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RECONSIDERING RECONCILIATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA: CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN COLONIAL KOREAN LITERATURE

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Introduction

The manner in which a culture or cultural-historical era resolves conflicts, and the terms in which it defines reconciliation, may be considered one of its defining aspects. While through the Western perspective, the Christian forgiveness paradigm based on the confession of wrong-doing by the perpetrator and the portrayal of a change of heart by the victim has long been culturally dominant, this paradigm must be reconsidered when looking at reconciliation in the context of a different culture or time period, such as the Japanese Colonial Period on the Korean Peninsula.

Although the mention of the Korean Colonial Period and the topic of reconciliation immediately sparks attention to the yet ongoing political conflict between both of the modern Korean nations and Japan, I would like to commence by highlighting that the primary concern of this thesis is not with that conflict in particular. Though the topic of colonial reparations and political reconciliation is an interesting topic in itself, an analysis of political reconciliation from the perspective of literature written during the colonial period is difficult to actualize, considering that many of these works do not concern itself with this topic for several reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to imagine reconciliation to a colonial conflict when colonial rule is ongoing. Secondly, censorship during this period restricted the content that could be published, resulting in a majority of works being unable to comment on the oppressive conditions under which they were written. Although this thesis does not explicitly center on the atrocities of the Japanese colonial period, I contend that the onset of the colonial era in Korea was pivotal in challenging dominant ideologies, leading to a cultural transformation on the peninsula, including altered perceptions of reconciliation.

Although the colonial era in Korea was a time of immense political and cultural transformation in various aspects, I have singled out three key developments which I consider to be integral to the way that reconciliation is shaped in these works. While societal values at the

time were mainly rooted in Neo-Confucianist ideology, there was also a swift increase in conversion to Protestant Christianity, due to the growing presence of missionaries on the Korean peninsula. Furthermore, the increased ties with the Protestant Church, as well as the influx of modern thought from the West and Japan, allowed for the creation of early feminist groups, starting the New Women movement. Finally, due to Japanese administrative changes, as well as a gradual move away from Neo-Confucianism, there was a significant change in the structure of the family, as well as the hierarchies within the family. This means that families began to become smaller, consisting only of a husband, a wife, and children, and that patriarchal authority began to decrease. I shall furthermore consider the differing paradigms of reconciliation in Christian traditions as well as in Neo-Confucianism and how these paradigms are in conflict with one another.

The first work I shall analyze is the novel *Mujŏng (The Heartless)* published by Yi Kwangsu in 1917. My analysis will focus mainly on how the reconciliation narrative between the two main characters, Yi Hyŏng-sik and Pak Yŏng-ch'ae, reflects developing ideas of chastity and gender norms. I shall argue that because of the unevenness of this development as well as the difference in the two characters' religious affiliation, they are unable to work through the reconciliation process, leading them to an impasse.

The second work that I shall analyze is the novel *Samdae (Three Generations)* by Yŏm Sang-sŏp, published in 1931. I shall discuss the shifting hierarchies within the familial context, as the patriarchal hierarchy within the Cho family is continuously broken down. Furthermore, I will argue that ongoing societal conflict surrounding gender and class bleed directly into the interpersonal conflicts of the novel, thus rendering these conflicts equally insoluble.

The last work I shall discuss is the short story *Chagak (Awakening)* by Kim Wŏn-ju, published in 1926. Through this last work, a feminist work by one of the pioneers of the New Women movement, I shall offer a contrastive analysis of how shifting gender hierarchies are

presented, this time from a female perspective. Similarly to the previously mentioned novel, the protagonist is placed in a situation in which her interpersonal conflict with her husband is irreconcilable, due to its ties to the political conflict of gender inequality. However, rather than avoiding the conflict, she confronts it directly, leading to a different outcome compared to the other case studies of this thesis.

I shall argue that in each of these works, interpersonal conflicts are interconnected with broader political conflicts. Characters are presented with a binary choice: either to confront the conflict, jeopardizing the potential for reconciliation, or to sidestep the conflict by reimagining it through the creation of a new narrative around it, redirecting the real cause of the conflict through a common pretense of oblivion.

The second solution shares similarities with what has been used in strategies of political reconciliation as the "act of oblivion", a strategy in which the population is exhorted to collectively forget about a certain event, in order to move on from it. Ross Poole argues that especially in transitional societies, too much emphasis on the past may reproduce past conflicts and traumas (Poole 150). The paradox embedded within such an exhort is not lost on Poole however, as he argues that an act of oblivion is not directed at cognitive memory, but rather at conative memory, meaning that it does not aim to make the event disappear entirely from people's memory, but rather to make sure that they do not act on these memories (Poole 156).

Regardless, as pointed out by Judith Pollman, such an attempt at the erasure of memory was generally unsuccessful (Pollmann 147). Although many modern societies now consider truth to be crucial to reconciliation, Pollman points out several examples evident of the presence of similar dilemmas in modern society. One example is the claim made by the Spanish high court that the violence committed during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-9 was the result of a consensus of social forces in the transition to democracy (Pollmann 157).

Through this claim, a new narrative is created in which the conflict is not about the violence of the Civil War, but rather about a common strive for democracy that unites citizens through a common goal.

The case studies exhibit similarities with this concept, although there are fundamental differences. Acts of oblivion are memory acts enacted by a government, and thus necessarily concern political reconciliation. In this situation one party urges the other to forget, by acting through a vertical power structure. However, when it comes to interpersonal reconciliation in the case studies of this thesis, oblivion is not enacted by an institution of power, but established by characters' common strive for reconciliation. Nevertheless, in each case there is a need to renarrate the conflict in order for reconciliation to take place.

Although there has been plenty of research into the cultural transformation that occurred in the Colonial Period, little to no research has been done into what this meant for interpersonal reconciliation, especially when it comes to its representation in literature. Since plenty of research has been done into ideas of reconciliation both in the Christian as well as in the Confucian context, my aim is to unify these topics and to examine how these paradigms conflict with one another in the Korean colonial period, approaching it through the lens of literature. Furthermore, my aim is to understand how political conflict in the context of these works, cause the political to bleed into these interpersonal reconciliation narratives, creating the need to resolve the conflict in a matter which has been identified predominantly with political reconciliation, namely through a common pretense of oblivion and a renarration of the conflict.

Chapter 1: Cultural-Historical Context and Theoretical Framework

To embark upon an exploration of the topic of interpersonal reconciliation in Korean literature during the colonial period, I shall draw on two assumptions pertaining to interpersonal reconciliation, elucidated in the introductory chapter of *A Literary History of Reconciliation* by Van Dijkhuizen. Firstly, each culture or historical era possesses distinctive frameworks for comprehending conflict resolution. Consequently, various cultural paradigms of interpersonal reconciliation emerge, characterized by different rituals and conceptions, which at times may cause conflicting perspectives. Secondly, it is noteworthy that interpersonal reconciliation is intricately entwined with hierarchical dynamics, influenced by factors such as race, class, and gender (Van Dijkhuizen 1). Prior to discussing the works that comprise the case studies of this thesis, it is therefore necessary to understand the cultural-historical context in which these works were written; the period of Japanese colonial rule on the Korean peninsula.

The Japanese Colonial Period, officially lasting from 1910 to 1945, was a dynamic era on multiple fronts. The Japanese government orchestrated significant reforms in various aspects of Korean society, including its former feudalistic land policies, taxation structure, educational system, and class divisions. Additionally, this era is distinguished by a substantial influx of intellectual and cultural influences, emanating not only from Japan but also stemming from the growing presence of Western missionaries on the Korean peninsula, who established mission schools and contributed to the surging prevalence of Protestant Christianity, challenging the previously predominant influence of Neo-Confucianism which had been the official state ideology of Chosŏn Dynasty Korea (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 48). The transformation of cultural and political circumstances caused not only a nationwide shift in political hierarchies, but also produced substantial impacts within the realm of interpersonal and domestic cultural dynamics, evident in domains such as family structure.

For the purpose of this thesis, a focused examination will be conducted on three distinct developments within Korean society, with due acknowledgment of their interconnectedness. Firstly, a comprehensive overview will be provided concerning the widespread conversion to Protestant Christianity, including an exploration of the intricate dynamics between the Japanese colonial government and religious entities such as the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and an assessment of the resulting shifts in the religious landscape across the Korean peninsula. Secondly, a section of this chapter will be devoted to examining the evolving role of women in Korean society, with particular emphasis on the heightened responsibilities assumed by women in the sociopolitical domain, largely attributable to their affiliations with Protestant groups. Lastly, an investigation will be conducted into the transformation of Korean family structures and its consequences for hierarchical relations within the familial context. Subsequently, I shall discuss a theoretical framework of reconciliation in Korean traditions, through which the aforementioned cultural-historical context will be applied to the analysis of the reconciliation narratives within the selected case studies.

Religious Transformation: Protestant Christianity and Colonial Governance

While the dynamic between Protestant missionaries, their affiliated organizations, and the Japanese colonial government fluctuated over time, it can be posited that, on the whole, their relationship was marked by tension. The ascendancy of Protestant missionary groups in shaping the sociocultural landscape of the Korean peninsula commenced as early as 1895, preceding the formal annexation of Korea by the Japanese Empire in 1910. Missionaries established hospitals and schools with a notable degree of autonomy, relatively unhindered by both the Korean government and the emerging Japanese imperial presence, which was gradually solidifying its control over the peninsula (B. Lee 123). Initially, missionaries more or less favored the expanding authority that the Japanese were consolidating in Korea, albeit with a general

stance of disapproval of the cruel treatment of the native Korean population (Sørensen 57). This positive sentiment was, in part, attributed to the perceived imposition of order by the Japanese, exemplified by the early development of an educational system (Kang 98), as well as by the Japanese involvement in organizing the Kabo Reforms of 1894-5 (K. M. Hwang, *A History of Korea* 115). Furthermore, the overarching objectives of these missionary groups primarily centered on the spread of Christianity rather than advocating for Korean independence. It was generally considered more desirable to endure injustices than to tarnish the reputation of Christianity (Sørensen 59). Consequently, during the early colonial era, missionaries often discouraged followers of the church from participating in acts of resistance (Kang 98).

A notable shift occurred during the Campaign of a Million Souls, which took place in the winter of 1909-1910. This movement called for a massive conversion to Protestant Christianity and resulted in a substantial presence of approximately 12,202 Presbyterians and 3,513 Methodists on the Korean peninsula (Kang 97–98). The fact that these Protestant organizations were predominantly under Western authority raised concerns among the Japanese (Sørensen 61). It is worth highlighting that a parallel surge in numbers was not apparent within the Catholic community; their persecution in the previous century compelled them to maintain a lower profile (Baker 17–18). The suspicions harbored by the Japanese regarding the growing influence of Protestants were not unfounded. Missionary schools, in addition to directing modernization efforts, evolved into breeding grounds for nationalist sentiments (Wells 177).

It was primarily these developments that placed Christians in a precarious legal environment, as the Japanese government in the post-annexation period from 1910 onward, did not shy away from committing human rights violations if they contributed to the expansion of colonial authority (B. Lee 124). Consequently, missionaries and Korean Christians increasing-

ly harbored disdain for the Japanese government, leading to a heightened atmosphere of anti-Japanese sentiment within missionary schools and church communities (Sørensen 60).

During the March 1st Independence Movement of 1919[1], Protestants were held largely responsible, irrespective of the orchestrating role played by the Ch'ŏndogyo[2] community (Sørensen 62). The ensuing events marked an apex of hostility among Japanese authorities towards Christians. Numerous schools were shut down, and a massacre occurred at Cheamri, where men were coerced into a church that was subsequently set ablaze by Japanese soldiers (Kang 102–03). The disturbing nature of this incident drew international attention and prompted a call for administrative reforms by the Commission of Relations with the Orient, a part of the Council of Churches of Christ in the United States. Subsequently, Saito Makoto assumed the position of governor-general, ushering in an era of reduced oppression (Kang 104). This period did not, however, entail complete religious freedom, as scrutiny of Christian activities continued (Kang 106). However, it did signify a comparatively reduced level of control over missionary schools (B. Lee 135).

In the subsequent period, commencing approximately in 1935, imperial governance readopted earlier patterns, driven by the expansionist ambitions of the Japanese Empire and the establishment of Manchukuo[3]. During this time, the imperative for Korea to heed Japanese authority reached its zenith. In 1935, mission schools were officially compelled to participate in Shinto rituals, a measure aimed at ideological unification and the reduction of Christian

[1] On March 1st, 1919, Korean students, in collaboration with numerous social and cultural leaders, gathered upon the streets to protest against the military governance enforced by the Japanese colonial authorities. This episode was precipitated by the actions of Korean students residing in Japan, where a comparatively more liberal atmosphere allowed for greater political expression, culminating in the creation of a Korean independence manifesto. Furthermore, the uprising was instigated by the passing of the last autonomous Korean monarch, King Kojong (K. M. Hwang, *A History of Korea* 139–40). The event was largely orchestrated by Ch'ŏngdogyo and Protestant leaders (Wells 174).

[2] Ch'ŏngdogyo, or the Religion of the Heavenly Way in translation, was a rural-based faith that synthesized elements from folk religion with tenets from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Catholicism (Wells 174).

[3] Manchukuo, established in 1932 in Manchuria, which is now a region in northeastern China and is situated adjacent to the Korean peninsula, functioned as a puppet state under the Japanese Empire (K. M. Hwang, *A History of Korea* 149).

influence (Kang 107). As Japan became entangled in World War II, these encroachments on religious freedom intensified, culminating in the Presbyterian church being coerced to officially relinquish control of its church to the colonial government (Kang 110). Although these developments of the mid-1940s are definitely significant, they extend beyond the specific historical context of the case studies within this thesis.

In summary, throughout the period in which the works that constitute the case studies were written, mission schools grew to an immense influence as gateways for the influx of modern thought and as hubs of nationalist and patriotic activities, thus connecting the Protestant church to the independence movement. The swift increase of Protestants in Korea is therefore hardly surprising. Consequently, when considering the characters within the case studies, their religious affiliations should be considered to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their values and motives within the presented conflict and reconciliation narratives.

The Evolving Role of Women: Sociopolitical Empowerment through Protestant Affiliations

As previously mentioned, each of the presented societal developments that unfolded during the colonial period in Korea is inherently interwoven. Consequently, the earlier discussed ascension of Protestantism cannot be examined in isolation from the evolving status of women in colonial Korean society. This is largely attributable to the fact that numerous alterations stemmed from the interactions between Korean women and, notably, female Protestant missionaries.

While Christianity had its appeal due to the notion of equality before God, a stark contrast with the prevailing Neo-Confucian belief in female inferiority (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 2), the actualization of such equality within the sociopolitical landscape was absent, considering that Christianity also carries a long tradition of seeing women

as inferior. Nevertheless, as elucidated by Dr. Choi Hyaeweol in her influential work, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, it was precisely this division of spheres of influence within the mission framework, with men assuming responsibility for the evangelical realm through preaching and organizational oversight, and women overseeing domestic affairs, that facilitated female missionaries' access to Korean women (3).

When missionaries initially arrived on the Korean peninsula, they observed that women, particularly from higher social backgrounds, were secluded from society and seldom seen in public, engaging in social activities. The *anpang*, which can be literally translated as the "inner room," but carries the connotation of women's living quarters, was deliberately isolated from the front of the house and equipped with double-shuttered windows to further isolate women from the external world. This was primarily because it was widely perceived as unsafe for a woman to venture outside her home unaccompanied (Chizhova 1). It is noteworthy that women from lower social classes, such as those employed in commerce or entertainment, were more frequently encountered outdoors, as their incomes depended on their presence outside the confines of their homes. (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 47–48)

A comparable division of societal roles is discernible within missionary groups themselves, embedded within the overarching patriarchal structures and norms of the church. Nevertheless, this arrangement provided female missionaries with an opportunity to conduct their work within domestic realms, aligning with traditionally acceptable roles in Korean society. Given that women were the sole individuals permitted to access the women's inner chambers, these spaces became immensely important for evangelical endeavors (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 124–25). This segregation, evident both within missionary groups and Korean society, laid the foundation for the establishment of women's organizations (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 62–63). These women's organizations began to take shape as early as 1898, as exemplified in P'yŏngyang, where the female members of the first

church even ventured beyond the city walls to proclaim the Gospel to fellow women (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 71).

While attending church for Korean women was deemed a breach of proper societal behavior (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 63), embracing Christianity offered numerous advantages. One notable benefit was the requirement for literacy in the work aligned with the mission, which presented a valuable opportunity to these women (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 67). The increasing trend of upper-class Korean women converting to Protestantism, coupled with rising literacy rates, facilitated their access to mission schools. Consequently, these individuals, referred to as the "New Women," constituted the first wave of professionally educated women in Korea (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 7). In addition to the clear benefits of departing from traditional Korean gender norms for these New Women, this deviation was also justified by the church, as according to the missionary project, it was perceived to be a woman's duty to transcend her "inherent differences" in order to serve the mission's cause (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 53).

Given the increasing influence wielded by female missionaries, this presented an opportunity to initiate reforms within Korean culture that would align with the objectives of the mission. One such endeavor involved attempts to discourage early marriage, as married women were perceived as less likely to be convinced to join the mission's cause. In 1894, the Korean government enacted a law ordering that the legal age for marriage should be set at twenty years. However, the longstanding tradition of early marriages persisted, intensified by the fact that many unions were not officially registered and thus existed external to the law (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 77). Furthermore, missionary efforts aimed to eradicate the practice of concubinage, which was regarded as a form of polygamy (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 79).

Taking this as the foundational framework of activities within women's organizations on the Korean peninsula, let us consider how these organizations persisted in the aftermath of the 1919 March Independence Movement. As previously discussed, the period leading up to this event was marked by strict military rule, during which the autonomy of mission schools to provide education was compromised. While the following era did not grant these schools complete educational freedom, it was characterized by gradual industrialization, the proliferation of social and cultural associations, and the expansion of the vernacular press, resulting in for example the founding of the magazine *Sin Yŏja*[4] *(New Woman)* by Kim Wŏnju (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 166), whose work will be discussed in one of the case studies. The creation of this magazine brought into existence not only a platform for feminist debate, but furthermore allowed for the notion of the New Woman – defined by Barbara Molaney as 'the educated, patriotic embodiment of a new gender order working to overcome the oppressions of the Confucian family system and traditional society' – to enter into the public Korean consciousness as well as to develop into a historical concept (Choi, *New Women in Colonial Korea* 2). Moreover, an increasing influx of ideas from women's movements in Japan and the Western world catalyzed the growth of the New Women's movement in Korea (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 146).

It comes as no surprise that, given the previously discussed prevalence of nationalist sentiments within Protestant circles, there exists a connection between Korean modern womanhood and nationalism (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 8). However, this alignment with the pursuit of Korean independence was by no means unanimous, particularly during Japan's heightened military mobilization approaching the Japanese Army's involvement in the Pacific War. Although, as mentioned earlier, this period falls outside the scope of the case studies within this thesis, it is useful to consider it critically, as it challenges teleolog-

[4] 신여자

ical interpretations of Korean womanhood that equate the emergence of the New Woman with the rise of the Korean independence movement.

An exemplary comparison can be drawn between two female activists, Kim Maria and Kim Hwallan. While both aimed to broaden the sphere of female influence, their approaches were fundamentally different, regardless of their mutual affiliation with the church (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 165). Kim Hwallan aligned herself with the Japanese empire, believing that collaboration with the colonial state would facilitate the development of the women's movement. In contrast, Kim Maria's ultimate goal was the national independence of Korea. Kim Hwallan argued that the Pacific War was a sacred conflict destined to rescue Asian nations from Anglo-Saxon dominance, whereas Kim Maria contended that a hallmark of modern civilization is independence (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 153–55). This is merely one example of the heterogeneity of ideological viewpoints within women's organizations.

It is essential to not only scrutinize the parallel development of the independence movement and the New Women movement carefully, but also to be critical of teleological perspectives concerning the transition from the traditional Neo-Confucian domestic woman to the modern New Woman. As argued by Dr. Choi Hyaeweol in her aforementioned book, it was, in fact, nationalism that ended up conserving Neo-Confucian gender roles, regardless of the efforts to step away from them discussed within this chapter. This is because nationalism tends to prioritize the collective community over individual perspectives, resulting in the predominance of male viewpoints when considering for example gender roles (Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea* 14–15). Furthermore it must be taken into account that the New Women discussed in this chapter were mostly educated individuals from the upper classes. By 1929 only 7.9 percent of girls had been enrolled in elementary school alone (Choi, *New Women in Colonial Korea* 6).

Nonetheless, it is evident that the role women assumed in society at the conclusion of the colonial period differed from what it was prior to the arrival of Protestant missionaries on the Korean peninsula. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the evolution of women's roles in Korean society is a complex subject that not only reflects various forms of societal conflict, but is also integral to the issues at stake in those conflicts. This includes the balance between traditional Neo-Confucian values and newer values, such as those derived from Protestantism and foreign women's organizations. Additionally it is crucial to emphasize the pivotal role of Korean women themselves in shaping the New Women movement. Moreover, this evolution occurred within the context of political turmoil under a colonial regime. In summary, the development of women's rights is a subject matter that may often exhibit contradictions and thus demands careful examination. When analyzing the case studies within this thesis, it is therefore essential to consider female characters not as mere signifiers of the New Women's movement, but as complex personalities existing within the colonial context.

Domestic Transformation: The Evolution of Korean Family Structure and Hierarchy

The transformation of Korean family structures is intricately linked not only to the New Women's movement discussed earlier but also to legal reforms driven by Japanese policies, specifically those related to household registration, which after the Kabo reforms of 1894-1896, was administered by the new *p'anjŏkguk*[5] (Household Registration Bureau) (K. M. Hwang, "Citizenship, Social Equality and Government Reform" 359). In the early colonial period, the Office of the Governor-General conducted surveys to establish a loosely defined set of rules rooted in Korean customs, which had been heavily influenced by Neo-Confucian values. This approach aimed to differentiate between Korean and Japanese individuals, with

[5] 판적국

the intention of gradual integration of Japanese immigrants with the native Korean population through a step-by-step reduction of exemptions from the Japanese legal code in the future. This strategy served several practical purposes, such as alleviating tensions arising from colonial assimilation efforts (Lim 4–5). Although Neo-Confucian values had been ingrained in Korean culture for centuries, the shift to patriarchal familial norms becoming legally defined, as opposed to being rooted only in culture, marked a substantial change (Lim 8).

There were significant reforms within this legally structured registration system. For instance, in the 1909 reform of the system, the inclusion of the "four ancestors[6]," which used to be part of the household registration, was abolished. Instead, individuals were required to provide detailed information about every member of the household, including their birth parents, clan affiliation, birth date, and cause of connection to the family (K. M. Hwang, "Citizenship, Social Equality and Government Reform" 366). This represented a departure from traditional patriarchal norms, as it not only incorporated greater inclusivity for women but also allowed for the incorporation of household members from a *nobi*[7] background who continued to reside with their masters following the abolition of the *nobi*-system during the Kabo reforms (K. M. Hwang, "Citizenship, Social Equality and Government Reform" 380–81). Consequently, this reform of the household registration system played a role in the gradual blurring of status divisions.

The transformation of Korean family structures was not solely a matter of legal reform but also closely tied to socioeconomic changes. Dr. Kim Seong-Yeon argues that as Korean society underwent structural shifts during the colonial period, the traditional concept of a large family lost relevance. This transformation was driven by the transition from a feudalistic

[6] The four ancestors consist of the father, the paternal and maternal grandfather, and the paternal great-grandfather (K. M. Hwang, "Citizenship, Social Equality and Government Reform" 361).
[7] The *nobi*-system is somewhat akin to a system of slavery. However, to avoid evoking associations with Western histories of slavery due to notable differences, it is essential to refrain from using the term 'slavery' when referring to *nobi*.

agricultural society to a capitalist one, which placed greater emphasis on individual priorities (32).

As a result, a new family structure gained prominence; the "nuclear family" (*haekga-jok*[8]*)*, characterized by a household consisting solely of a father, mother, and their direct offspring (S. Y. Kim 31). This shift also brought about different motivations for marriage, with love and affection becoming increasingly valid reasons for matrimony. These changes culminated in the development of what Kim terms the "home-centered family" (*kajŏnghyŏng kajok*[9]*)*, which saw a loosening of the father's patriarchal authority, evolving into more of a "friendly-father" role (S.Y. Kim 35–36). This process of "affectivization," as described by Sungyun Lim, was further driven by the popularization of romantic love in the media and literature (Lim 77). It's important to note that this transformation was not a teleological process but rather a gradual evolution marked by ideological conflicts between the emerging home-centered family and the traditional feudalistic family structure (S. Y. Kim 40).

The emergence of the nuclear family, which granted greater domestic authority to the mother, played a pivotal role in preserving gender roles rooted in Neo-Confucianism. This is typified by the popularization of the concept of the "wise mother, good wife" (*hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ*[10]), which represented a fusion of traditional Korean gender norms with influences from Meiji Japan's gender ideology known as *ryōsai kenbo*, carrying a similar meaning to *hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ,* and the Victorian ideal of female domesticity introduced by missionaries (Choi, ""Wise Mother, Good Wife"" 3). The Education Ministry's introduction of this term as a mandatory part of elementary education facilitated its adoption across all social layers, although especially within the middle-class. So it became an integral component of the modern

[8] 핵가족

[9] 가정형 가족

[10] 현모양처

nation-building project (Choi, ""Wise Mother, Good Wife"" 7). Despite significant resistance to this ideal of womanhood, exemplified by figures like Kim Hwallan, who argued that "marriage is not necessarily an absolute thing to do if the woman has a will to pursue an important task (qtd. in Choi, ""Wise Mother, Good Wife"" 17)," this ideology considerably influenced modern Korean society's ideals of womanhood, as well as the conception of what a woman's role was to be within the familial context (Choi, ""Wise Mother, Good Wife"" 23).

Traditions of Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula: A Theoretical Framework

As the three distinct processes of cultural and sociopolitical change in Korean society outlined at the beginning of this chapter have been discussed, an exploration of how various cultural paradigms of reconciliation intersect with this oftentimes ambiguous situation of cultural transformation in the colonial period can ensue. In discussing the different cultural paradigms that encountered one another in colonial Korea surrounding reconciliation, it is necessary to first and foremost acknowledge that one's religious and ideological affiliation does not have a direct causation to how a character may act within reconciliation narratives. Although it is interesting to consider a character's conception of cultural paradigms of reconciliation, this characterization of the conflicting paradigms must therefore not be considered a watertight description of how reconciliation took place in Korea during the colonial period.

Prior to the arrival of Protestant missionaries in Korea, Neo-Confucianism stood as the dominant state ideology. For the purpose of this thesis, I will primarily focus on the contrast between Neo-Confucian and Christian conceptions of reconciliation, as they are most relevant to the forthcoming case studies. Nevertheless, the Korean religious landscape was far from straightforward, carrying a rich history of pluralism, characterized by an inclination to incorporate elements from different religions and ideologies and synthesize them into a single

worldview (K. M. Hwang, *A History of Korea* 33). This manner of religious practice is quite distinct from the Western religious experience. Thus, while the primary focus will center on the conflict between Neo-Confucian and Protestant reconciliation paradigms, the presence of traditions rooted in Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism, and, in some cases even Catholicism, cannot be entirely neglected.

The type of reconciliation discussed within this thesis is interpersonal, although the inherent link of interpersonal reconciliation and the political are not to be denied. While the terms "reconciliation" and "forgiveness" are oftentimes used interchangeably in their vernacular usage, they must be carefully approached when discussed in an academic context, as the term forgiveness, as has been pointed out by Van Dijkhuizen, carries certain assumptions about the meaning connected to reconciliation (3). As I shall be comparing forgiveness interculturally it is necessary to problematize this concept of "forgiveness" and furthermore consider the relevance of such a concept within the different cultural paradigms and whether or not a term such as "forgiveness" is satisfactory in understanding them.

Commencing with an examination of the cultural paradigm of reconciliation within Christianity, it is essential to underscore the significance of the concepts of "remorse" and "repentance" in facilitating the process of forgiveness. Delving deeper into the importance of repentance within the Christian context, it becomes evident that there exists a gap between what is written in the Bible and what is commonly perceived as Christian within the broader religious consciousness. In the Christian context, interpersonal forgiveness finds its roots in the divine, as emphasized by Anthony Bash (Bash 140–41).

Regardless, there exists a common belief within the Christian theological consciousness that there is virtue in forgiving the unrepentant in an act of unconditional forgiveness. According to Bash, this stems from a common misconception of the bible passage Luke 23:34 resounding: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (qtd. in Bash 137).' How-

ever, the ignorance in this context does not refer to an ignorance of the immorality of the act, which in this context means the killing of Jesus, but to the fact that they did not know the divine identity of their victim. (Bash 137) There thus exists ambiguity in whether there is a real need for repentance and remorse to achieve forgiveness in the Christian paradigm, considering that although the Bible argues for the need of repentance in achieving forgiveness, there exists a notion of unconditional forgiveness and thus forgiving the unrepentant in the common theological consciousness.

The situation is fundamentally different in Neo-Confucianism, first of all due to the fact that there is no divine figure such as a God within this ideology, resulting in a difference in conception of what may be considered moral behavior. Morality in Neo-Confucianism is grounded within the "five constant relations" of Confucianism: ruler and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend (He 6). Therefore it must be deduced that hierarchical relations play a significant role in deeming when reconciliation is appropriate. A departure from the concept of "divine forgiveness" relevant to the Christian reconciliation paradigm requires also a reconsideration of the appropriateness of using the term "forgiveness". I argue that in order to ensure a distance from linking divine connotations to the Neo-Confucian reconciliation paradigm it is necessary to utilize a new term in understanding reconciliation in the Neo-Confucian context.

I propose the usage of the Chinese character *sŏ* (恕), which functions as a component of a multitude of modern Korean words associated with reconciliation. Although a direct translation of the character into English would render it similar to the word forgiveness, *sŏ* has connotations with concepts like "consideration" and "empathy" (Eggert and Roetz 252), distinguishing it from the Christian "forgiveness." While forgiveness must be considered as an action of moving beyond the wrong that has been done to someone, rooted in the way that

God forgives sinners, *sŏ* is a consideration of the perpetrator's situation and an understanding of what drove them to take certain actions. Between Confucian literati, who formed the upper class of the Neo-Confucian society of the Chosŏn dynasty, a usage of the combination of the character *sŏ* with the character *ryang* (諒), carrying the meaning of examining, was also common, creating the word *ryangsŏ*, whose meaning is closer to the word "pardoning" rather than "forgiving," signifying a sense of forgiveness in which rather than actually moving beyond the conflict, the victim simply renounces any further acts of accusation or revenge (Eggert and Roetz 252).

A similarity can be encountered in the characterization of either forgiveness or *sŏ* as virtuous. In Neo-Confucianist ideology, resentment is generally considered to be a self-centered and petty behavior, and it should therefore be replaced with a sense of broad-mindedness whenever appropriate (Shun 17). The phrase "whenever appropriate" is important, as being lenient and thus accommodating immoral behavior was far from desirable (Eggert and Roetz 255). As has been discussed, we find a similar disdain for forgiving the unrepentant in the Christian paradigm, although it is often misunderstood in the widespread religious consciousness.

Finally, a difference is noticeable in the role of confession. While the Christian paradigm does carry an importance of active repentance and confession of one's wrongdoing, although the role of such a confession in Christian tradition oftentimes fell to women (Van Dijkhuizen 121), such an open act of confession was in most cases considered entirely inappropriate in the Neo-Confucian paradigm. As the act of *sŏ* was considered virtuous it was also meant to naturally sprout from one's morally cultivated character (Eggert and Roetz 264). Thus asking for forgiveness through a confession of one's wrongdoing could have been con-

sidered a patronizing act through which to insult the other's moral integrity (Eggert and Roetz 267).

In conclusion, the main difference between the Protestant forgiveness paradigm and the Neo-Confucian paradigm of *sŏ,* lies in the motivation to which one might decide to reconcile. While the Protestant paradigm is a reflection of God's forgiveness of humanity's sins, the Neo-Confucian paradigm reflects a consideration of what behavior is considered normative within the context of the five constant relations. A related distinction between the two paradigms lies in their respective considerations of the relevance of emotion to the appropriateness of reconciliation. Within the Christian paradigm, emotional distress is a pivotal factor. Consequently, there arises a need for the transgressor to persuade the victim to undergo a change of heart, transcending their emotional injuries. As discussed, the expression of remorse is fundamental to this persuasion by the transgressor. In contrast, the Neo-Confucian paradigm places importance on social norms as the determining factor for establishing the appropriateness of reconciliation. This reliance renders actions such as a confession superfluous to inducing the victim to move beyond their emotional distress, as emotions are not perceived as relevant to the reconciliation process from the outset.

In analyzing the influence of these paradigms on reconciliation narratives within the case studies of this thesis, internal ideological aspects and motivations which drive characters to act a certain way within the narrative, as well as acts, such as confession or supplication, through which they reach reconciliation must be considered. Simultaneously it must be considered that characters can act without being in accordance with either paradigm or by combining elements from multiple paradigms.

Chapter 2: Transformation of Gender Norms in Yi Kwangsu's *Mujŏng (The Heartless)*

The novel *Mujŏng* or *The Heartless*, as it is titled in the English translation, was first serialized in the newspaper *Maeil Sinbo* in 1917, making it the earliest work discussed in this thesis. It was thus conceived in a time that, as discussed in the previous chapter, was characterized not only by a strict military rule over the Korean peninsula, but furthermore by a strict governmental influence over what was allowed to be published.

Not only is this the first novel discussed in this thesis, but it is furthermore generally considered the first modern Korean novel, as it approaches a manner of speech similar to the vernacular Korean used by common people at the time (P. H. Lee xvi). Although its status as the first modern novel has been called into question numerous times, this novel has been influential not only in its new ideas of storytelling but furthermore because of its prominent status within the Korean literary canon. It is argued by Hwang Jongyon that it was Yi Kwangsu that was one of the first to argue for a separation of literature from morality, and instead argued that the purpose of writing was art and the representation of the human experience through realistic thought and emotion (J. Hwang 781).

Although this work can likely be considered Yi's most widely read work, due to its status as the first modern Korean novel, he continued to write other influential works of fiction such as *hŭk* (*The Soil)* serialized in 1932-33, as well as non-fictional works of which a notable example is a work titled *Ten Commandments for New Women* published in 1932 (Choi, *New Women in Colonial Korea* 41). Throughout his life Yi Kwangsu acquainted himself with several areas that not only served as breeding grounds for nationalist sentiment, such as in Vladivostok and within Tonghak groups, but furthermore were influential in the adoption of modern thought opposing traditional Neo-Confucian values, such as several schools he attended in Japan as well as a Presbyterian school in Seoul. Therefore it is no surprise that a clash of such values takes centerstage of his novel *The Heartless* (A. S. H. Lee 5–21).

The protagonist of *The Heartless* is Yi Hyŏng-Sik, a middle school teacher who was orphaned early in life and possesses few friendships, but feels a deep affection for his students. Although previously never concerned with getting married or finding love, he is invited to start teaching English to the daughter of the *yangban*[11] Elder Kim, named Kim Sŏn-Hyŏng, and he starts to feel affection towards her. Shortly after, Hyŏng-Sik is confronted by the daughter of his late benefactor, named Pak Yŏng-Ch'ae. As Yŏng-Ch'ae's father and brothers had been arrested and imprisoned on unjust grounds and consecutively died in prison, she was forced to dedicate herself to life as a *kisaeng*, a female entertainer usually trained in the arts of music and poetry, who dedicated themselves to entertaining men and oftentimes also slept with them, thus challenging Hyŏng-Sik to reconsider his ideas of *kisaeng* as impure beings and broadening his views and expectations of women in general. As Hyŏng-Sik was intended to marry Yŏng-Ch'ae before the fall of her family, but is simultaneously encouraged to marry Sŏn-Hyŏng, he must navigate this dilemma through a thorough reflection of his inner turmoil stemming from clashing traditional and modern values.

The plot of the story centers mainly around the shifting relationship between Hyŏngsik and Yŏng-ch'ae, although several other characters also influence the course of this central narrative. For the majority of the story there is a heterodiegetic narrator, although at times the narration slips in and out of a first-person narration. The character through which this first-person narration is focalized is not consistent throughout the story. It is through this narrato-logical device that Yi Kwangsu manages to create polyphony and is thus also able to juxta-pose the contrasting ideologies that form the background of this story.

Throughout my analysis of this novel, I argue that the conflict in the narrative reaches an impasse due to the contrasting ideological backgrounds of the characters. Hyŏng-sik at-

[11] A *yangban* was a social elite in Chosŏn society that carried a high position in either the government or the military.

tempts to reconcile with Yŏng-ch'ae by confessing his transgressions, aligning with the Christian paradigm. However, Yŏng-ch'ae's response aligns more closely with the Neo-Confucian reconciliation paradigm. This ideological difference leads to a communication breakdown, with the characters talking at cross purposes. Within the context of political and cultural turmoil, marked by an uneven evolution of ideals, these ideological differences permeate the interpersonal reconciliation dynamics. Thus, I argue that it is necessary to construct a new narrative of the conflict in order to reach reconciliation, akin to Judith Pollman's concept of an "act of oblivion."

The first character introduced to the reader is Yi Hyŏngsik. His first characterization tells a great deal about how his ideological background should be perceived. He is described as follows:

> Hyŏng-sik was powerless. He did not have the power of money, in a world dominated by money. Nor did he have the power of knowledge that people would look up to in an era of knowledge. He had believed in Jesus for some time, but since he had never had much interest in church, he was not particularly well regarded there either. He felt nauseated when he saw youths who lacked any knowledge or virtue frequent the homes of the pastor or the elders, showing off and thereby becoming deacons and stewards, and putting on airs in church. (79–80)[12]

Although at first glance this section appears to be told by an external narrator, there are elements to be found that hint at this being a case of free indirect speech. Especially telling is the section about knowledge, considering that in the chapter directly following this section, Hyŏng-sik is described by the church elder Kim as 'young, but learned and very well-known for his writing,' in a scene where Hyŏng-sik is invited to teach English to the elder's daughter,

[12] I quote from the translation provided by Ann Sung-Hi Lee in the book *Yi Kwangsu and Modern Korean Literature: Mujŏng*

Kim Sŏn-hyŏng (Yi, “Mujŏng” 82). From the juxtaposition of these two passages it becomes clear that the statement that people did not respect Hyŏng-sik’s knowledge is false and that therefore his initial characterization must be considered to be narrated from his own perspective. The use of free indirect speech allows for the usage of an unreliable narrator, and thus further places the reader within the perspectives of these characters. This contributes to the earlier mentioned polyphony.

Although an affinity with Christianity is clearly portrayed in the fact that he believes in Jesus, a certain distrust of the integrity of the church is also portrayed. The central point of his distrust lies in the topic of knowledge and virtue. In the original Korean text the word used for virtue is *tŏkhaeng*[13] (Yi, *무정 - Mujŏng (The Heartless)* 12), which contains the Chinese character 德, used to describe virtuous conduct in Taoist as well as Confucian tradition. It is therefore already in Hyŏng-sik’s introduction that the reader may notice a conflict between his newfound belief in Jesus and his traditional values that remain rooted in Confucianism.

This conflict of values is also noticeable in his first confrontation with Pak Yŏng-ch’ae, as she appears on his doorstep at night. Because the orphaned Hyŏng-sik was practically raised by Yŏng-ch’ae’s father, Scholar Pak, it becomes immediately clear that he feels a certain indebtedness to him, as portrayed by the following expression of gratitude by Hyŏng-sik:

> “‘Ah, it is you Yŏng-ch’ae, it is you,” Hyŏng-sik said in a tragic voice. “Thank you. Thank you for coming to see an ungrateful scoundrel like me.”’ (87)

Scholar Pak was falsely imprisoned for conspiring robbery and murder, and this quote seems to be a confession of Hyŏng-sik’s guilt for not supporting him in his time of hardship. Although such guilt likely stems from a neglect of the hierarchical Confucian relation between teacher and student, an open confession of guilt such as is presented in this section appears

[13] 덕행

Christian. Regardless of his feelings of guilt, Hyŏng-sik is sceptic of trusting Yŏng-ch'ae as he notices that she has become a *kisaeng*.

After Hyŏng-sik and his landlady invite Yŏng-ch'ae in, Yŏng-ch'ae tells them about her life after the imprisonment of her father. The narration is presented almost completely in direct speech by Yŏng-ch'ae, thus telling the story entirely from her perspective, aside from the occasional interjections by Hyŏng-sik and his landlady. It is clear that Yŏng-ch'ae's values are rooted in Neo-Confucian thought, as was taught to her by her father. The importance that Yŏng-ch'ae places on these values, as well as the impossibility of adhering to them, is portrayed in the following passages:

> Yŏng-ch'ae thought about the stories of old. She remembered how her father had told her stories about women who sold themselves in order to redeem their father's sins. Though she had not been more than ten years old at the time, she had wept and thought, "I want to be like those women."
>
> "Shall I do what those women did?" thought Yŏng-ch'ae when she heard the man say that she would be able to give her father food and help him get out of jail if she had money. (109)

It is clear that Yŏng-ch'ae based her decision to become a *kisaeng* not only on Confucian ideals of filial piety, but more directly on a Confucianist classic, namely *Biographies of Virtuous Women*, a real textbook which was oftentimes used for the moral education of women. Although her becoming a *kisaeng* fits with her Confucianist education, she is more or less tricked into doing so by a man who later sells her and takes off with the money. He is presented in the previous quote as 'the man'. Yŏng-ch'ae's father's reaction to her decision is as follows:

> My father lost his temper when he heard that I had become a *kisaeng*. "Foolish girl! You have ruined our glorious family reputation. Have you defiled your body already, a

> young girl fallen prey to someone's schemes?" He thought I had become a *kisaeng* through immoral conduct, and he ended up committing suicide. (Yi, "Mujŏng" 110)

When Yŏng-ch'ae's father finds out about her decision he is humiliated beyond compare, although he has taught her these values himself. Though she has followed the examples of virtuous women, she has at the same time given up her chastity as it appears to her father; thus, an act of filial piety is considered an act of disgracing the family. This shows that it is nearly impossible for Yŏng-ch'ae to adhere to the ideals of the Confucian virtuous woman when her family falls down the social ladder. Yet, it is the only ideological paradigm that she is familiar with at that point in the story.

The root of the conflict that arises between Hyŏng-sik and Yŏng-ch'ae lies in exactly this conflicting nature of Neo-Confucianist societal expectation. Throughout the novel, we are presented with Hyŏng-sik's inner thoughts about what it means for his relationship with Yŏng-ch'ae that she has become a *kisaeng*. This inner monologue is characterized by continuous contradiction, through which Hyŏng-sik alternates between feeling for Yŏng-ch'ae and condemning her for her unchastity. This conflict becomes clear from the juxtaposition of the following two excerpts:

> She must have been laughing at me and the old woman, he thought. Ah, Yŏng-ch'ae has become a fallen woman. She has become a filthy rotten whore. (112)

> Yŏng-ch'ae is the daughter of my benefactor and teacher, and he had given me approval to make her my wife. Even though she has momentarily fallen into dishonorable circumstances because of bad luck, I have the responsibility of saving her. I regret that I did not seek her out first, and I feel sorry towards her about that. (113)

Hyŏng-sik is confronted with a dilemma between excusing what he sees as Yŏng-ch'ae's immoral behavior, and straying from his duty as a student to his teacher. Both are in conflict

with Neo-Confucian ideals. Additionally, the reader is presented with an expression of remorse, albeit within Hyŏng-sik's inner monologue. This foreshadows a later scene where Hyŏng-sik does openly express these feelings towards Yŏng-ch'ae, to a certain extent.

Yŏng-ch'ae also at times feels that she is unworthy of Hyŏng-sik's empathy. She contemplates for example that since her own father reacted as severely as he did, it is unlikely that Hyŏng-sik will react any more mildly (Yi, "Mujŏng" 110). However, what Yŏng-ch'ae fails to mention to Hyŏng-sik is that she kept her chastity regardless of her being a *kisaeng*. When Hyŏng-sik finds out about this he resolves to save Yŏng-ch'ae by buying her freedom from the old woman who owns her (Yi, "Mujŏng" 133). This plan fails when he hears from the old woman that Pae Myŏng-sik and Kim Hyŏn-su, respectively the dean and the headmaster's son of the school that Hyŏng-sik works at, have taken Yŏng-ch'ae to Ch'ŏngnyangni, presumably to engage in sexual intercourse with her. Hyŏng-sik decides that he must save Yŏng-ch'ae and he follows her, arriving too late however to prevent Yŏng-ch'ae from being raped. Upon arriving at the site Hyŏng-sik confronts Pae with the inhumanity of his actions:

> The two men sank their heads down, as though ashamed. They were not contrite, though. They thought it was alright to rape a *kisaeng* if she did not do as she was told. They thought it was a sin for a woman of a good family to have illicit relations with a man; but a *kisaeng* was a woman with whom any man could fool around. (165)
>
> Hyŏng-sik stomped his feet on the ground again and said, "Please become human beings!" Hyŏng-sik believed that if he said this, the two men would feel guilty, and would regret what they had done, and would vow never to do such a thing again. (166)

Once more presented with a case of free indirect speech, the reader is granted a look into the minds of Pae and Kim. Although Hyŏng-sik believes that his words will inspire remorse in the two men, they fail to do so because of two fundamental differences in their worldviews.

Firstly, Kim Hyŏn-su claims that he is being wronged in this scene because he feels that 'he was being insulted by a lowly fellow from the countryside' (Yi, "Mujŏng" 166). The determination of wrongdoing in this scenario is not based on emotional harm but rather finds its basis in social hierarchy. Because Hyŏn-su is from a higher social status he believes it is insulting for Hyŏng-sik to lecture him. Secondly, there exists a fundamental difference in each of the men's view of women's rights, especially when it comes to women from a low social status; *kisaeng*. While Hyŏng-sik is outraged by what he sees as a crime against humanity, Pae and Kim believe that what they have done is not immoral, since Yŏng-ch'ae is a *kisaeng* and the rules applicable to women of higher standing do therefore not apply. It is these fundamental differences that cause Hyŏng-sik's attempt to instill remorse in Pae and Kim to fail.

Following this incident, Yŏng-ch'ae resolves to end her life and she sends a letter to Hyŏng-sik to let him know about her decision. It is this news that causes Hyŏng-sik to reflect on the meaning of Confucian morality rather explicitly, once again in the free indirect speech:

> Human life did not exist for the sake of one particular responsibility or one moral law, but existed for all the myriad responsibilities towards the universe. Loyalty, filial piety, chastity honor – these were not the center of human life. Human life was not contained within concepts such as loyalty or filial piety, but rather, loyalty and filial piety derived from human life. (193)

As discussed, these responsibilities, based on the five constant relations, are the very center of Confucianist conceptions of morality. Therefore Hyŏng-sik's rejection of these values can be considered a step away from Confucianist ideology in general.

The deviation from Confucian ideology is furthermore accentuated by the juxtaposition of this passage with a contemplation of the same subject matter by Hyŏng-sik's friend, U-sŏn, who claims that 'a woman's virginity was her life. If she lost her virginity, it was right for

her to kill herself' (Yi, "Mujŏng" 193). At the end of chapter 53, this difference in opinion is summarized. Hyŏng-sik believes that Yŏng-ch'ae's resolution to commit suicide was wrong not only in theory but also in terms of emotion, considering that Yŏng-ch'ae still had a 'responsibility to the world and God.' U-sŏn thinks that her decision is absolutely virtuous. Within the novel this difference is explained by an external narrator through their differing educational backgrounds. U-sŏn's is the classical Chinese or Confucianist education, while Hyŏng-sik's is an English education; one rooted in Christianity (Yi, "Mujŏng" 194–95).

This scene represents one of the rare instances in which Hyŏng-sik explicitly invokes the Christian God. The noteworthy aspect of this moment lies in its timing, emerging in a moment of crisis. His expression of religious faith during a period of adversity is pivotal in comprehending his subsequent actions in the final reconciliation scene with Yŏng-ch'ae, as he searches to reconcile through confession, aligning with the Christian paradigm of forgiveness.

Next, Hyŏng-sik resolves to travel to Pyongyang in order to stop Yŏng-ch'ae from jumping into the Taedong river and ending her life. During his stay at an inn in Pyongyang he is sexually assaulted by a group of peddlers also staying at the inn. It is in this scene that his last judgements when it comes to Yŏng-ch'ae's chastity are removed:

> Hyŏng-sik thought of Yŏng-ch'ae. He and Yŏng-ch'ae seemed to have strangely similar destinies. He realized that his affection for Yŏng-ch'ae was growing even stronger. I must marry Yŏng-ch'ae, and we must spend our lives together, loving each other, he thought. (201)

It is in this scene of sharing a similar fate to what Yŏng-ch'ae had had to experience that Hyŏng-sik ceases to judge Yŏng-ch'ae's loss of her chastity and fully understands the helplessness that her situation encompassed. Although he thinks about Yŏng-ch'ae and worries

about her for a short time, what follows is a section that explores Hyŏng-sik freeing himself from sexual repressions, which characterized his previous life.

During his stay in Pyongyang he spends time with a *kisaeng* named Kye-hyang. Although he does not engage in sexual intercourse with her of any kind, he is portrayed as having a significantly different stance towards sexual attraction than before:

> This was the first time he had ever known such a delicate, enthralling pleasure, he thought. Her eyes shone with a wondrous light that brought one's entire body into ecstasy, and her skin gave off mysterious emanations that made one's muscles tingle.
>
> Hyŏng-sik thought of Sŏn-hyŏng, and the joy he had felt the other day when he sat across from her. (207)

Not only does Hyŏng-sik allow himself to feel affection for the opposite sex, but he also starts to reinterpret past contacts with women, recognizing that he had indeed felt a connection with his student Kim Sŏn-hyŏng.

Although this means a significant development for the character of Hyŏng-sik, it is also the primary cause of his ensuing conflict with Yŏng-ch'ae who, it turns out, did not jump into the Taedong river at all, as she was convinced not to by a female student on the train named Pyŏng-uk, who is an example of what I have defined in the previous chapter as the New Woman. Hyŏng-sik does not know this, however, and is convinced by his landlady that it is his fault that Yŏng-ch'ae died and that it was his heartlessness towards Yŏng-ch'ae that caused her death:

> "[T]he way I see it, Yŏng-ch'ae was in love with you. How could you have been so heartless? When she was leaving, you should have held onto her and told her not to go, or followed after her. But you did not." The old woman resented Hyŏng-sik. (240)

Following this exchange, Hyŏng-sik initially contemplates his guilt in Yŏng-ch'ae's presumed death. However, instead of continuing his search for Yŏng-ch'ae, he ends up getting married to Sŏn-hyŏng, whom he decides to leave Korea with in order to go study in the US.

Up until now I have primarily discussed the development of Hyŏng-sik's worldview and his ideological standpoints. However, it is also necessary to understand the development of Yŏng-ch'ae's character. Most important in understanding Yŏng-ch'ae is the scene in which she talks about Hyŏng-sik with Pyŏng-uk. Yŏng-ch'ae claims to have very fond childhood memories of her time with Hyŏng-sik, which Pyŏng-uk finds understandable. However, Pyŏng-uk disagrees with Yŏng-ch'ae's resolution to save herself for Hyŏng-sik:

> "No, you have been dreaming until now. How can you regard someone whose face you scarcely know and whose mind you do not know, as your intended? Such are the shackles of outdated thought. People live through the breath of life that is within them. A husband whom one does not love is not a husband. Your past is a dream. Your true life begins from now on." (271)
>
> "Then you decided your entire future because of a few words that your father said!"
>
> "Yes. Is that not one of the 'three obediences'?" "Ha! The 'three obediences' have taken the lives of tens of millions of women for thousands of years, and made tens of millions of men miserable. Those accursed two words." (272)

Pyŏng-uk invites Yŏng-ch'ae to free herself from the gender norms placed on her by Neo-Confucianism, as well as from the expectations of her late father. It is in this conversation that Yŏng-ch'ae's view of the role of women in Korean society is challenged, to the point where Yŏng-ch'ae is shocked. Pyŏng-uk calls for Yŏng-ch'ae to be a human being first, before she is a woman, thus inviting Yŏng-ch'ae to reconsider what it means to be a woman. Additionally

Pyŏng-uk argues for the need for love and affection in marriage, a value which I have presented in the previous chapter as modern to Korean society at the time.

Yŏng-ch'ae and Pyŏng-uk grow very close and eventually resolve to leave Korea for Japan together, in order to attend a music school in Tokyo. On the train Yŏng-ch'ae finds out that she is on the same train as Hyŏng-sik and Sŏn-hyŏng, who are on their way to go study in the US. In the following scene Yŏng-ch'ae finds out about Hyŏng-sik's marriage. This can be seen as Yŏng-ch'ae's ultimate realization that she has been wronged and that her emotions have value:

> "Then was he already engaged when I went to see him?" Yŏng-ch'ae felt disappointed about the past. Her past life seemed even sadder and more grievous. It seemed as though she had been deceived by the world and lived a life that could hardly be called a life. Everything she had striven for until now seemed to be meaningless. Her heart burst with disappointment and sorrow all at once. Moreover, she had devoted her body and mind to Hyŏng-sik, but he seemed to give her no more thought than he would a wisp of straw. "I don't know why, but I feel bitter," Yŏng-ch'ae said. (306)

The Korean word used to describe the word 'bitter' here is *wŏnt'ong*[14] (冤痛) (Yi, *무정 - Mujŏng (The Heartless)* 454), which carries not only the meaning of resentment, but also a connotation of regret. Therefore, she does not only reproach Hyŏng-sik for his heartless actions towards her, but likely also comes to regret that she let her world revolve around him for so long. Although she clearly feels bitter towards Hyŏng-sik, she does keep a certain restraint in her expression, even towards Pyŏng-uk who is likely to support her anger towards Hyŏng-sik. The phrase 'I don't know why' shows that although she is breaking from her traditional mold,

[14] 원통

she has difficulty in fully expressing her emotions. It is this scene which precedes the final reconciliation scene between Hyŏng-sik and Yŏng-ch'ae.

Before coming to visit Yŏng-ch'ae in the train, Hyŏng-sik has a final realization of how heartlessly he has acted:

> There was pain in his heart, though. It seemed as though he had committed a serious sin in not having followed Yŏng-ch'ae to P'yŏngyang and found out whether or not she was alive or dead. Moreover, he had hurried back to Seoul and gotten engaged to someone else the next day, and he had forgotten all about Yŏng-ch'ae ever since then. He was indeed heartless, after all. (304)

Although the use of the English word "sin" clearly shows a Christian ideological viewpoint, it must be considered that the word used in the Korean original text is *choe*[15] (罪) (Yi, *무정 - Mujŏng (The Heartless)* 450), whose meaning is much more neutral in its religious connotations. Although *choe* is certainly used in Christian contexts to signify 'sin', it may also simply signify a crime. However, considering Hyŏng-sik's aforementioned references to Christianity, I do consider the translation of this word as 'sin' to be correct. What is presented here is therefore not only a crime towards Yŏng-ch'ae, but also a crime before God.

Overhearing Yŏng-ch'ae speak about her bitter feelings toward him, Hyŏng-sik is struck with feelings of shame and remorse and thus resolves to beg for Yŏng-ch'ae's forgiveness. Hyŏng-sik thus commences the reconciliation scene by confessing his sins and begging for forgiveness, pertaining to the Christian forgiveness paradigm. However, Yŏng-ch'ae's response to his confession does not fit within this paradigm. Their exchange goes as follows:

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[15] 죄

> "Please forgive me, Yŏng-ch'ae, Hyŏng-sik said. "I have nothing to say for myself. I have sinned against you and Scholar Pak. If only you would reproach me."
>
> "Not at all. I foolishly sought you out and caused you needless anxiety. How worried must you have been when I said I was going to die, even though I didn't die." Yŏng-ch'ae hung her head.
>
> This won't do, Pyŏng-uk thought to herself. (318)

Firstly, it should be noted that the translation '[i]f only you would reproach me' is not entirely correct. What Hyŏng-sik seems to be saying here is that whatever reproach Yŏng-ch'ae may have towards him, he will accept[16]. While Hyŏng-sik thus admits his wrongdoing and attempts to convince Yŏng-ch'ae to move past the wrong that has been done to her, Yŏng-ch'ae's response has barely anything to do with this wrong and merely comments on the difficult situation that Hyŏng-sik must have been in. It is clear that what Hyŏng-sik is striving for is forgiveness and what Yŏng-ch'ae is granting him is closer to what I have defined in the previous chapter as *sŏ*, due to her empathy and her consideration of Hyŏng-sik's situation.

Yŏng-ch'ae's response causes a shift in Hyŏng-sik's attitude and thus also in the trajectory of the conversation. Hyŏng-sik says to Pyŏng-uk for example that due to her saving Yŏng-ch'ae, his own sin has grown lighter (Yi, "Mujŏng" 319), therefore putting his own hardships in the center of the situation. The conversation shifts even further in the following scene, in which Hyŏng-sik reproaches Yŏng-ch'ae for her not having sent him a postcard to let him know that she was alive, causing Yŏng-ch'ae to feel sorry for him. By placing the blame back on Yŏng-ch'ae, the gender hierarchy rooted in Neo-Confucianism is re-established. Neither Hyŏng-sik, nor Yŏng-ch'ae know how to resume the conversation:

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[16] Original Tekst: 무슨 책망을 하시든지 (Yi, *무정 - Mujŏng (The Heartless)* 479)

> Hyŏng-sik's thoughts and feelings were very confused as he looked at Yŏng-ch'ae weeping across from him, and he thought of Sŏn-hyŏng sitting in the other train car. Hyŏng-sik, Yŏng-ch'ae and Pyŏng-uk said nothing for awhile. The train roared as it crossed a steel bridge. It was still raining heavily, as one could tell from the rain falling on the windows, and the sound of flowing water. There might be a flood. (320)

The reader is presented with a situation in which both parties are sitting in silence, signifying an impasse in the reconciliation process. Due to each party's fundamentally different approach to reconciliation, one rooted in the Christian forgiveness paradigm and one rooted in the Neo-Confucian paradigm, both Hyŏng-sik and Yŏng-ch'ae end up feeling sorry for one another, yet a final moment of reconciliation remains impossible. It is exactly the heavy rain and the possible flood mentioned at the end of this chapter that foreshadow their final reconciliation.

Hyŏng-sik and his wife Sŏn-hyŏng, along with Yŏng-ch'ae and Pyŏng-uk pass a small village on the way to Masan and notice that there has indeed been a great flood that has half-submerged the houses. In order to help the people of this village, the four companions organize a concert in order to collect money to help the village population restore their land. It is through this common goal that the four characters are united:

> "I felt sorry for them." She smiled. "Didn't you?" They had all grown much closer while working together that day.
>
> …
>
> "We must give them strength! We must give them modern civilization." Pyŏng-uk said confidently." (341)

Although the scenes preceding their activities in the village are characterized by unresolved conflict, the scenes following this scene depict them in good spirits with one another, having thus reconciled. The reader is presented with what is defined by Van Dijkhuizen as "imper-

sonal reconciliation;" reconciliation is not achieved through human interaction, but through an external factor that causes the characters to move beyond their conflict (Van Dijkhuizen 146). It could be said that the flood that destroyed the village also acts symbolically in washing away the conflict between Yŏng-ch'ae and Hyŏng-sik. Additionally, the flood put them in a position in which they are able to rebuild a friendly relationship through the common effort of gathering funds to rebuild the village, but also through a common goal of bringing modern civilization to Korea.

In the final chapter the four characters are described to still be in contact with one another years later:

> Pyŏng-uk graduated from a school of music, and after that worked and made money to attend school for two years in Belin. This winter she plans to meet up with Hyŏng-sik and Sŏn-hyŏng.
>
> Hyŏng-sik and Yŏng-ch'ae are said to have received outstanding grades each year. The three young women who held a benefit concert in the waiting room of the Samnangjin Station have now become splendid ladies. (346)

Not only have the characters reconciled, but additionally they are fulfilling their goal of participating in modern society through education, as they had all resolved to do after their benefit concert.

Concludingly, the plot of *The Heartless* centers around the evolving relationship of Hyŏng-sik and Yŏng-ch'ae in which both characters are challenged in their traditional worldview rooted in Neo-Confucianism. While Hyŏng-sik increasingly breaks from his traditional values regarding gender in order to move past his prejudice towards Yŏng-ch'ae, Yŏng-ch'ae is gradually encouraged by her friend Pyŏng-uk to recognize her value and potential as a woman. In the final reconciliation scene Hyŏng-sik and Yŏng-ch'ae both seem ready to

voice their emotion. However, while Hyŏng-sik's attempt at reconciliation is rooted in the paradigm of Christian forgiveness, Yŏng-ch'ae's approach is rooted in the Neo-Confucian paradigm of *sŏ*. Therefore the two find themselves at an impasse. Left in a situation in which both characters feel sorry for one another, but cannot reconcile, the characters end up reconciling through a common learning experience, as well as through a common goal in bringing modern civilization to Korea.

The resumption of the characters' friendly relationship may be considered a result of an impersonal reconciliation set in motion by the flood. However, the shared goal of bringing modern civilization to Korea plays a crucial role. This collective endeavor is a human action rather than an external, impersonal factor. By focusing on this goal, the characters divert attention from the original conflict, framing traditional societal norms as the root of their conflict, rather than their own actions. This shared goal of modernizing Korea is not free of internal conflict either, as characters like Hyŏng-sik, advocating Western education, may envision a different modern society compared to characters like Yŏng-ch'ae or Pyŏng-uk, who strive for women's emancipation.

In essence, the characters reconcile by establishing a common narrative that replaces their conflicts. This pretense of oblivion of the real cause of their conflict enables them to comply with this narrative, seemingly achieving a lasting reconciliation reminiscent of Pollman's concept of an "act of oblivion." *The Heartless* offers a resolution to an interpersonal conflict that exhibits characteristics akin to political reconciliation, underscoring the interwoven nature of the interpersonal and the political. This narrative demonstrates that these realms are often inseparable, as is the case in this novel as well as the other works discussed within this thesis.

Chapter 3: Conflict Within the Family in Yŏm Sang-sŏp's *Samdae (Three Generations)*

In the novel *Samdae (Three Generations)* by Yŏm Sang-sŏp, which was published in 1931, the reader is presented with a similar form of conflict resolution as I have identified in *The Heartless*. Although there are several scenes in which characters make an attempt to reconcile with one another, their interpersonal conflicts appear irreconcilable, partly due to their undeniable ties to the political turmoil, which sets the stage of the novel. Similarly to what I have described in *The Heartless*, Yŏm's novel creates a new narrative surrounding these conflicts, through which reconciliation appears possible once more. However, while *The Heartless* presents the reader with a rather linear development of the conflict between Yŏng-ch'ae and Hyŏng-sik, the plot of *Three Generations* is different in the sense that many conflicts between characters coexist, while also running parallel to one another. For example, each conflict that takes place within one specific generation of the Cho family, is at all times interconnected to both other generations. The narrative structure of the story, characterized by its continuous shifts between the three different generations, is an integral aspect of this overarching theme.

The opening chapter of the novel presents the reader with Cho Tŏk-ki, who is the youngest of three generations of men from the upper middle-class Cho family. Visiting a bar with his friend Kim Pyŏng-hwa, a revolutionary who left his family and is in a significantly worse financial situation than Tŏk-ki, he meets Hong Kyŏng-ae, a woman whom Tŏk-ki's father Cho Sang-hun, who represents the second of the three generations of the Cho family, used to have an intimate relationship with. However, Sang-hun abandoned her after she became pregnant, leaving her to raise her child with only her mother for support. It is this meeting that introduces the several conflicts of the novel, which not only revolves around clashing intergenerational ideas, but also around changing ideals surrounding gender and class.

According to Kim Chie-sou, Yŏm gives voice to three distinct generations and their corresponding era: the late Chosŏn period, the Enlightenment Period, and the Colonial Era (C.

Kim 475). Throughout the novel, Yŏm does not necessarily take a side in which of these perspectives is better, as opposed to Yi Kwangsu, who in the conclusion of *The Heartless* suggests that modern thought will better Korean society.

Born in 1897 in Seoul, Yŏm Sang-sŏp moved to Japan in 1912 for studies at Keio University. He engaged in journalism, co-founded a literary magazine in 1919, and faced arrest for attempting to organize a movement akin to the March 1st Movement in Japan. Though sentenced to ten months in prison, he was acquitted without serving time. Returning to Seoul in 1920, he worked for the *Dong-A Ilbo*, and co-founded the literary magazine *The Ruins*. Although he returned to Japan in 1926 for a short while to devote himself to writing fiction, he went back to Seoul once more and joined the *Chosŏn Ilbo*, publishing notable works such as *Running Wild* and *Three Generations*. The latter gained recognition in the 1960s as a Korean fiction masterpiece despite initially escaping the attention of the masses as well as the Japanese Colonial Government, therefore allowing the prominent role of resistance activism in the novel (C. Kim 473–76).

In the first two chapters of the novel, Hong Kyŏng-ae immediately clarifies what her stance is when it comes to traditional Korean gender norms. She not only deliberately displays behavior in clash with these ideals by getting openly drunk, but furthermore displays her dissatisfaction with the Cho family. She does so by expressing dissatisfaction with the church, in which both Cho Sang-hun, and Tŏk-ki's friend Kim Pyŏng-hwa's father take a position of leadership. She expresses her criticism in the following manner:

> "People will say I'm a fallen woman if I keep drinking like this. But does a woman drink because she is fallen, or is she fallen because she drinks? I say neither! If a woman's fallen because she drinks, then all drinking men are fallen, too, and all non-

> drinkers, like ministers, will go to heaven right? Kin-san[17], isn't that right?" She slapped Pyŏng-hwa on the thigh. (16)[18]

Although it is clear from the context that the person she is really criticizing in this section is Cho Sang-hun, Tŏk-ki's father, she directs her criticism towards Pyŏng-hwa, who has practically nothing to do with her conflict with the Cho family. At the same time it is Tŏk-ki who feels addressed in this scene. This is reflective of one of the central questions of the novel, of whether culpability for the abandonment of Kyŏng-ae and her child is shared intergenerationally within the Cho family. This is also reflected by a play on words used by Kyŏng-ae. Whilst drinking, she says that she will "suck up every single drop of the *buja's* blood," if she can (Yŏm, *Three Generations* 15). The play of words lies in the double meaning of the word *buja*, which can refer to both the word 富者 and 父子, meaning respectively 'rich man' and 'father and son'. Though her accusation could be directed generally at the rich upper class, it is likely that her words call out the actions of Sang-hun, and the shared culpability of his son Tŏk-ki. There is a distance being created between Kyŏng-ae's accusations and Tŏk-ki, due to their direction at Pyŏng-hwa, but it is clear that Kyŏng-ae's words inspire feelings of responsibility in Tŏk-ki.

> For Tŏk-ki, Kyŏng-ae's words were far from idle chitchat. He knew they were aimed directly at him, and he began to panic, realizing that he really must leave before she blurted out anything else. (17)

Although Tŏk-ki himself is not a church elder at all, he still feels that Kyŏng-ae's accusations are directed at him directly, therefore creating a link between his father's actions and his own responsibility.

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[17] This is the Japanese version of Kim and thus refers to Pyŏng-hwa.
[18] I quote from the translation provided by Yu Young-nan in the book *Three Generations* published by Archipelago Books in 2006.

Due to his feelings of guilt, Tŏk-ki resolves to meet Kyŏng-ae again, in order to further discuss her situation. Kyŏng-ae makes it clear that her conflict with his father lies in the fact that he abandoned his own child, rather than that he had disrespected her. She criticizes him by once more calling out the hypocrisy of his Christian identity:

> "She isn't in your family registry, is she? Your father the Christian, the 'pastor,' won't put her name there because it would sully the Cho family name." As she spat out these words, a menacing look flitted across her face. (57)

She is referring not only to the negligence of Sang-hun in failing to provide for his own daughter, but furthermore points out the hypocrisy in valuing the family registry as reflective of the honor of his family name, considering that this is a system deeply rooted in the Neo-Confucian tradition, which he claims to have sworn off.

Tŏk-ki decides that he must convince his father to better Kyŏng-ae's situation. He addresses his father rather directly, causing a reaction opposite to Tŏk-ki's intention to inspire remorse:

> "Even though you're my father, I've got to say that what you've done – sacrificing others for the sole purpose of saving your own skin – is just plain wrong."
>
> "Stop this nonsense! To talk to your father this way! How can someone your age be so impudent?" The father had no intention of hearing his son out and wanted him to know who was in charge. (115)

Although Tŏk-ki is making an attempt to inspire remorse in his father, the result is quite the opposite. This is due to the fact that Tŏk-ki is in conflict here with the Confucian hierarchical relation between father and son, as becomes clear from Sang-hun's reference to age in this excerpt. Sang-hun's response to Tŏk-ki's accusation also shows how he holds onto Confucian ideology only when it is convenient to him. As has been discussed in chapter 1, the period in

which this work was written was characterized by a loosening of patriarchal hierarchy within the family. It seems however, that Tŏk-ki and Sang-hun are not in agreement on what the hierarchical relation between father and son is, therefore causing friction between the two in this scene.

This conflict is a direct reflection of an earlier scene which takes place between Sang-hun and his father Cho Ŭi-kwan, where Sang-hun criticizes Confucian ancestral rites as well as his father's plans to build a Confucian academy:

> "Whatever happened in the past, what sense does it make to landscape the grave site at this point? If it were just a little bit of tidying up, it would be another matter, but I really don't understand how you can seriously plan to build a Confucian academy and expect Confucianists to flock there in droves. Money aside, does it make any sense nowadays?"
>
> "Enough! I told you to get out, but here you are still – going on and on." (96)

Although Sang-hun is offended at being criticized by his own son, he displays a very similar attitude towards his own father in his attempt to coerce him into adopting modern values. The reversal of the Confucian hierarchical dynamic between father and son is highlighted in this scene through an ironic comparison drawn between Ŭi-kwan and a prodigal son:

> It[19] was used to silence those who had objected to the old man's worming his way into the registry of a sonless family, those who had worried that the increase in number would dilute the true *yangban* stock. The old man claimed that he had spent only a thousand, much like a prodigal son quoting a figure lower than what he has actually squandered. (95)

[19] 'It' here refers to a large sum of money spent by Ŭi-kwan.

What is described here is an attempt by Ŭi-kwan to raise his social status through falsification of the ancestry registry. His comparison to the biblical personage from the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32, not only highlights the arguable wrongdoing in the falsification of this registry, but more importantly the reversal of hierarchical roles in this scene, as Ŭi-kwan's comparison to the Prodigal Son automatically places Sang-hun in the role of the father. It is exactly this reversal of the hierarchy that causes the tension between the two characters in this scene, similar to the conflict between Tŏk-ki and his father.

Regardless of the initial unsuccessfulness of Tŏk-ki's efforts to inspire remorse in his father, Sang-hun eventually does decide that he must speak to Kyŏng-ae in order to take responsibility for her situation. Meeting her in a hotel, their conversation commences as follows:

> Kyŏng-ae stared at him. "Why do you want to see me?"
>
> "Come now, there's no need for you to act so defensively. What happened between us is all my fault," he began, but the maid who had led Kyŏng-ae to the room reappeared.
>
> "Will you be staying overnight?" the maid asked. "If so, we'll go ahead and get the bedding ready."
>
> Sang-hun had made up his mind to stay, but he made a show of looking down at his watch before he said to Kyŏng-ae, "It's so late. Let's just stay." (154)

Sang-hun starts out by immediately confessing his wrongdoing to Kyŏng-ae, in accordance with the reconciliation paradigm rooted in Christianity, to which Sang-hun claims to have devoted himself. However, regardless of this direct confession, the effect is severely mitigated, partly by his dismissal of Kyŏng-ae's feelings of distrust by saying that there is "no need to act so defensively." Furthermore, the whole exchange appears to be premeditated, considering that Sang-hun had made up his mind to stay at the hotel with Kyŏng-ae, prior to knowing the outcome of their conversation.

The ulterior motive of spending a night with Kyŏng-ae also becomes clear later on in the conversation, when Sang-hun reflects on the true reason for his sudden resolution to help Kyŏng-ae after all this time:

> If there was no chance of winning her back, there was no need to make the effort. Desire raised its head again, although that hadn't been the case while she'd been out of sight. He knew that it would be difficult to find another woman of Kyŏng-ae's caliber, though he hadn't had a lot of experience with women. There was no reconciling with his wife, and he couldn't lead a celibate life waiting for her death. (159)

The hypocrisy behind his confession does not escape Kyŏng-ae, which I consider to be the primary cause for her refusal to reconcile with Sang-hun in this scene. However, her rejection of his attempt to make amends to her can also be considered a rejection of the Christian concept of confession, which Kyŏng-ae considers to be hypocritical in itself. A clue to this can be found in a comment Kyŏng-ae makes after Sang-hun's confession. Suspicious of Sang-hun's sudden interest in her she asks: "What is this sudden interest in me, yesterday and again today? Has God told you it's now okay to see a woman like me? Have all the whores at Maedang House run away?" (155).

Sang-hun's mention of his wife, with whom he deems reconciliation impossible, is noteworthy. His assumption suggests a distinction between his perceptions of his wife and of Kyŏng-ae. One possible explanation lies in Kyŏng-ae embodying the characteristics of a New Woman, as she deviates from traditional Confucian gender norms. Given Sang-hun's aspiration to project a modern image, Kyŏng-ae's non-compliance with societal expectations may contribute to his desire to resume their relationship. Additionally, physical attraction likely plays a role, considering Kyŏng-ae's relative youth compared to his wife.

Aside from his physical attraction to Kyŏng-ae, there is another motive for Sang-hun to reconcile. The offer he makes to Kyŏng-ae is to take their daughter in as his own child, but he expects Kyŏng-ae to cut off contact with her, thus showing that his motive in taking her in is not to take responsibility for his actions, but to save face in the public eye, considering that his connection to Kyŏng-ae, who is of lower social descent, could be considered shameful. It is this final realization that causes Kyŏng-ae to make an outright rejection of his reconciliation attempt, after which she storms out. Before leaving she says the following:

> "I don't care. I thought you might have repented a little over what you had done to us and had come to your senses. They say you can never make a silk purse of a sow's ear," she spat out before she left the room. (161)

In her ultimate rejection, she uses the word 'repent,' or *hoegae*[20] in the Korean text (Yŏm, *Samdae 1* 274), a concept closely related to the Christian paradigm of confession discussed in chapter 1. Although the idea of repentance is not strictly reserved for Christianity, since ideas of repentance are also present in Buddhist ideology (Konior 97), the word *hoegae* carries Christian rather than Buddhist connotations, since in Buddhism there is a separate word for repentance: *ch'amhoe*[21]. Furthermore, the word *hoegae* consists of the two Chinese characters 悔, which carries the meaning of remorse, and 改, which means to fix something. Kyŏng-ae means, therefore, that she reproaches Sang-hun not only for his failure to repent internally, but also for his refusal to better the situation of Kyŏng-ae and her daughter. The usage of the word *hoegae* in this situation shows once more Kyŏng-ae's disdain for Christianity, as she expresses that remorse has little meaning unless it is followed by action.

Following this exchange with Kyŏng-ae, Sang-hun continues to disregard the expectations of his father and devotes himself to a life of pleasure, spending nights with prostitutes

[20] 회개

[21] 참회

and drinking excessively. This deterioration of Sang-hun's situation in his father's eyes causes them to completely fall out, even though he is likely to pass away soon from his illness. In Ŭi-kwan's final words he tells his son not to come to him again, and that when he dies, Sang-hun will not be notified of his death, further emphasizing their estrangement (Yŏm, *Three Generations* 256). This is a final way in which reconciliation between the two is rendered impossible. After Ŭi-kwan's death, the reason for their split becomes clear, through the distribution of the inheritance. Sang-hun does inherit some of his father's possessions, but compared to his family members, the inheritance is small.

> Sang-hun's paltry share was the result of the old man's obstinacy, a response to his son's Christianity, which prohibited its believers from performing ancestral ceremonies. In the end, the old man's feudal ideas prevailed. (311)

Although several reasons for the fallout between Sang-hun and Ŭi-kwan could be proposed, it is made abundantly clear here that the decisive reason for their conflict is their difference in political ideology and religious affiliation.

Before his death, Ŭi-kwan contacts Tŏk-ki and summons him back to Korea after he has been studying in Japan. His return to Korea marks a continuation of the conflict between Tŏk-ki and his father. Tŏk-ki's ideological affiliation appears to lie somewhat in between that of his father and his grandfather. A clue to Tŏk-ki's worldview can be found in the following passage:

> Tŏk-ki disliked his grandfather's temper, his outdated ideas, and the hostility he bore towards his own son, but seeing the extent to which the old man was concerned about his descendants, Tŏk-ki was boundlessly grateful. (311)

It is clear that Tŏk-ki distances himself from the feudalistic ideals of the Chosŏn era, but it is also clear that regardless of his ideological affiliation he has a sense of respect and devotion to

his own grandfather. This respect is mutual, as can be deduced from the fact that Ŭi-kwan leaves Tŏk-ki in charge of the family after his death, further escalating the conflict between Tŏk-ki and Sang-hun.

Sang-hun utilizes his father's death to completely distance himself from his family. He moves his possessions out of his house to live with his new mistress Ŭi-kyŏn, and his late father's mistress, who does not have a name in the novel but who is referred to as 'the Suwon woman.' As Tŏk-ki is now the head of the family and is in charge of the family's assets, Sang-hun sends Tŏk-ki his bills for the furniture of his new house, expecting them to be paid for. Tŏk-ki visits his father leading to the following exchange:

> "If you can't pay, just leave the bills here." Sang-hun wasn't in any mood to fight over bills in the presence of the gaggle of young ladies.
>
> "It's not that I don't mean to pay them, but…" Tŏk-ki's heart was pounding with rage so it was almost impossible to go on. "Isn't all this a bit extravagant, considering our situation? Wouldn't it have been enough if you had simply brought the furniture from the other house?" (391)

Sang-hun speaks about these bills in a manner that is almost indifferent. Sang-hun prioritizes being pleasant towards his female company over his responsibilities to the family. This behavior appears to stem from a dissatisfaction with the reversal of hierarchical roles between him and his son, now that Tŏk-ki has inherited the family assets. Although he legally has no ownership of these assets, he describes spending the family money to pay for his furniture as claiming what is his, whether Tŏk-ki agrees to it or not (Yŏm, *Three Generations* 392).

There is a similarity between Sang-hun's reckless spending on his new furniture and the earlier mentioned usage of money by Ŭi-kwan to forge the family registry. However, although Sang-hun's conflict with his father over what he considers to be a waste of money

leads to only more conflict, as has been discussed earlier, Tŏk-ki takes a different approach and is able to empathize with his father's situation:

> Tŏk-ki's heart went out to him, though, understanding that a person who loses his faith often will lead a chaotic life after his ambitions and hopes are dashed. On the other hand, without faith, his father was free to be himself and break loose from the constraints that had been imposed on him. But how could he have fallen so far, so late in life? Instead of feeling antagonism toward his father, Tŏk-ki merely felt sad.
>
> When he returned home, Tŏk-ki wrote a dozen checks and gave them to Secretary Chi with the bills from the stores. (392)

Tŏk-ki is able to put aside his rage after he realizes that his father is in a difficult situation. Through the act of paying for his father's bills, which was the very reason for this specific conflict in the first place, he gives into his father's demands and reconciles with him for the time being, although this is hardly a solution to the overarching tension between them. Key in this situation is Sang-hun's lack of repentance. Since there is no confession of wrongdoing, this situation can be considered an example of what I have defined as *sŏ*, as Tŏk-ki is able to internally put aside his rage towards his father by drawing from his own empathy and understanding of his father's situation of hardship.

Once again a comparison can be made with the Parable of the Prodigal Son. When the parable was mentioned earlier, it was used to describe Ŭi-kwan explaining his spendings towards his son. This lies parallel to what is happening in this scene, as Sang-hun is claiming that it is his right to spend the family's money. Tŏk-ki's willingness to pay for his father's bills and to look past his insults, could be considered an act of unconditional love that he feels for his father, similar to the love the father felt towards the Prodigal Son in the parable. Once more, there is a reversal of hierarchical roles between father and son. Through Tŏk-ki's par-

don of his father's actions, he assumes a position of superiority, effectively looking down on his father and establishing a hierarchical structure where Tŏk-ki stands above his father. Another possibility is that Tŏk-ki feels a sense of responsibility towards his father, following the Confucian value of filial piety.

As Ŭi-kwan has passed away and Sang-hun appears to be "sick or going senile," as he is described by Tŏk-ki (Yŏm, *Three Generations* 392), the conflict between Kyŏng-ae and Sang-hun remains. This conflict runs parallel to Tŏk-ki's relationship to a young woman named P'il-sun, who, like Kyŏng-ae, is of a lower social class in comparison to the Cho family. She is introduced to Tŏk-ki by his friend Pyŏng-hwa, and throughout the novel Tŏk-ki's affection for her grows to the point where he even offers to pay for her education (Yŏm, *Three Generations* 162). Since Tŏk-ki is also married, the similarity between the relationship of P'il-sun and Tŏk-ki and the relationship between Kyŏng-ae and Sang-hun does not go unnoticed.

Kyŏng-ae, for example, warns P'il-sun about Tŏk-ki and tells her that although he is a good man, she has been in the exact position that P'il-sun is in (Yŏm, *Three Generations* 407). Tŏk-ki's mother also points out how similar his situation is to Sang-hun's affair with Kyŏng-ae:

> "You should have more dignity. Or are you repeating your father's history? Why do you invite a grocer's daughter into the main room and chat away like that? You should bear in mind your status – you're the head of the family now!" (419)

The responsibility that Tŏk-ki carries as head of the family not only means a responsibility for the family assets, but also, as Tŏk-ki himself puts it: "he was at the center of things and was held accountable for his family's every move" (Yŏm, *Three Generations* 422).

Although Tŏk-ki is unable to change Kyŏng-ae's situation, he clearly also sees a connection between his own responsibility to P'il-sun and his father's responsibility towards

Kyŏng-ae. In the final chapter Tŏk-ki decides that he must fulfill his responsibility towards P'il-sun and her family and thus breaks the cycle within his family of men who neglect their responsibilities towards the women they are involved with; such as Ŭi-kwan did to the 'Suwon woman' in leaving her barely any money after his death to sustain herself, and Sang-hun did to Kyŏng-ae. Although there is a connection between each of the generations, Tŏk-ki also has a final realization at the end of the novel that frees him from this cycle:

> My father's involvement with Kyŏng-ae may have started the same way. If my father hadn't been wealthy, her father would have asked other comrades for favors. My father and I find ourselves in similar situations because we both happen to come from a rich family, that's all. My father did things his own way, and I'll do things my way, according to my character, ideology, and feelings. (471–72)

This comparison that Tŏk-ki makes between his relationship with P'il-sun and his father's relationship with Kyŏng-ae shows first of all that Tŏk-ki has ceased to see his father fully responsible for his situation with Kyŏng-ae, considering that he claims that if his father had not been in the picture, the same would have happened to Kyŏng-ae regardless, with another man from the upper class. He claims that the reason for their affair was simply the fact that Sang-hun was rich. At the same time he distances himself from his father's actions as well as his ideology. He resolves that he must do better than his father did. The final sentence of the novel is a reflection by Tŏk-ki on his own responsibility towards P'il-sun:

> *Someone who was poor, whose lot in life was hard labor, shouldn't he at least receive an appropriate compensation for his pains?* With this notion taking root in his head, it became clear to Tŏk-ki that looking after P'il-sun and her mother was his obligation, his duty. (472)

Tŏk-ki takes his view of the conflict outside of the personal sphere into the political, as he realizes that his obligation to provide for P'il-sun's family does not only have to do with the fact that he has inserted himself into her life and therefore has a responsibility to take care of her, but it also has to do with a general responsibility of the economic upper class to provide for the lower class.

With this final expression Tŏk-ki symbolically distances himself from the cycle of conflict between the three generations of men within the Cho family and the three women with whom they were involved. However, this revelation is hardly revolutionary, considering that the responsibility that Tŏk-ki feels in providing for P'il-sun and her family, highlights a hierarchical relation in which the upper classes of society must play the role of the benefactor in providing for the lower classes. Tŏk-ki is thus unable to break free from the class structure rooted in the feudalistic society of the Chosŏn era. His discomfort with this is expressed in the following excerpt:

> He wanted to believe that he was now visiting P'il-sun and her mother to pay his condolences as Tŏk-ki, not as a benefactor. (472)

The conflict in his revelation is displayed here through irony. Although he claims that he does not want to be a benefactor to P'il-sun and her family, this is exactly the relationship that he is establishing with them.

A parallel is also noticeable with the relationship between Tŏk-ki and his friend Pyŏng-hwa. In the very beginning of the novel, Tŏk-ki says the following to Pyŏng-hwa:

> "Seems you're only happy when you're bumming something off me, aren't you? Even if it's just a cigarette. How about we trade places in the exploiter-exploited class relationship?" (4)

The juxtaposition of this excerpt from the very beginning of the novel and the earlier quote from its conclusion, shows that in fact very little has changed in the way that Tŏk-ki interacts with the lower class. Regardless, the end of this novel is framed to be a reconciliation, albeit exclusively internal to Tŏk-ki.

What is constructed here is a narrative in which the insoluble conflict of social class and gender is replaced with the resolution of a more contained issue, allowing Tŏk-ki to free himself from the weight of responsibility for the actions of his father and grandfather. However, this internal reconciliation moment, crucial for Tŏk-ki, sidelines the perspectives of P'il-sun and Kyŏng-ae. I argue that this exclusion is crucial for this semblance of reconciliation to take place. Given Tŏk-ki's lack of tangible actions to improve Kyŏng-ae's situation, a direct confrontation with this unresolved conflict will not lead to reconciliation. Instead of a comprehensive resolution of the novel's conflicts, Tŏk-ki exclusively addresses his own feelings of guilt, resulting in a "reconciliation" narrated exclusively from a male perspective.

Chapter 4: The New Woman and Marital Conflict in Kim Wŏnju's *Chagak (Awakening)*

The previously discussed novels by Yi Kwangsu and Yŏm Sang-sŏp reflect on what modernity on the Korean peninsula meant for the previously dominant view on gender norms. However, in each of the two works, conflicts resulting from the clash of traditional and modern values are presented from a male perspective. The "resolutions" of the gendered conflicts in these novels do not encompass any physical manifestation of change in Yŏng-ch'ae nor Kyŏng-ae's situations, and are instead largely internal to the male protagonists. This leaves the reader to wonder whether these internal feelings are reciprocated by the female characters with whom the conflicts take place. Acknowledging the male-dominated view of reconciliation which has been discussed up until now, it is essential to contrast this view through an analysis of a work narrated from a female perspective.

Kim Wŏnju, also known by her penname Iryŏp, whom I have briefly mentioned in chapter 1 while discussing the New Women movement, was the founder and editor of the literary magazine *Sin Yŏja*, whose first issue was published in March of 1920 following the March 1st Movement (Y. H. Kim 6). The magazine was used to publish political essays, criticizing traditional gender norms, as well as literary works such as short stories and poems written by women. It was her political involvement, for example through her essay titled 'My View of Sexual Purity,' published in 1927 in the *Chosŏn Ilbo* (Y. H. Kim 21), that caused her to be remembered as a torchbearer of Korean feminism.

The short story *Chagak*, or *Awakening*, was serialized in June 1926 in the Chosŏn Ilbo, and marks her 'last fictional piece with a feminist agenda,' as described by Yung-Hee Kim (10), before Kim Wŏn-ju devoted herself to Buddhism as a nun. The story is written in an epistolary form, from the perspective of a woman named Im Sunsil, who writes to her nameless female friend. The story is split into seven distinct parts. However, the story may also be divided into two sections: one taking place after the protagonist's husband leaves Korea to

study in Japan, describing her anguish in being separated from her husband; and one taking place after her husband sends her a letter to notify her that he will divorce her, after she had already heard rumors about her husband's infidelity during his time in Japan. After receiving this letter, Sunsil reflects on the unhappiness that she experienced living with her in-laws when she was still married to her husband. Although she is initially distraught by the thought of the divorce, it is through this divorce that she is liberated from society's expectations of her as a woman, and she is able to have a sense of agency over her own life. Although her husband later writes to her to beg for her forgiveness, she rejects him.

Although the husband's infidelity and the divorce could be considered the central conflicts in the story, as they are arguably the most tangible, I argue that the real conflict presented is between Sunsil and herself. I will discuss how the way in which Sunsil describes her marriage in two different ways – she describes her husband as the one light of her life in the first section of the story, and as the root of all her unhappiness in the second part – is proof that the divorce has allowed her to forgive herself for the unhappiness she has experienced throughout her marriage, and to free herself from society's expectations of what it means to be a woman. Additionally I shall argue that Sunsil's rejection of her husband's apology is required for her to maintain this state of independence.

Before analyzing the story itself, I shall briefly discuss the relevance of the title in understanding how this story should be read. The Korean title of the story is *Chagak*[22], which can be translated into English using the word 'awakening'. The Korean word is comprised of the Chinese characters 自 and 覺, which respectively carry the meaning of 'oneself' and 'to wake up'. The state before the awakening takes place must therefore be read as a state of being asleep, which in this story is the period where Sunsil thinks that her happiness is fully

[22] 자각

dependent on her husband. The text must thus be read as a political statement, considering that it connects a moral judgement to the behavior of the protagonist.

From the very beginning of the story, prior to the husband's departure for Japan, the reader is already able to notice a sense of irony in Sunsil's description of her husband. She describes her husband as if he is as sad as Sunsil about his departure, and his separation from her:

> The night before his departure, he came home around two o'clock in the morning, back from the farewell party and other parties thrown by his friends. His face was flushed, as if drunk from the wine he usually never touched. He came into the room with an embarrassed smile on his face and said, "Why are you still up? It is quite late . . . ." Taking off only his hat and overcoat, he slipped into the bedding I had already spread out for him.
>
> Looking up at my reddened eyes as he lay in bed, he too became sad. "Now, please take off your clothes and come lie down right here . . . ," he said. Then, lying on his back, he stretched out his hands and untied the strings of my blouse. (22)[23]

Considering that the vast majority of the story is focalized through Sunsil, due to its epistolary form, the claim that her husband 'too became sad' is an assumption made by Sunsil, as she projects her own emotions onto her husband. The reality of the situation appears to differ from her perspective, considering that her husband not only chooses to spend his last night in Korea separate from his wife, but is furthermore surprised when he finds his wife waiting for him prior to his departure. When he does find his wife still awake, the first thing he decides to say to her is to remove her clothing, which hints at a relationship of which the foundation lies in physical attraction.

[23] Quoted from the translation of the story by Yung-Hee Kim, in the article "From Subservience to Autonomy: Kim Wŏnju's Awakening".

The gap between the reality of their relationship and the image that Sunsil has formed of it also becomes clear from her description of the night that ensues:

> That night, it was the warmth of his deep affection, not the sorrows of parting, that drew uncontrollable tears from my eyes. Still, we ended up staying awake all night talking about the sorrows of parting, whispering our love, and voicing our hopes. (23)

Although Sunsil claims that her tears were not caused by the 'sorrows of his parting,' this claim is directly followed by her saying that the couple spent their entire night talking exactly about these sorrows that she claims are not the ones leading to her intense emotion. This gives us a hint to distrust Sunsil's description of her relationship with her husband, even before the time jump.

After he leaves the next day, Sunsil goes to the back of the house to secretly watch her husband depart, and what she sees I consider to be symbolic foreshadowing of what is about to happen to their relationship:

> Our family dog, so fond of him, trailed behind. But whatever so occupied my husband as he talked with his friend kept him from noticing the dog following him as he walked on without even looking back. Not heeding my sister-in-law's repeated summons, the dog would just glance back, then keep following. Finally, my husband chased it away, hurling a stone at it. I felt so sorry for the dog, as it came tottering back driven away by its master, that I almost wanted to hug it and cry to my heart's content. (23-24)

Sunsil's husband's hurling of the stone at the family dog is an act of rejecting the loyalty that it has towards him, similar to how he ends up rejecting the loyalty of his wife Sunsil, who sits at home eagerly awaiting his return even when she hears rumors of his infidelity. Significant

is also the indifferent manner in which he scares the dog away, similar to indifferent manner which shall characterize the announcement of his divorce to Sunsil.

Meanwhile, in her husband's absence, Sunsil writes about the friction that she has with her in-laws. This conflict with them shows that although Sunsil is making an attempt to fit herself into the image of the ideal Confucian woman, she has been suffering throughout her marriage even prior to the divorce. The historical context of the transforming family structure, in which the nuclear family was slowly but surely gaining popularity, as discussed in Chapter 1 must be kept in mind in reading this. Scolding Sunsil for portraying her sadness about being separated from her husband, her mother-in-law says the following:

> "Young people these days think that a husband and wife have to be sitting together all the time. When we were young, we served our in-laws nicely and lived happily with them, even if our husbands were posted to the countryside or lived apart for decades with their concubines." I always took this outburst as another of her rituals. (25)

Not only her mother-in-law's words, but also Sunsil's reflection on them are telling of the difference in their world-view. Sunsil's mother-in-law's mention of concubinage not only shows a fundamental difference in opinion on what it means for a husband to be faithful to one's wife, but furthermore dismantles the grounds of the conflict between Sunsil and her husband in the eyes of the mother-in-law. As they think of concubinage as a practice within the boundaries of moral behavior, Sunsil has no ground to stand on in reproaching her husband in their eyes.

In the early sections of the story Sunsil's husband still writes to her. In these letters, he expresses empathy with her for having to endure life with his parents and siblings:

> Should I say I'm sorry, or should I say thank you? The only thing I can say is that it's for your sake that I am always studying and ceaselessly cultivating myself. (25)

The contemplation of whether he should apologize or thank Sunsil for putting up with her in-laws shows that he himself is also reflecting on whether him leaving his wife to fend for herself is morally justified, and thus also taking traditional ideas of family structure into question. At the same time, he claims that his leaving for Japan is purely in his wife's interest, which is later confirmed by him as a lie.

At the start of the fifth letter of the story, directly following the time jump, Sunsil describes her distress as follows: 'I felt heavy and distressed, feeling all the more acutely the pain I had so long endured at the hands of my in-laws.' Prior to the time jump, Sunsil describes her pain as a result of the crumbling of her marriage. However, after the time jump, the pain that she is referencing is not the pain that she feels due to her abandonment by her husband, but rather the pain that she feels at the hands of her in-laws. This shows the reader that the underlying distress which she has been feeling throughout her marriage has to do with the constricting way of life she has been forced to live by, enforced by her in-laws.

Sunsil hears of the divorce through a letter from her husband, from whom she has heard little to nothing for several months. She describes the letter as follows:

> The letter said roughly the following: that the divorce was instigated entirely by his parents, that he was not responsible for it; that he had stayed married to me up to this point because of his conformity to social conventions and his pity for me; that he felt sorry but that I should look to my own future without clinging to him.
>
> Soon I heard rumors that he was having an affair with an older spinster, a student in Japan. He had reportedly sweet-talked her, saying that I was a wife in name only; that he had anguished over his inability to love me from the beginning; that only after he met her did he come to know what love really meant. She was also rumored to think

> that I was an ignorant, stupid, and insensible woman because I hadn't received a modern education. (27)

The letter that she receives from her husband and the rumors she hears after receiving the letter are in direct contrast with one another. Although he appeared in his earlier letter to draw traditional gender norms into question, it becomes clear from this excerpt that he is in fact hiding behind those values; he uses his parents to justify the divorce and to avoid taking accountability for his own actions. Another important element of this excerpt is the mention of modern education, which here appears to be the primary reason as to why this woman is superior to Sunsil in her husband's eyes. Later it is also shown that modern education is Sunsil's escape from the expectations put on her by Neo-Confucian gender norms.

Sunsil is immediately overwhelmed by resentment after receiving her husband's letter, and returns his letter with the following text:

> I have continually lamented my unhappiness at this unusual suffering, which stemmed from my miserable married life with a man who does not at all fit my ideal image of a husband. This was all because I am a woman, incapable of controlling her personal circumstances. I will send the child to you after I give birth, whether it be a boy or a girl. The child would simply become a great obstacle to my ability to pursue my future plans. But please remind the child that there is another person who wishes it happiness more than anyone else in this world. Good-bye. Yours, Im Sunsil, June 18th. (28)

Through this letter she not only breaks free from her obligation to serve her husband and her in-laws, but furthermore separates herself from the responsibility of taking care of her child, thus severing not only her ties with Neo-Confucian gender norms, but also those which modern family values were attempting to impose on Korean women, such as the ideal of the 'wise mother, good wife.' From here on Sunsil is able to start pursuing her own path.

Sunsil's in-laws are upset with her leaving them as she describes them to 'value keeping appearances more than moral principles or compassion.' However, after leaving their house she also finds conflict with her own father, who attempts to lecture her by telling her that 'a woman who leaves the husband of her youth is a ruined woman'. However, his words mean nothing to her, as she has already made up her mind to move on, in pursuit of a modern education. Therefore she breaks not only from the authority of her husband and his family, but also from the patriarchal authority of her own father.

Later on in the story Sunsil writes that her husband changed his mind, and that he has made several attempts to reconcile with her:

> After I left him, he sent me a few letters of apology, asking me to come back. Last fall, he began sending messengers, then came several times in person to beg me for reconciliation. Each time I treated him nicely while graciously turning down his proposal. But he kept on sending me letters with the same message. I stopped responding because I simply didn't feel like doing so. (29)

There is little to be said about the role the husband really played in attempting to reconcile with Sunsil, which I argue to be precisely the point of the story. The decision of whether to reconcile with her husband is entirely left up to Sunsil, granting her the agency over her life that was absent to her throughout her marriage. She refuses his apologies and definitively breaks off any future contact with him through a final letter:

> You have no reason to see me as a contemptible wife, abjectly submissive to her heartless husband, who abuses and beats her, saying that she should die and become the ghost of his household. You are silly to expect my return, knowing well that I would rather die ten times over than lead a humiliating life. (29)

This final refusal of his attempt at reconciliation clarifies to the reader that if she were to accept his apology, it would mean maintaining the oppressive marital relation which caused her suffering in the first place. Therefore the issue of interpersonal reconciliation between Sunsil and her husband is inseparably connected to the political conflict between traditional and modern gender roles. Reconciliation between the two is impossible as long as there is a larger social conflict at hand; namely that a marital relationship in Korean society at the time was undeniably oppressive. I draw a similarity with *Three Generations*, where interpersonal reconciliation is similarly rendered impossible through unresolved political conflict.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, I argue the real conflict of this story to be the conflict between Sunsil and herself. The way out of this conflict seems for Sunsil to be first of all to pursue a modern education, a process which she start immediately after separating from her husband. However, the final sentences of this story are especially telling of the way in which Sunsil sees a future after liberation from her oppressive marriage:

> Now that I have escaped from a life of inhuman slavery, I have to lead a meaningful life as a worthy human being. And I am going to look for a person who takes me as a human being. (30)

This final excerpt not only reveals a glimmer of hope for the future but also showcases a resolution. The decision to henceforth live life ‘as a worthy human being’ demonstrates an ongoing journey towards internal reconciliation between her awakened self and the self that allowed her to be oppressed by her husband and in-laws. Immediately following this statement, she outlines a goal for her future: to find someone who will accept her as a human being. The juxtaposition of these sentences makes it clear that she envisions a life as a worthy human being as one accompanied by someone else. However, as discussed earlier, marital relationships within Korean society at the time were unavoidably oppressive in her eyes. Therefore, her resolution to live life as a worthy human being is also a commitment to finding a way to

sustain a relationship with another human that is free from oppressive hierarchical notions of marriage to which she was subjected.

The primary manner in which this text discerns itself from the previously discussed novels, is that rather than creating a new narrative in order to escape from the conflict at hand, Sunsil confronts the conflict directly. This case study underscores that, within the context of the political and cultural turmoil of the Korean Colonial Period, characters face a binary choice: either construct a new narrative that conceals the true essence of the conflict, somewhat akin to an ‘act of oblivion,’ or confront the conflict directly, jeopardizing the potential for reconciliation.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to research interpersonal reconciliation between characters in Korean works of literature written within the time period of the Japanese colonial occupation of the Korean peninsula. However, throughout the three case studies of this thesis it has become clear that it is impossible to separate narratives of interpersonal reconciliation from the socio-political conflicts that form the background of these narratives. In this thesis I have highlighted the emergence and development of the New Women's movement; the mass conversion to Protestant Christianity and increased presence of Western Missionaries; and the consequent transformation of domestic family structures as key developments in understanding the narratives of conflict resolution in colonial Korean literature. Each of the case studies of this thesis has shed a light on one or more of these developments and how they come into play in shaping the reconciliation of their different characters.

In my analysis of *The Heartless* by Yi Kwang-su, I discussed how ideological transformation in Korea happened unevenly, causing different characters in the story to approach reconciliation from an entirely different ideological viewpoint, with Hyŏng-sik taking a Christian approach as opposed to Yŏng-ch'ae, whose approach is more easily identified with Neo-Confucian thought. I discussed how this leads to an impasse in the reconciliation narrative, leaving the conflict to be resolved in an impersonal manner, through a flood which washes away their conflict. The flood, acting as a coercive external force, compels these characters to collaborate, providing them with an opportunity to forge a new narrative around their conflict. In this narrative, they can set aside the underlying issues and resolve their problems through a deliberate pretense of oblivion, effectively obscuring the true cause of their conflict.

In *Three Generations* by Yŏm Sang-sŏp, several interpersonal conflicts are presented to the reader, which appear unresolvable, similarly to the political conflicts that form the background of the novel, rooted in rapidly changing dynamics of gender and social class, as

well as the gradual erosion of patriarchal authority within the family. Through an intergenerationally continuous conflict between the upper-middle class men of the Cho family and the female characters with whom these men enter into a relationship, the responsibility to change this cycle of conflict falls to the youngest generation Tŏk-ki, who fails to break free entirely from his grandfather's feudalistic values, and attempts to resolve all past conflict by entering into a benefactor relationship with P'il-sun. Despite minimal tangible change, the conclusion of the novel is framed as a reconciliation of the intergenerational conflict. Tŏk-ki constructs a narrative that reframes the conflict, shifting its focus from the men in his family disrespecting lower-class female characters to a broader sense of responsibility that the upper class holds over the lower social class. It is through this reimagined narrative that Tŏk-ki finds the capacity to move forward from the conflict.

In *Awakening* by Kim Wŏn-ju, the conflict between husband and wife is similarly unresolvable due to the inherently oppressive nature of marriage in Korean society at the time. For Sunsil, to reconcile with her husband would be to maintain these oppressive gender norms, which she rules out as an option. In her case as well, socio-political conflict bleeds directly into the interpersonal dynamics, rendering a reconciliation between these characters impossible. Contrastingly, rather than to avoid the conflict through the creation of a new narrative, Sunsil confronts the conflict directly, thus ending all possibility to reconcile with her ex-husband.

Each of the presented case studies highlights the interconnectedness of interpersonal reconciliation narratives and the socio-political context in which they take place, in this case the turbulent Colonial Period of Korea. Characters facing political and cultural conflicts are presented with a binary choice: either sidestep the conflict by reimagining it and moving forward through a pretense of oblivion, or confront the conflict, risking the potential for reconciliation. Moreover, these cases underscore that the decision to reconcile may often involve rein-

stating a previously dominant ideological viewpoint, while choosing not to reconcile can be a means of breaking free from the constraining nature of such perspectives. In essence, these characters grapple not only with their personal relationships but also with the prevailing ideologies of their time, highlighting the intricate interconnectedness between the personal and the political in pondering the topic of reconciliation.

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