo.

Self-deceit & Complicity in “Mimicry”

The maintenance of Minami’s hiding place not only requires permission imparted by the colonizing power of the Japanese but also requires Minami’s acceptance of this permission in order to justify its inherent ambivalence. Minami does not have the power to assimilate completely on his own but simply needs to rationalize his ethnic ambivalence and his complicity in the self-serving colonial strategy of “mimicry.” Minami remedies this ambivalence through self-deceit: “Therefore, I continued to persuade myself, again and again, that I was not being hypocritical [*gizen wo haru* 偽善を張る], nor was I being servile [*hikutsu* 卑屈].”²⁸ The text, by making use of a retrospective narrative, elucidates the process of self-deceit. The narrator is aware of this process and acknowledges it through the use of words like “persuaded,” demonstrating that consent to mimicry required Minami’s exertion.

Only by remaining in this state of deliberate ignorance, or self-deceit, can Minami justify his ability to pass as Japanese and his reasons for doing so. “I started to think that, in order to play with these innocent children [Japanese children who attend the school where he teaches], this might actually be the best way to go about it.”²⁹ Indeed, the innocence of these “harmless” children allows him to justify the contradiction he feels between his “proper” Korean name and the “beneficial” Japanese name that allows him to assimilate. Furthermore, Minami’s Japanese students or colleagues never threaten his hiding place.

In a similar manner as for Minami, Haruo’s hiding place requires self-deceit. Haruo’s self-deceit, in contrast to Minami’s, is active and external, maintained through the practice of inclusive exclusion. For example, even after it is clear to Minami that Haruo’s mother is Korean, Haruo desper-

ately asserts, "I'm not Korean . . . right, Mr. Minami [*sensei* 先生]?"³⁰ Once again, then, Haruo and Minami achieve a similar end—assimilation into Japanese society—through vastly different methods. Although both participate in acts of self-deceit, Haruo's actions are much more assertive and external, while Minami's complicity to pressures to assimilate is comparatively passive.

Confrontation & the Destruction of Individual Hiding Places

Minami and Haruo both maintain their hiding places, successfully assimilating and concealing their ambivalent ethnic status until the ambivalence is confronted and the contradiction of mimicry is exposed. For Minami, it is Haruo and Ri who contest his ethnic ambivalence. Japanese characters, in their near invisibility, do not evoke doubt or introspection in Minami. Only Haruo and Ri, who also have ethnic connections to Korea, arouse skepticism in Minami's mind.

The first confrontation for Minami occurs during an interaction with Ri after class at the night school. Ri tears down Minami's delicately constructed hiding place with one mere utterance: "He [Ri] shut the door and stood in front of me in a defiant manner. 'Teacher.' He said this in Korean."³¹ This one Korean word, "teacher," serves to rip apart the tenuous "Japanese" face that Minami has heretofore presented through "mimicry," making an assimilation into Japanese society now unachievable. Upon hearing a Korean word, Minami can no longer justify his ambivalent status and his complicity in the colonial policy of assimilation. "This was certainly proof that I had placed a sense of servility inside of me that kept me from remaining calm."³²

Minami's reaction reveals an immediate awareness of both his failed self-deception and complicity to the colonial policy of assimilation. Yet he is not precluded from attempting to recover his hiding place, as he defends himself to Ri: "For example, say that I am Korean. Those kids' feelings toward me would contain something other than love. . . . Maybe a negative type of curiosity? . . . Anyway, I think that difference would become their main concern."³³ That is to say, the difference that he has struggled to conceal will be exposed. Nevertheless, Minami continues: "I am not concealing the fact that I am Korean."³⁴ Even if the latter assertion is true, Ri snatches Minami out of his hiding place of assimilation and firmly places him in the realm of colonized "Korean."

As mentioned earlier, Ri also identifies physical markings of Korean ethnicity on Minami's face. In the ethnically essentializing tone of the narrative, not only language but also physical appearance demands association with a specific ethnicity, making complete assimilation impossible by drawing a sharp line of distinction between the Japanese colonizers and Korean

colonized. Minami finds that, in fact, he does not have the power to construct or recover his assimilated identity after it has been called into question, since it was the colonial authority that allowed him to pass as Japanese in the first place.

With the destruction of his hiding place irreversible, Minami plunges into an internal struggle that is continuously exacerbated by Haruo. After the confrontation with Ri ends, the narrator expresses the doubt budding in Minami's mind: "For a moment, a thought that I might be a hypocrite flashed like lightning."³⁵ The loss of the ability to assimilate, then, is not seen as a negative but rather as a revelatory moment where Minami begins to acknowledge his complicity to Japanese colonialism. Shortly thereafter, Haruo, who recognizes that Korean is being spoken, sneaks into the room and yells, "Hey Korean!"³⁶ Later, and aware that Minami is present, Haruo chases a Japanese girl, yelling, "Capture the Korean" (*Chōsenjin zabare* 朝鮮人ザバレ). The narrator explains the full meaning of Haruo's choice of words: "'Zabare' means 'capture' in Korean. It was a word that the Japanese [*naichijin*] in Korea used often."³⁷ Haruo's outbursts make it impossible for Minami to reconstruct his hiding place.

Minami's internal struggle reaches its apex during another confrontation with Ri, who becomes enraged after realizing that Minami and Haruo have grown close. Upon seeing Haruo asleep in Minami's room, Ri says, "Mr. Minami, you are troubled when someone calls you a Korean. . . . You are trying to win him [Haruo] over."³⁸ Ri remains suspicious of Minami and his intentions with Haruo because he uses a name that marks him as ethnically Japanese. Referring to Haruo's mother, Ri further questions Minami: "Why don't you sympathize with that poor woman?"³⁹ Minami cannot handle this direct questioning of his ambivalent status and replies, "Won't you stop?"⁴⁰ With his hiding place destroyed, Minami can no longer justify his acceptance of and complicity in the act of assimilation. His only solution is to ask Ri to stop confronting him. This act plunges Minami deeper into his internal struggle over his ethnic ambivalence: "Like a person who just finished a severe battle, I leaned against a wall."⁴¹ Minami then engages in a dialogue with himself: "Hypocrite, you are being a hypocrite"; and "Don't be servile, don't. Why do I always have to be enraged?"⁴² Realizing that he cannot return to a comfortable hiding place where he is free from questioning his assimilatory actions, he begrudgingly starts to question his motives.

Although Haruo is not given interiority, since the narrator speaks from Minami's viewpoint, Haruo's hiding place is also clearly destroyed when his ambivalent ethnic identity is exposed. The ambivalence of Haruo's ethnic identity is embodied in his relationship with Minami: His need to "abuse" Minami in order to maintain his colonizer status is coupled with his desire to be near Minami. The final blow to Haruo's tenuously constructed hiding

place occurs at a hospital where Haruo's mother has been taken for emergency treatment. Minami asks Ri what happened to her, and Ri replies, "She was knifed in the head by her husband." Ri continues: "She is Korean. Her husband is Japanese, a cruel villain." Ri's remark reveals Haruo's ethnic ambivalence to Minami, which Haruo tries to deny: "My mother is not Korean. That's wrong. That's wrong."⁴³ Yet, in a way similar to the destruction of Minami's hiding place, Haruo can no longer recover the hiding place that was built on the foundation of assimilation through mimicry. He must find a way to resolve the ambivalence of the colonizer-colonized binary that his mixed ethnic identity represents.

Resolution: Construction of a Colonial Utopia

With their hiding places destroyed and the ability to pass as Japanese denied, Haruo and Minami are forced to find another way to remedy the ambivalence of their ethnicities. The inability to deny Korean ethnicity is treated as a positive in the text, and the objective here becomes to construct an alternate space that is divorced from colonial Japan, a "colonial utopia," where being Korean does not bring with it the stigma of being a colonized person.⁴⁴

Both characters have immediate and significant obstacles (i.e., marks of Korean ethnicity) blocking the path to this colonial utopia: for Minami, it is the reading of the character for his name; for Haruo, it is his mother. Haruo can overcome this obstacle through accepting his mother as ethnic Korean, but he has, up until this point, maintained his hiding place by denying his mother's existence and ethnicity. Throughout the text, Haruo separates himself from his mother to keep himself from having to confront his ethnic ambivalence. But after his "mixed" ethnicity is exposed, he starts to draw closer to his mother, and, through his relationship with Minami, to his partial Korean ethnicity. Aware of this change, Minami points out to Haruo's mother: "Surely, Haruo will recall his love for you soon. I think that Haruo's becoming attached to me is not necessarily only from love for me but also a different way of showing love for you."⁴⁵

The gradual movement toward Haruo's acceptance of his mother culminates when he visits her in the hospital. Haruo, along with his father, demonstrated his rejection of his mother when he did not initially visit her in the hospital. Minami inquires with Haruo: "'Should we go to the hospital,' I asked. He sadly shook his head. 'Why?' He did not answer." Haruo does not answer and simply refuses, showing that he is not ready to accept his mother. Finally, when Haruo is prepared to accept his mother, he visits her at the hospital, although still hesitantly: "I [Minami] hurriedly went around the corner, and suspiciously looked the area over. Sure enough, it was just as I had thought. In a dim corner behind the stairs to the second floor, Yamada Haruo, cowering, watched closely as he hid himself."⁴⁶

Having accepted his mother and, in turn, his Korean ethnicity, the problem for Haruo, as well as for Minami, remains how to accept Korean ethnicity without being relegated to the inferior status of the colonized. The resolution reached in the text is the construction of a space—a colonial utopia—wherein ethnicity can be acknowledged without bringing negative consequences. This space is constructed in the text when Minami and Haruo go on an excursion to Ueno, a location that symbolizes Japan's status as a modern imperial power.⁴⁷ While in Ueno, Minami and Haruo visit a department store, and Minami purchases clothes for Haruo. They ride escalators and eat ice cream. Through these acts of consumption—the consumption of modern Japan—Minami and Haruo enter the public space of the colonial utopia, where ethnicity and the divide between colonizer and colonized is not questioned. In other words, although the two have successfully discovered a way to accept their Korean ethnicity, this acceptance is accomplished only through another type of assimilation. Their active participation in (and consumption of) modern Japan is done without questioning Japan's modern landscape and symbolic power as modernizer of colonial Korea. They do not address the hierarchical relationship between colonizer and colonized that has not been overcome.

This colonial utopia goes unchallenged even when they meet Ri, previously the main confrontational force for both of them. In fact, Ri, through his own consumption of modern Japan, joins them in this colonial space where there is no need to question ethnicity. They meet Ri when he pulls up in his “new” taxi. Ri no longer questions Minami and Haruo's participation in the colonial strategy of assimilation, as he has assimilated by acquiring a taxi and, therefore, an economic means of survival. Consumption erases the need to question ethnicity and the colonial situation. No longer is there any confrontation or doubt, no self-deceit or mimicry, just utopian bliss. After Ri drives off, Minami remarks, “I thought, what a blessed, happy day.”⁴⁸

The resolution of Minami's internal struggle is confirmed on the last page of the text: “‘Teacher, I know Teacher's name.’ ‘Really.’ Hiding my embarrassment, I [Minami] laughed, ‘try saying it.’ ‘It's “Nan,” right?’”⁴⁹ Through this recognition that Minami's name is “Nan,” the text completes the construction of this alternate space of a colonial utopia. Haruo demonstrates that his full acceptance of both his own and Minami's Korean ethnicity through voicing the “Korean” pronunciation of Minami's name. Minami no longer questions what reading of his name he should use, and Haruo no longer denies his mother. Their acceptance of their ethnic identity as constructed by the text is complete. Also, hiding places are no longer necessary, since the colonial utopia exists outside, among others. “I thought this young boy, Haruo, is now among all these people. For some reason, this made me happy to the point of being strange.”⁵⁰ Their presence among “all these people” is reason for happiness because they have overcome the

ambivalence of their ethnicities and are no longer confronted by others over them.

This state of "colonial utopia," however, is completely divorced from the reality of the colonial situation. Here, the previous textual markers of the colonial relationship, like Minami's colleagues "doing the favor of" referring to him as "Minami," completely disappear. Earlier in the text, the narrator remarks that even Turkish children with "hair of a different color" (*keiro no chigau* 毛色の違う) can play innocently with these (*kochira no* こちらの, meaning "Japanese") children; but "why is it only Haruo, who has received Korean blood, who cannot?"⁵¹ This question clearly delineates the boundary between the colonizer and colonized. Yet this relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is forgotten in the text's construction of the colonial utopia: blood is no longer relevant, as there is no interaction with all of the people surrounding Minami and Haruo. By not giving Japanese people a voice in this alternate space, the texts succeeds in creating a space where Haruo and Minami's ethnicities are not challenged. The colonial utopia is ultimately just another hiding place, although it is a "universal," outside one, rather than an individual, internal one. Nevertheless, the universal hiding place of colonial utopia is just as susceptible to confrontation as the individual hiding places of mimicry. Both are constructed through deceit and concealment. If Haruo and Minami were to engage the Japanese people surrounding them, their shared hiding place would be shattered just as quickly as the confrontations with Ri tore down their individual hiding places.

Furthermore, although the desire to assimilate through denying Korean ethnicity is extinguished, it is only exchanged for another type of assimilation: active consumption of Japanese modernity in a public space. Similar to Kim's own life experience of assimilating through resisting assimilation, Haruo and Minami's "resistant acts" of accepting their ethnic identities eventually leads to assimilation. In short, the text, far from representing a resistance to or critique of Japanese colonialism, promotes the active assimilation of colonized Koreans into the Japanese Empire.

This reading of the text becomes further complicated once the censorship of the colonial period is considered. Upon receiving nomination for the Akutagawa Prize for literature, Kim Saryang asserted that he was not pleased with the nomination since the story was a lie, lamenting that he did not state what he had truly wanted.⁵² Kim was therefore aware that the use of the colonizer's tools—both Japanese language and the Japanese literary establishment—limited his ability to resist Japanese colonialism. What is possible, therefore, is that Kim realized that the solution proposed by his text to the "colonial predicament" was an impermanent one that served only to promote another type of assimilation. Clearly, the story was an attempt by Kim to address the name-change policy that forced Koreans to

adopt Japanese names. What is not clear is what possible solutions Kim saw to overcoming the relegation of Koreans to the status of “colonized” other than assimilation into the Japanese Empire.

Notes

¹Kazuki Sato, “‘Same Language, Same Race’: The Dilemma of *Kanbun* in Modern Japan,” in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Frank Dikotter (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 118–35: 135.

²Chang Hyök-ju was referred to as Chō Kakuchū, the Japanese pronunciation of the characters for his name. Chang was educated in Korea but moved to Japan in the 1930s and naturalized after the war. Kim Saryang was known as Kin Shiryō, once again the Japanese pronunciation for the characters of his name. Kim received his higher education in Japan but left Japan in 1942 and made his way to northern Korea after the end of World War II. For more biographical information, see Isogai Jirō and Kuroko Kazuo, eds., *Zainichi Bungaku Zenshū* 在日文学全集 11 (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2006).

³Quoted from Kawamura Minato, *Umaretara soko ga furusato* 生まれたらそこがふるさと (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1999), 34. All translations in this article are my own.

⁴“Tenba” was originally published in the journal *Bungei Shunjū* 文芸春秋 in 1940. A reprint is available in Kim Saryang, *Hikari no naka ni: Kimu Saryan sakuinshū* 光の中に: 金史良作品集 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999), 107–64.

⁵Kawamura, *Umaretara soko*, 36–37.

⁶Yun Tae-sök, *Shingminji kungmin munhangnon* 식민지 국민문학론 (Seoul: Yōngnak, 2006).

⁷“Hikari no naka ni” was originally published in the journal *Bungei Shuto* (文芸首都) in 1939. All citations in this article, however, are from the following edition: Kim Saryang, *Hikari no naka ni: Kimu Saryan sakuhinshū* 光の中に: 金史良作品集 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999), 10–56.

⁸From the late 1930s on, Japan’s colonial policy shifted from a loosely defined assimilation policy (*dōka* 同化) to a more strictly defined policy of imperial subjectization (*kōminka* 皇民化).

⁹Kim, *Hikari no naka ni*, 10.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 29.

¹²The Korean-language reading of this character (남) is *Nam*.

¹³Kim, *Hikari no naka ni*, 15.

¹⁴Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 40.

¹⁵Kim, *Hikari no naka ni*, 27.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁸Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85–92: 86.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 91.

²⁰Kim, *Hikari no naka ni*, 19.

²¹*Ibid.*, 13.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, 16.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 10.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 18.

²⁷Ibid., 17.

²⁸Ibid., 13.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 24.

³¹Ibid., 14.

³²Ibid., 15.

³³Ibid., 16.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 17.

³⁷Ibid., 18. The word *zabare* is in a command form. Kim does not use the word "Japan" (*Nihon* 日本) or "Japanese" (*Nihonjin* 日本人) in the text. Instead, he uses the terms "inland" (*naichi* 内地) and "inlander" (*naichijin* 内地人), highlighting Japan as the metropole. Curiously, though, Kim does not use the opposing term "outerland" or "periphery" (*gaichi* 外地); he instead uses the contemporary term for Korea, *Chōsen* (朝鮮).

³⁸Kim, *Hikari no naka ni*, 31–32.

³⁹Ibid., 32.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 33.

⁴³Ibid., 24.

⁴⁴Ironically, this concept of "alternate space" is similar to Kim Don-myou's notion of "third way" (*daisan no michi* 第三の道), used to describe the way in which resident Koreans of postwar Japan navigate between the ethnic identities of "Korean" and "Japanese." However, the crucial difference is that Kim Don-myo's "third way" is based on a post-imperial Japan and a divided Korea, whereas the alternate space referred to here is constructed in a Japan that has colonized Korea, making Korea a possession of Japan rather than a separated geographical space. See Kim Don-myou, "Zainichi Chōsenjin no daisan no michi" 在日朝鮮人の第三の道, in *Zainichi Kankoku, Chōsenjin: Sono Nihon shakai ni okeru sonzaikachi* 在日韓国朝鮮人：その日本社会における存在価値, ed. Iinuma Jirō (Osaka: Kaifūsha, 1988), 21–86.

⁴⁵Kim, *Hikari no naka ni*, 44.

⁴⁶Ibid., 47.

⁴⁷The public park at Ueno—one of Tokyo's first—was designed to be a site for cultural enlightenment, providing homes for the National Museum (1882), the Zoological Garden (1882), the Imperial Museum (1909), and the Tokyo Library (1885, forerunner of the National Diet Library). In the 1880s, Tokyo Imperial University was relocated from Kanda to Hongo, near the park; and the park was the site of several industrial expositions during the late Meiji and early Taishō (1912–26) eras. In 1911, parts of the Korean National Palace (Gyeongbokgung 景福宮, 경복궁, most of which was razed by the Japanese after Korean annexation in 1910) were dismantled in Seoul, shipped to Japan, and re-assembled in Ueno Park as a "trophy" of Japan's colonial empire. (Michael Rich, personal communication with the editor, April 3, 2007.)

⁴⁸Kim, *Hikari no naka ni*, 53–54.

⁴⁹Ibid., 56.

⁵⁰Ibid., 50.

⁵¹Ibid., 34.

⁵²Nan Bujin, *Kindai bungaku no 「Chōsen」 taiken* 近代文学の「朝鮮」体験 (Tokyo: Ben-seishuppan, 2002), 55.