

The Literary Territorialization of Manchuria:  
Rethinking National and Transnational Literature in East Asia  
from the Frontier

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Miya Qiong Xie

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The Literary Territorialization of Manchuria: Rethinking National and Transnational Literature  
in East Asia from the Frontier

**Abstract**

This dissertation studies modern Chinese, Korean, and Japanese literature written in and about Manchuria from the 1920s through the 1970s. Manchuria, now the northeastern part of China, was once an open frontier. In the first half of the twentieth century, it became a site of contestation and conflict among multiple countries. Along with the political and military rivalries that unfolded there, I argue that literature played an important role in the frontier contestation. At a time when legal territoriality defined by state sovereignty experienced frequent and radical turnovers, literary writers sought to engage with the process of a cultural territory-making through literature. In their writing in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, the writers developed various thematic and stylistic strategies that suited their circumstances and personal preferences. These strategies allowed them to claim the frontier space for the particular group of people with whom they identified. I call the writers' literary engagement "literary territorialization," a process in which frontier writers aimed to territorialize the frontier in ways that were more fluid and flexible but also more fragile than the establishment of legal territory. Through an investigation of a multilingual body of Manchurian literature, my work explores how frontier literature demarcates the nation in a web of translational connectivity.

In the four chapters of my dissertation I discuss frontier writers who have had varying relationships to Manchuria. They include Manchuria-born Chinese writers who were exiled to China Proper after the Japanese takeover in 1932 and sought to reclaim the land through literature;

a Manchuria-born Chinese writer who stayed during the Japanese Manchukuo regime (1932-1945) and engaged in transnational linguistic experiments as his form of literary territorialization; diasporic Korean writers in Manchuria who were constantly anxious about the issue of translation; and postwar Japanese repatriation literature by women survivors that deals with their traumatic withdrawal from Manchuria. In individual works, writers may choose to exclude or include characters, languages, and other cultural elements belonging to different groups. Ultimately, however, their textual choices are all different ways to embody their territorial consciousness regarding the frontier in literature. In a time when the frontier was still open to multinational rivalries, literary territorialization functioned to prepare or justify political and military competition for legal territorial rights, or else to compensate for their loss in Manchuria and elsewhere. And when the frontier was closed, former frontier writers used literature to represent and work through the traumatic experience caused by the process of deterritorialization.

Methodologically, my work designates a common space as the ground for comparing literatures of different languages within the same region of East Asia. It also contributes to existing studies of East Asian national and transnational literature. In this dissertation, I offer fresh interpretations of classic texts of the national literatures of three East Asian countries from a transnational perspective. I also engage with current trends in transnational literary studies in East Asia, including Sinophone literature, Japanese colonial literature, and Korean diaspora literature. Ultimately, I argue that frontier literature serves as a bridge between national and transnational literature, because the essence of frontier literature is to claim a national space in a transnational geographic setting and with a strong transnational awareness. In addition, the smaller theoretical issues discussed throughout the dissertation include the spatial imaginary in literature, translation, and linguistic hybridity, among others.

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For Ao Wang, Congfeng Xie, and Lijun Jiao.

## **Introduction**

This dissertation studies modern Chinese, Korean, and Japanese literature written in and about Manchuria from the 1920s to the 1970s. Manchuria, now the northeast part of China, was once an open frontier. In the first half of the twentieth century, it became a site of contestation and conflict between multiple countries. Along with the political and military rivalries that unfolded there, I argue that literature played an important role in the frontier contestation. At a time when legal territoriality defined by state sovereignty experienced frequent and radical turnovers, literary writers sought to engage with the process of a cultural territory-making through literature. In their writing in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, each of the writers developed various thematic and stylistic strategies that suited his/her circumstances and personal preferences. These strategies allowed them to claim the frontier space for the particular group of people with whom they identified. I call the writers' literary engagement "literary territorialization," a process in which frontier writers aimed to territorialize the frontier in ways that were more fluid, flexible, but also more fragile than the establishment of legal territory. Through an investigation of a multilingual body of Manchurian literature, my work explores how frontier literature demarcates the nation in a web of translational connectivity. It also considers how this process provides us with new ways to reconsider national and transnational literature in East Asia.

The topic first drew my attention when I noticed some curious coincidences in literary works from across East Asia. Many works I have enjoyed are by authors with some connection to Manchuria. These writers include Xiao Hong (蕭紅 1911–1942), one of the best women writers in modern China; Abe Kōbō (安部公房 1924–1993), the pioneer of modernist literature in

postwar Japan; and Yǒm Sang-sōp (염상섭 1897–1963), the master of modern literature in Korea.

These writers were either born in Manchuria or spent an extended time there. To be sure, Manchuria is generally known to the world for its abundant agricultural products, such as soy beans, and resource industries, such as dams and mines, rather than for its literature. Readers sometimes know that a couple of well-known writers in their own national literatures have experience with Manchuria, but they rarely relate this phenomenon to literatures from other nations or view Manchuria as a hub of modern East Asian literature. My discovery of Manchuria as a common point of engagement for a group of multilingual East Asian writers suggested two things. First, Manchuria used to host a variegated landscape of multilingual examples of literature, but many have been forgotten or have been considered only within the framework of national literary histories in East Asia during the postwar years. Second, because I have been personally drawn to works by writers with a Manchurian background, these works must share something that strikes a chord with me. Thus, hoping to discover what the frontier had offered to diverse East Asian writers, I decided to do serious research on these works.

At first I treated frontier literature from Manchuria simply as a site of literary diversity. Works written in a variety of languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Mongolian, and so on, were all actively produced and circulated in the region. The body of literature produced in each language also presents an impressive richness. For example, among the Chinese writers, some belong to the Han people, who constitute the dominant population in Manchuria as well as in the entirety of China; some belong to the Manchu people, who originated in Manchuria but ruled China for centuries until the early twentieth century; and some are from other ethnic groups. Among frontier Han writers, some portray Manchuria as an exclusively Chinese world with little trace of foreigners; others represent the land as home to people from many nations. Therefore, my

initial objective was to delineate the multifarious aspects of this literary world. If there were any order or paradigm that I hoped to identify, it would be a fluid process of identity-making enabled by the nebulous, underdefined frontier space. By highlighting the opportunities and dilemmas that these writers confronted, I aimed to establish the frontier as a site where new literary possibilities at odds with mainstream national literatures can survive and sometimes thrive.

While this generalized observation still forms the basis of my understanding of Manchurian literature, a more crystallized pattern surfaced as I read frontier works in different languages side by side. Most writers wrote only for readers in their own languages; nevertheless, in their writing, they seem constantly involved in conversations with people outside the group. The tone of these conversations can be offensive or defensive, or sometimes negotiable, but the key message always involves a short but clear declaration that “Manchuria is our land.” In other words, regardless of each frontier writer’s circumstances, they all seem driven by the shared imperative to claim the frontier for their fellow countrymen against claims by other peoples living on the same piece of land. In specific works, writers may choose to exclude or include characters, languages, and other culture elements belonging to different groups. Ultimately, though, their textual choices are all different ways to territorialize the frontier through literature. This discovery helped me to narrow my focus to two questions. First, what is the relationship between this literary territorialization and the military or political multinational contestation over the frontier with which East Asian scholars are more familiar? Second, how could literature in different languages recreate the same land into territorial embodiments of different and conflicting collective identities?

The observation of literature’s participation in history in the frontier space invites reflection on the notions of national and transnational literature in modern East Asia in general. As literary studies have expanded their scope from the national realm to the transnational, topics such as

Sinophone literature, Japanese imperial literature, and diaspora Korean literature have been widely discussed and debated in both the East Asian and Western academic worlds.<sup>1</sup> One of the key problematics in all these discussions is the relationship between the categories of transnational literature and national literatures, which in East Asia are largely demarcated according to the postwar order of nation-states. What frontier literature can offer, then, is a “contact zone,” or a passage, between national and transnational literature. On the one hand, in open and contested multinational frontiers, issues concerning transnationality, such as hybridity or border-crossing, are often amplified. On the other hand, the same heated territorial contestation gives writers the desire and momentum to territorialize the space for their own peoples through literature. This dynamic between multinationality and nationality makes frontier literature relevant both to various forms of East Asian literature that are associated with geographic spaces beyond the nation and to archetypal forms of national literature.

Consequently, literary contestation on and over the frontier provides an ideal site in which to explore various possibilities by which national and transnational literatures are inherently connected. For example, just as frontier historians would argue that nation and empire are made on the frontier as much as in the center, my analysis of frontier literary works demonstrates that

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Sinophone studies, see Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang, “Introduction: Global Chinese Literature,” Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang ed., *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 1–14. Also see Wang Dewei, “Wenxue dili yu guozu xiangxiang: Taiwan de Lu Xun, nanyang de Zhang Ailing,” *Huayi fengqi: huayu yuxi wenxue sanlun* (Kaohsiung: guoli zhongshan daxue wenxueyuan, 2015), 1–21. For studies of Japanese imperial literature from a transnational point of view, see, for example, Faye Yuan Kleeman, *Under an Imperial Sun: Japanese Colonial Literature of Taiwan and the South* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), for the Taiwanese case; and Nayoung Aimee Kwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), for the Korean case. In her article “Translating, Intertextualizing, and the ‘Border’ of Japanese Literature,” Karen Thonber provides an overview of scholarly discussions and debates regarding the study of transnational Japanese literature in recent years. See *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 9 (2008): 76–92. Studies of diaspora Korean literature within the scope of East Asia largely include those on Japanese Korean writers and on Chinese Korean writers. For a representative study of the former, see John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). For a discussion of the latter, see chapter three of this dissertation.

the same argument applies to literature.<sup>2</sup> On the frontier, we witness how national literature takes its form when frontier writers attempt to nationalize a transnational space through creative writing; we also witness how some of these works are later canonized in national literary histories. Conversely, we may also notice that transnational literature does not always challenge, resist, or deconstruct the inner logic of national literature; rather, it is often enlisted and qualified by the latter. Finally, by juxtaposing multilingual frontier literatures and addressing their common topics of engagement, we can explore the possibilities for establishing literary dialogues within the condition of contestation. All of these observations are not only helpful in integrating national and transnational studies of East Asian literature as academic fields, but also pertinent to broader social challenges that East Asia faces today.

In addition, my research revisits the tension between politics and literature within national literatures and literary histories from a frontier perspective. Works discussed in this dissertation express frontier peoples' hopes for a space to contain their feelings of collective belonging and capture their frustration over failing to maintain such a space. These works also include serious literary experiments on both thematic and stylistic levels, thanks to the diverse literary and cultural traditions that circulated on the multinational frontier. At the same time, however, one may argue that these works are all highly politicized, strategic pieces of literature. It is true that the writers' aesthetic explorations always have a political end. But to what extent did literature fulfill this end? How did the politicization of particular pieces of literature in turn affect the authors' aesthetic

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<sup>2</sup> For historical studies of the Manchurian frontier as an imperial center for the Qing dynasty, see, for example, Mark Elliott, "Frontier Stories: Periphery as Center in Qing History," *Frontiers of History in China* 9, no. 3 (2014): 336–360. For relevant works about the idea of nation states being made on or from the frontiers, see, for example, Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2000); Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire: Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

explorations? These are old questions for literary scholars, but asking them in a frontier context generates new answers. Territorial politics ideologizes literature. At the same time, it stimulates literary expressivity with respect to human engagement with space.

Methodologically, my work of comparative literature designates a specific geographic space as a common ground for comparison. It brings together works written in different languages, at different locations, at different times, and from different perspectives, based on their common engagement with the frontier space. Following the well-established “spatial turn” in the humanities, scholars of comparative literature have articulated a “space of comparison” that specifies a common space as the ground for comparison. Behind the spatial chronotope of comparison is the hope that while the evolutionary scale inherent in the temporal schema of comparison encourages discrimination, a space of comparison will “withdraw the discriminating evolutionary hierarchy from the geography of the globe.”<sup>3</sup> However, as Natalie Melas points out, turning comparative studies from a “method” into a “scope” does not immediately eliminate discrimination; on the contrary, as long as the will to measure and the search for commensurability prevail, the ground for comparison will be nothing but “a ground of equivalence” in which a type or a category is reinforced rather than dispersed or diversified. Melas, therefore, argues that comparative studies based on space must acknowledge a sense of “incommensurability.” She defines this as “that which cannot be measured by comparison,” in order to open the field up to “the possibility of an intelligible relation at the limits of comparison.”<sup>4</sup>

More specifically, in recent years, a number of critics, including Bertrand Westphal and Robert Tally, have introduced the notion of “geocriticism.” This method centers on place rather

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<sup>3</sup> Natalie Melas, *All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 29–31.

than on individual authors or their works. My approach is not entirely the same as theirs, in that my major objective is not to delineate the contours of a place, but rather to enhance our understanding of literary authors and their works by designating a common space for comparison. Nevertheless, some principles for geocritical comparison that Westphal outlines have proven illuminating to my work. A typical geocritical study examines and compares multiple representations of a singular place by a group of writers. Each writer, likely having traveled to the place from elsewhere, naturally represents it from a perspective shaped by his or her own cultural and historical background. Examining a set of works against each other, then, allows the reader to observe time in space and to discern the “asynchronous rhythm” of a given place. Ultimately, a geocritical comparative study arrives at a “multifocalization of views on a given referential space” and uncovers the place “in its mobile heterogeneity.”<sup>5</sup>

These theoretical insights into the comparison of literature in space have helped me formulate my own ground of comparison. I call it “literary territorialization,” by which I mean the process through which ambivalent geographical spaces are transformed by the medium of literature into territories where various collective identities find embodiment. Each of the major players in the frontier competition in Manchuria, including China, Japan, and Korea, has its own long and complicated history as well as an equally long and complicated history of relations with the other two countries. Moreover, in the first half of the twentieth century, all three nations experienced radical transformations. China was transforming from an ancient empire to a modern nation. Japan was experiencing radical metamorphosis from an ancient kingdom to a modern nation, and then to a modern empire. Meanwhile, Korea became Japan’s protectorate and then a Japanese colony very

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<sup>5</sup> Bertrand Westphal, trans. Robert Tally, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 139, 73.

early in the century. So when frontier writers from these countries write, they write within the very different temporalities of their own nations and within a shared frontier temporality at the same time. In this case, conventional binary categories, such as empire/nation and colonizer/colonized, do not always paint a full picture of frontier literature and literary relations. In my research, these categories have illuminated specific circumstances. But as a general analytical framework, they tend to fix the fluid frontier subjects in hierarchies and obscure their other advantages or disadvantages, anxieties, and obsessions. From the perspective of “literary territorialization,” however, the frontier subjects’ collective identities are no longer fixed but are used as resources, capital, and currency and are put into transaction and conversation, all for the purpose of frontier competition. The ground of literary territorialization is where frontier players embed their respective asynchronous historical and cultural traditions in a shared simultaneity. It is also an arena in which they can continually adjust their views of the past according to their present interactions. Therefore, the comparative ground of literary territorialization allows me to delineate the “asynchronous rhythm” of modern East Asian literature. It also gives me a place to reconsider national/transnational literature that presents points of view that are conflicting but also dialogical “multifocalizations” of different perspectives.

In line with this approach, in this dissertation I use the inclusive term “Manchurian literature” to refer to works written in or about Manchuria. Most works were written by authors who were either born in Manchuria or who have lived in or traveled to Manchuria; however, the works were not necessarily produced while they were physically in Manchuria. Occasionally, my discussion also includes authors who deal with Manchuria intensively but have never been there. In other words, the scope of Manchurian literature is not defined solely by the geographical location of the author, nor by the thematic focus of the works; nor is it a regional literature in the conventional

sense. The only common denominator of the works to be discussed in this dissertation is that they all engage with the space of Manchuria with territorial ambition. Consequently, the very notion of “Manchurian literature” goes beyond the national literature framework that divides literature either by the identity of the author or by the language of the work. It is a spatial and methodological ground for the comparison of a body of multinational and multilingual literatures.

## Nationality and Transnationality in Literary Territorialization

According to the historians Leonard Thompson and Howard Lamar’s comparative study of frontiers in America and Africa, a frontier is defined “not as a boundary or a line, but a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies” Thompson and Lamar state that the existence of a frontier depends on three essential elements: “territory; two or more initially distinct peoples; and the process by which the relations among the peoples in the territory begin, develop, and eventually crystallize.”<sup>6</sup> My own emphasis on the notion of frontier incorporates their definition, stressing that the frontier always entails a physical terrain where different peoples

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<sup>6</sup> Leonard Thompson and Howard Lamar, *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 7–8. In a sense, Thompson and Lamar’s definition of frontier is essentially American and is an elaboration of Frederick Jackson Turner’s earlier definition: “The American frontier is sharply distinguished from the European frontier—a fortified boundary line running through dense populations. The most significant thing about the American frontier is, that it lies at the hither edge of free land. In the census reports it is treated as the margin of that settlement which has a density of two or more to the square mile. The term is an elastic one, and for our purposes does not need sharp definition. We shall consider the whole frontier belt, including the Indian country and the outer margin of the ‘settled area’ of the census reports.” See Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893), in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1976), 3. Thompson and Lamar’s definition works well for the Manchurian context as a nebulous zone of contact and contestation, except that the division commonly taken for granted by US frontier historians between the intruding colonial powers and the indigenous native people hardly exists in Manchuria. Manchuria experienced multiple layers of “newcomers” in less than a hundred years. As this dissertation will show, by the beginning of the twentieth century, some peoples in Manchuria could be defined as either indigenous or as newcomers—depending on to whom they were compared. In these situations, the division between the two types of frontier dwellers became fluid and open to various interpretations. Regardless of the interpretation, it was always politically charged.

encounter each other and a temporal process in which the frontier transforms itself from “open” to “closed.”

However, unlike Thompson and Lamar, I do not call the frontier a “territory.” In this dissertation, *territory* refers to a space that is delimited by a set of stable borders that distinguish an inside from an outside. It is primarily a cultural and philosophical notion, a physical terrain that embodies and produces identity. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define territory as the product of a process of making the milieus and rhythms surrounding a subject territorial. When neutral objects or states become the marks, signatures, and expressions of a certain subject, a territory comes into being.<sup>7</sup> A frontier, on the other hand, is where the borders have not yet been fixed and stabilized. The borders might be internal, between different peoples, but also the outside boundaries that circumscribe the frontier space. The boundary of the frontier is eventually determined by the group that wins the frontier contestation and closes the frontier. In this sense, the frontier is the territory-to-be, a nebulous space that does not yet have clearly demarcated borders.

These notions of frontier and territory find various embodiments in the geopolitical space of Manchuria. Manchuria, first of all, is where multiple political powers compete to claim it as a territory of their own in the legal sense. According to international law, a territory refers to a “portion of the surface of the globe” over which a particular political entity holds sovereign rights and interest. More specifically, territory involves a positive and a negative aspect: “The former relates to the exclusivity of the competence of the state regarding its own territory, while the latter refers to the obligation to protect the rights of other states.”<sup>8</sup> In the first half of the twentieth

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<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 314–5.

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Shaw, *International Law*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 487–91.

century, multiple powers entered Manchuria. Whether they entered as an ancient empire, a modern nation-state, or a modern empire, all aimed to transform the land, or at least part of it, into their own legal territory. Even the Koreans claimed sovereignty over their settlement in Manchuria at the turn of the century. In short, a national competition for sovereignty is the defining nature of frontier contestation in modern Manchuria.

At the same time, however, I argue that behind the political and military rivalry over the legal reclamation of the land is the more inclusive process of territory-making in the Deleuzian sense. This is a process in which frontier milieus and rhythms are made into expressions of identity and subjectivity. This process is closely related to the sovereignty claims that frontier subjects strove to make, but it should not be reduced to the latter. In Manchuria, it functions to prepare or justify political and military competition for legal territorial rights, or else to compensate for their loss in Manchuria and elsewhere. To again take the extreme case of the Koreans as an example, it became difficult to justify their sovereignty claim over their settlement in Manchuria after Japan took over the diplomatic rights of Korea in 1905. After Korea was declared a formal colony of Japan in 1910, the claim became impossible. And yet their subordinate condition did not stop the Koreans from relating their frontier settlement to their territorial struggles in other ways. These include making the frontier a base for the Korean independence movement, representing it as a reminder of their territorial loss, and carving out part of it as an alternative cultural territory that allowed them to preserve a Korean identity during the heyday of Japanese assimilation. In short, the territory-making process presents itself in a variety of modes. These modes, by which a group of people find connections to a piece of land and articulate a sense of collective belonging through such connections, go far beyond a simple sovereignty claim.

I call this process *territorialization*. The notion derives from Deleuze and Guattari. My

definition, however, is more refined and concrete than theirs. For Deleuze and Guattari, territorialization means to make something—a human, an animal, a piece of land, an atom—territorial. The territory-making process applies to both human societies and the natural world. It is essentially a philosophical concept pertaining to the impossibility of or resistance against any fixed structure. In my research, territorialization is specifically about people and land. It is a reification of the Deleuzian concept that requires fuller attention to social and historical context. Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari describe territorialization as a series of movements in which the subject is de-territorialized and re-territorialized. The subject is constantly released from one set of territorial relations and then immediately captured by another. In this way, the subject surrenders itself to a seamless dynamism of territorialization and reterritorialization.<sup>9</sup> Following their description, I want to stress that in the case of a contested frontier, different processes of territorialization initiated from different centers not only operate as a relay to capture frontier subjects consecutively, but also sometimes overlap. Overlapping territorialization may happen to any subject, but it is acutely manifested in the frontier setting.<sup>10</sup>

Literature, as the art of language, is constitutive of the process of territorialization. Deleuze and Guattari explicitly ask whether the process of territorialization is an art: “Can this becoming, this emergence, be called Art? That would make the territory a result of art.” The artist is the person who makes territories, for he/she is the first person “to set out a boundary stone, or to make a mark.”<sup>11</sup> Artistic creation and creativity are required to turn the non-specific states of certain

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<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, throughout and 174–221 in particular.

<sup>10</sup> In this sense, subjects of the contested frontier are the very opposite of the nomads in Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization. They consider nomads “the Deterritorialized par excellence,” because “there is no reterritorialization afterward as with the migrant, or upon something else as with the sedentary. With the nomad, on the contrary, it is deterritorialization that constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself.” *A Thousand Plateaus*, 381.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 316.

objects into expressions of territoriality and to give them territorial meanings. Language, however, is both the product and the producer of human territoriality, according to the Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin. Drawing heavily upon linguistics and semiotics, Raffestin argues that “territoriality is shaped by language, a system of signs and codes that proceeds from a linguistic conceptualization of the world.”<sup>12</sup> We can properly understand “language” in Raffestin’s argument as not the social language in its narrow sense but the broad system of signs and codes that includes texts, images, and all other expressive and communicative forms. Nevertheless, this definition of language does not prevent social language from acting as a significant form of embodiment of human territorial consciousness. And when the artist in Deleuze and Guattari’s narrative evokes letters and words to set out the boundary stone or to make the mark, this artist is essentially a literary writer.

In my dissertation, I use the term “literary territorialization” to refer to territory-making through literary writing. I argue that literary territorialization was a significant and integral part of the frontier territorialization in Manchuria that unfolded on both the legal front and other social and cultural fronts. In literature written in and on Manchuria, we witness creative ways of naming and defining the land and of establishing relationships between the people and the land in ways that favor the territorial claims of the group with which the literary writer identifies. More pertinent to literary studies, I also argue that the multinational environment of the Manchurian frontier intensifies literary creativity. The contested nature of the frontier means that when literary writers write to territorialize, the relationship they portray between the people and the land must be different from and exclusive of the relationships articulated by writers from other groups. At the

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<sup>12</sup> Claude Raffestin, “Punti di riferimento per una teoria della territorialità umana,” in *Esistere ed abitare: Prospettive umanistiche nella geografia francofona*, ed. Clara Copeta et. al. (Milano: Franco Angeli, cop. 1986), 75–89. Quoted in Fabio Lando, “Fact and fiction: Geography and literature: A bibliographic survey,” *GeoJournal* 38, no. 1 (January 1996): 6.

same time, the multiple cultures circulating in the frontier space enrich the creative mind of frontier writers, allowing them to shape their voices by borrowing from a large pool of literary traditions.

In modern Manchuria, literary territorialization typically took place in the name of 民族 (Chin. *minzu*/ Jap. *minzoku*/ Kor. *minjok*), a notion that can be loosely translated as *people, nation, race, ethnicity* or *minority* in English. The word exists in the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean languages in the same ideographic form during the period I study, but is pronounced differently: as *minzu* in Chinese, *minzoku* in Japanese, and *minzok* in Korean. When writers imagine Manchuria as belonging to the group of people they identify with in their literary works, this group is almost always referred to as 民族. And yet, the same word does not always mean the same thing. During the period under discussion, the connotation of the word itself was undergoing transformation, as the large-scale political changes in all three countries entailed a constant defining and redefining of the notion of 民族.<sup>13</sup> To complicate matters, in the frontier literature of Manchuria, writers sometimes use the word in an intentionally vague manner to make it relevant to multiple national circumstances. It is therefore impossible to offer an all-purpose definition of the word in this Introduction. Instead, I will explain how I use and translate the word differently in different contexts.

In my dissertation, I use “people” as often as possible to translate 民族, at once to return to its initial meaning; to maintain its inclusiveness, vagueness and fuzziness; and to capture the major

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<sup>13</sup> For an overview of the evolution of the notion of race and ethnicity in modern China from the Late Qing until today, see Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, rev. and ex. edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For a similar conceptual overview that uses the Chinese word *minzu* as a point of departure, see Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 15–6. For the Japanese case, see Michael Weiner, “Discourses of Race, Nation and Empire in pre-1945 Japan,” in *Race, Ethnicity and Migration in Modern Japan*, ed. Michael Weiner (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 217–39. For the Korean case, see Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 4–8.

function of the notion in frontier literature, that is, to differentiate people. Sometimes I translate the word as “race,” for example when it is used to justify a hierarchical order among different peoples based on an assertion of the inherent characteristics of those groups, whether biological or cultural. In the context of the Japanese Manchukuo, where different peoples in Manchuria are considered different constituents of a multi-民族 nation-state with nominal rights to maintain and develop their respective cultures, I translate the different 民族 within Manchukuo as “ethnicity.” What is emphasized in this translation is the sense of political membership the frontier authority issues to its multinational members, a membership that both empowers and circumscribes them.<sup>14</sup> When peoples in Manchuria emphasize that they are part of a larger homogeneous group residing beyond the boundaries of Manchukuo, with the political implication that their collective identification aligns with this group, I translate the larger group as “nation.” For example, when Manchurian Chinese emphasize their belonging to the Chinese people as a whole, I refer to their connection to the Chinese nation. Finally, when I need to highlight the fluid, undefined nature of the word 民族, either because this is the way the author uses the word or because I am committed to grappling with its complicated connotations from a critical perspective, I keep the word in its phonetic form, namely *minzu*, *minzoku*, or *minzok*. The choice of form depends on the language of the work in focus.

The key dynamism of Manchurian frontier literature that I aim to capture in this dissertation is what I characterize as the dialectics between transnational connectivity and national contestation.

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<sup>14</sup> I am aware that my translation is different from the common translations of the word 民族 in the Manchukuo context. For example, the Manchukuo national policy of *gozoku kyōwa* is generally translated as “Five Races under One Union,” “Five Nations under One Union,” or “Racial Harmony.” I nevertheless choose to translate 民族 as the constituents of the Japanese Manchukuo into “ethnicity,” in order to highlight the political and cultural rights and limits that each 民族 in Manchukuo was entitled to. These entitlements were crucial for the frontier writers’ conception of their strategies for literary territorialization. In addition, I hope to reserve the word “race” and “nation” for other meanings, as explained here.

It stresses national competition as the larger framework that structures frontier literature in Manchuria and functions as the guiding principle that multilingual frontier writers engage with in their work, whether consciously or unconsciously. Within this framework, transnational connectivity is established when an author addresses other peoples on the frontier as potential readers in his/her work, or engages with a linguistic hybridity that is characteristic of the frontier space, or seeks to have his/her work translated into other languages, or crosses geographical and social borders in any other form. My analysis will show that very often the frontier writers could only engage with national territorialization by constructing a transnational connectivity. While border-crossing writing is ubiquitous in Manchurian literature, its purpose is almost always to gain leverage in the multinational rivalry over the frontier land.

The tension between national demarcation and border-crossing in the frontier space has been addressed by many frontier scholars. These include the historians Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron and the anthropologists Pablo Vila and Josiah Heyman.<sup>15</sup> The major challenge for scholars

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<sup>15</sup> In their article “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron redefine the concepts of borderland and frontier to address the coexistence of competition among colonial powers and accommodation between the intruding colonizers and the colonized native people in the US frontier in the nineteenth century. Adelman and Aron use *borderland* to refer to the space formed around “the contested boundaries between colonial domains,” while reserving *frontier* for “a meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders were not clearly defined.” The purpose of their conceptual clarification is to “describe the variegated nature of European imperialism and of indigenous reactions to colonial encroachments.” This is their critical response to the tendency to overemphasize the compromise and accommodation between the colonizers and the natives that they observe in recent US frontier studies. This tendency emerged following Richard White’s elucidation of what he terms a “middle ground,” namely a relationship of codependency between Algonquian-speaking Indians and French, British, and Americans, in *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*. This book presents a well-intended reconceptualization of the social structure of the US frontier that corrects earlier scholarship that focuses only on the strained relationship among colonial powers without paying attention to the natives. However, after the notion of middle ground flourished in the field of US frontier history, Adelman and Aron felt the need to rebalance the two dimensions of US frontier history—contestation and accommodation—in order to capture the full picture of social relations in the historical frontier. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814–41; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Along a related but different thread, recent scholars of contemporary US-Mexico border culture are also in search of a more nuanced approach to address some seemingly contradictory social phenomena characteristic of social groups along the US-Mexico border. On the one hand, inasmuch as a border-crossing consciousness and practice are ubiquitous in the daily life of the borderland population, Latino/a scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Renato

is to keep a balanced view of the two ends of the tension line. Doing so makes it possible to capture the rhythm of the social landscape of the frontier. It also ensures that national/imperial contestation is not amplified to appear the sole factor deciding the landscape and that international compromise and hybridity are not excessively celebrated. The latter danger is especially alarming. Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, a scholar of US-Mexico border culture, has pointed out that what matters is not whether the border is crossed, but whether the very concept of the border, often indicating hierarchical order, is “deconstructed and mediated.” For him, a border-crossing consciousness or practice may not necessarily lead to a transcendence of the order of the border; rather, it may reinforce the b/order through a repetitive crossing of it.<sup>16</sup> My study resonates with Gutiérrez-Jones view and would like to highlight the pattern in which a national/imperial order is intensified paradoxically through border-crossing writing. This pattern is highlighted in the context of the Manchurian frontier but can be just as common in other forms of transnational literature.

Accordingly, in my research on Manchurian literature, I am cautious not to claim too much critical power for it. If the frontier literature I study bears any critical power in terms of the way people and land are demarcated by nation or empire, then this power is manifested not in every form of the authors’ border-crossing writing, but in the moments when their literary territorialization fails, or falls short. These critical moments can take the form of authorial

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Rosaldo have advocated border-crossing and hybridity as a political act of resisting the imposition of homogeneous cultural values upon borderland subjects by national authorities on both sides of the border. On the other hand, socialist Pablo Vila and the literary critics Kavita Panjabi and Carl Gutiérrez-Jones all take a critical attitude to the celebration of an ahistorical border-crossing consciousness in the abovementioned works. Instead, they call for attention to the specific historical circumstances of each borderland group as well as to the polarization of national/ethnic identities among them. To establish a more fluid and flexible model for understanding the US-Mexico border culture, Josiah Heyman proposes to see it as a process of combined but uneven development across the border rather than a bounded set of traits, thus accommodating both the tension and collaboration between people from two sides of the border. For overviews of these discussions, see Josiah McC. Heyman, “Culture Theory and the US-Mexico Border,” by Josiah McC. Heyman, in *A Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Thomas Wilson (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2012): 48–65; Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, “Desiring B/order,” *Diacritics* 25 (Spring 1995): 99–112.

<sup>16</sup> Gutiérrez-Jones, “Desiring B/order,” 99–103.

reflection or be revealed by my own critical reading. When authors themselves are aware of the impossibility or incompleteness of their territorial claims over the frontier, a frontier subjectivity is coming into being. A frontier subjectivity is what rescues frontier subjects from being merely proxies for ideologies disseminated from the centers and gives them the agency to challenge or even manipulate the center. It often appears transitory or liminal, as frontier subjects are in a constant search for a more stabilized, territorial form of subjectivity, just like an open frontier that awaits closure. And yet, it is this liminality that opens the possibilities of frontier literature and confirms its capacity to be critical.

## The History and Literature of Manchuria

To study Manchurian literature, we must define Manchuria. But the question of what Manchuria is has different answers depending on who is answering and when. Technically, it is an expansive area twice the size of Japan and Korea combined that is located right where the Asian continent meets the Japan Sea. It is a land of abundance that all adjacent peoples coveted and was once an open frontier space that everyone wanted to define on their own terms.

The Manchus called the land *mukden*, *girin ula*, or *sahaliyan ula*. For them, it was the sacred ancestral homeland from which they launched their conquest of China in the seventeenth century. For the Han Chinese, however, the land has been known as *dongsansheng* 東三省, “the three eastern provinces,” or *dongsheng* 東省, “the eastern provinces,” until at least the early twentieth century. From the 1930s on, it was best-known as *dongbei*, or the Northeast. It was a peripheral part of the central kingdom that nonetheless promised wealth and prosperity. The Han Chinese flooded into the region even before the end of the Manchu reign and rose to political dominance

after the Xinhai revolution in 1911. The Japanese ventured into the game towards the end of the nineteenth century. They started to call the land *manshū* 滿洲 in the early nineteenth century, following the Manchus's name for themselves. In other words, it was the Japanese who turned the proper name *manshū* into a place name. Moreover, in the colonial context of the 1920s and the 1930s, the name's association with the Manchu people gave it the perfect symbolic evidence to justify Japan's plan to sever the land from the Han' Chinese. For the Japanese, *manshū* was to become the crown jewel of the Japanese empire on the continent. To that end, they thwarted a Russian advance from the north in a dramatic war in 1905, pushed Chinese warlords aside in the Mukden incident (Chin. *juyiba shibian* 九一八事變; Jap. *manshū jihen* 滿洲事變) of 1931, and set up a satellite state, Manchukuo (滿洲國; Chin. *manzhouguo*; Jap. *manshūkoku*; Kor. *Manjuguk*). They brought the Manchus formally into their imperial domain in the following year. Manchukuo had all the pretensions of an independent state, but failed to escape its fate when the Japanese empire itself collapsed in 1945.<sup>17</sup> Freed from its colonial masters, Manchuria was quickly transformed into the Northeastern region of the newborn PRC, the base of China's Soviet-inspired industrial revolution. Throughout those turbulent years, Korean immigrants carved out and maintained settlements along the Korean border. These enclaves, known as *kando* 間島 at the time, prefigured the Korean Autonomous Region in today's PRC. In short, if we had to characterize Manchuria in just one phrase, we could borrow the famous title of a book by the Inner Asia historian Owen Lattimore: "Manchuria, Cradle of Conflict." Manchuria was characterized by conflict in both the real and symbolic realms.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For a more detailed elaboration of how the Manchus, the Han Chinese, and the Japanese referred to this land, see Mark Elliott, "The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (August 2000): 603–46.

<sup>18</sup> Owen Lattimore, *Manchuria: Cradle of Conflict* (New York: Macmillan, 1932). Written in 1932, this book is a

Similarly, it is not easy to find a single authoritative map of Manchuria in the period we study here. This is because its territory and place names appear differently on maps drawn by mapmakers from different countries. Figure 1 shows a political map the Chinese government submitted to the League of Nations in 1932. At that time, the League of Nations was involved in mediating the Japanese takeover of Manchuria and the Chinese were protesting.<sup>19</sup>

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classic work on the geographical and historical conditions of Manchuria at the time.

<sup>19</sup> After the Japanese took over Manchuria and established Manchukuo, the League of Nations sent observers to the region. Their observations resulted in the Lytton Report, which acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria and demanded that the Japanese army withdraw from the region. However, instead of following the adjudication of the League, Japan withdrew from the League and continued its activities in Manchuria.

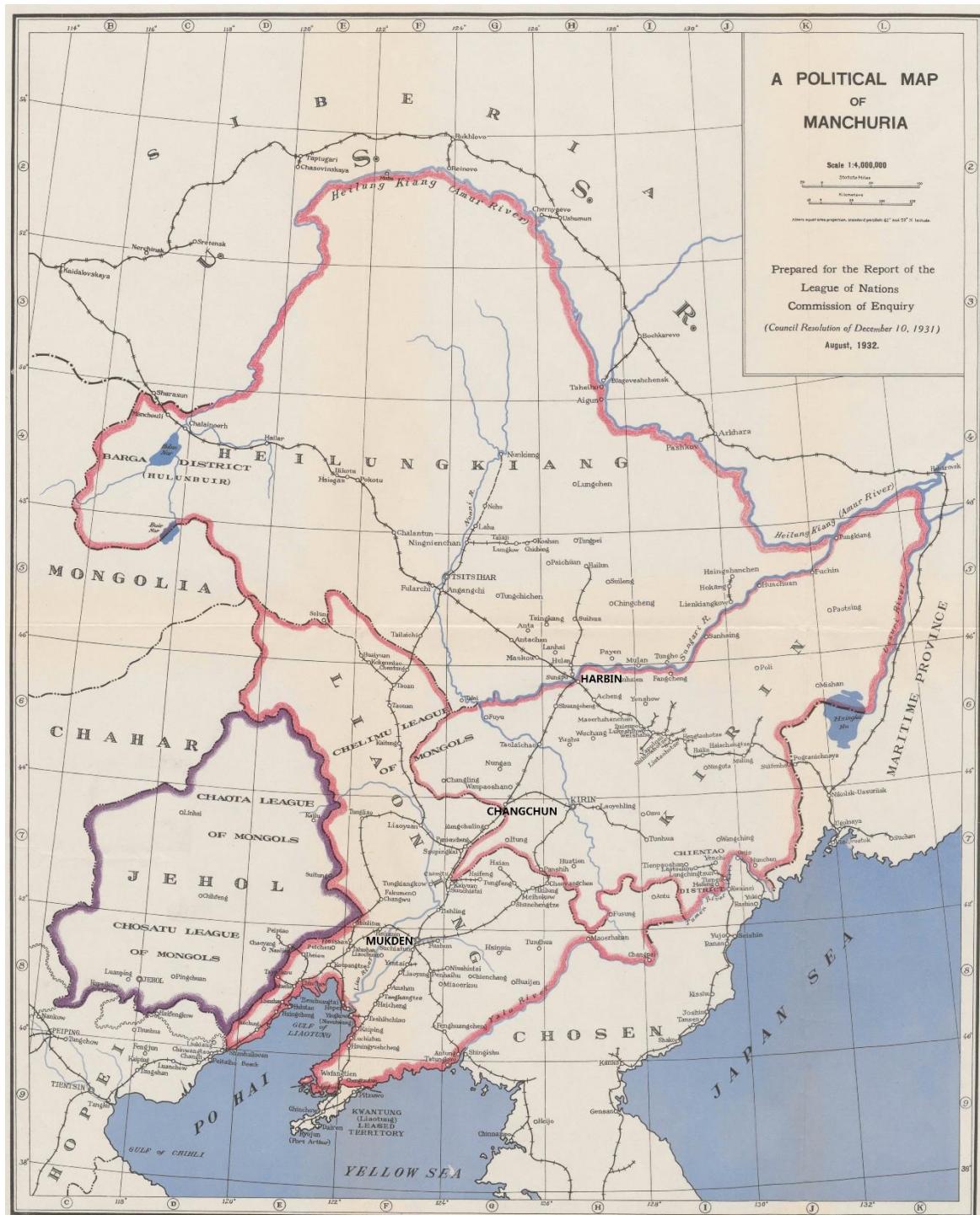


Figure 1. A Political Map of Manchuria, with my emphasis on the three major cities. "Appendix, Map No. 2," League of Nations, ed., *Appeal by the Chinese Government. Report of the Commission of Enquiry* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1932).

As this map shows, Manchuria is surrounded by China Proper, Russia (U.S.S.R. on the map),

Mongolia, and Korea (Chosen on the map). In this dissertation, I use China Proper to refer to the territories of the Chinese heartland centered along the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers as well as on the southeast coast, all of which are south of the Great Wall.<sup>20</sup> Within Manchuria there were three provinces, with Heilongjiang 黑龍江 (Heilungkiang on the map) in the north and Jilin 吉林 (Kirin on the map) and Liaoning 遼寧 in the south. The three major cities form the central stages of the literary activity that this dissertation deals with. These are Harbin (*haerbin* 哈爾濱) on the border of Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces, Changchun 長春 close to the border of Jilin and

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<sup>20</sup> The definition of “China Proper” that makes most sense to contemporary readers is from Mark C. Elliott’s *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*: “‘China Proper’ refers to the territories of the Chinese heartland, i.e., those centered along the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers, as well as the southeast coast. This includes all of modern-day China except for Qinghai, the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and the three provinces of the Northeast (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang), and possibly also Yunnan and Guizhou provinces.” See Mark C. Elliott’s *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 376. Of course, today’s provincial boundaries would be different from those operative in the Qing and in the Republic, but this definition gives us an easy sense of the approximate range of China Proper.

The term and concept of “China Proper” became problematic during the modern period, primarily because its Japanese and Chinese counterpart, 中国本部 (Ch. Zhongguo benbu; Jap. Chūgoku honbu), was associated with modern Japanese aggression in the Chinese frontier. In a well-known article by the Chinese historian Gu Jiegang, “The Term ‘China Proper’ Should Be Renounced” (“Zhongguo benbu yiming hanying feiqi,” 1939), the author starts by acknowledging that the word “China Proper” has been commonly used in “every geography textbook” in China since the twentieth century. However, he asserts that this was only because geography textbooks used in China were all translations of Japanese geography textbooks. He then argues that the term was in fact first invented by the Japanese to facilitate their claim to Manchuria and Mongolia, and Western scholars simply followed the Japanese to translate *Chūgoku honbu* into “China Proper.” See Gu Jiegang, “Zhongguo benbu yiming hanying feiqi,” in *Qianxian* 2, no. 2 (1939): 21–4, reprinted from *Yishibao* January 1, 1939. Similar concerns about the term “China Proper” can also be found in Qianmu, *Zhongguo lidai zhengzhi deshi* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2001, based on his lectures given in 1952), 120–1.

The main evidence Gu evokes for his argument of “Japanese conspiracy” is the text of the “Tanaka Memorial” (“Tianzhong zouzhe,” 1927), which was said to be a memorial to the Japanese emperor by Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi and was widely read in China at the time. One central proposal made in the memorial was to separate Manchuria and Mongolia from China Proper, as they were not considered essential parts of China. Recent studies, however, tend to believe that the Chinese fabricated the memorial. Nevertheless, it is true that a number of Chinese studies in Japan at the time proposed that only China Proper should be seen as the territory of modern China and that Japan therefore had the right to lay claim to lands beyond China Proper. For the controversy over the Tanaka Memorial, see John J. Stephan, “The Tanaka Memorial (1927): Authentic or Spurious?” *Modern Asian Studies* 7, no. 4 (1973): 733–45. For the Japanese appropriation of the concept of “China Proper” to justify their expansion in China, see He Weimin, “Kindai Nihon no ‘Shina’ ‘Man-Mō’ koshō,” *Gendai shakai bunka kenkyū* 39 (2007): 14. Based on this discussion, Gu’s conclusion that Western people translated the term from Japanese is probably wrong. It is more likely the other way around. However, Gu’s article powerfully shows why the term “China Proper” can be problematic when applied to modern China. On the other hand, he was also strongly against the use of other Chinese geographical terms imported from Japan, like “Huabei” (the Northern China) and “Huanan” (the Southern China), but these terms are still in common use in China today.

Liaoning provinces, and Mukden (*fengtian* 奉天) located at the center of the southern plain of Liaoning province. In the Manchukuo period, Changchun was designated as the capital city and was renamed Shinkyo (新京; Chin. *xinjing*) by the Japanese. When this city is mentioned during this period, I use Shinkyo or Xinjing depending on the perspective of the discussion. Understandably, throughout the period of my study, the provincial structure in the region was in constant change. For this reason, I use terms like *northern Manchuria* and *southern Manchuria* instead of the names of provinces to address internal differences within the region.

In addition to the three provinces, at the very southern end of Manchuria was the Kantō 関東 (Kwantung on the map) leased territory. This territory was first leased to Russia as one of the many territorial concessions that the declining Qing dynasty had to make to foreign countries in the late nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> In 1905, Japan took over the lease following its defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war. It was not until 1936 that the territory was again integrated into the political territory of Manchuria as part of Japanese Manchukuo. In other words, during the period of our discussion, the Kantō leased territory was under the indisputable sovereignty of Russia and Japan most of the time; also, it was not quite part of the literary territorialization on which this dissertation is focused. Accordingly, although the Kantō leased territory, especially its central city, Dairen (大連, Chin. *dalian*), also hosted active literary production in the first half of the twentieth century, I will not deal with it extensively in this dissertation.

In Manchuria excluding the Kwantung leased territory, the Chinese made up a dominant majority of the frontier population throughout the modern period. Although Chinese people in Manchuria could be further divided into smaller ethnic groups, including the dominant Han people,

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<sup>21</sup> Before the territory was leased to Russia, it had been offered to Japan in 1895 following China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese war, but Japan was then forced to return it to China under international pressure.

the Manchus, the Hui, and others, these groups commonly used Chinese, the language of the Han people, as their written language. In addition to the Chinese, the Russians by 1932 had a strong presence in northern Manchuria, roughly in the range of the Heilongjiang province including the city of Harbin. The Japanese, on the other hand, had been mostly active in the two lower provinces of Manchuria. In the early 1930s, after Japan took over Manchuria from the Chinese and established Manchukuo, it gradually consolidated its control of the entire region. Between then and 1945, in many respects the Japanese largely replaced Russian influence in the north.

As is seen, national conflicts brought elements of diverse cultures into Manchuria's cradle, which generated a variegated body of modern East Asian literature. In the following I will provide a general topography of the multinational frontier literatures and their major interactions. Detailed discussion of each case will be reserved for later chapters.

The formation of modern Chinese literature in Manchuria took place in the mid-1920s, under the influence of the New Culture Movement (*xinwenhua yundong* 新文化運動, 1917–23) first initiated in China Proper. Although scholars now tend to agree that modern Chinese literature did not erupt suddenly in the New Culture Movement but had multiple origins in preceding decades, the Movement's impact on Chinese literature in Manchuria was decisive.<sup>22</sup> During the New Cultural Movement, a group of leading cultural figures promoted a set of modern values as a way to reform Chinese culture and politics, such as vernacular literature, individual freedom, and democracy. Literature produced according to these tenets is referred to as “New Literature” (*xin*

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<sup>22</sup> In respect to literature, see David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997) for a reconsideration of the significance of the New Culture Movement to the emergence of modern Chinese literature. For historians' evaluations of the movement, see Kai-wing Chow, *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm: In Search of Chinese Modernity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) and Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

*wenxue* 新文學). The ideas of New Literature quickly spread to Manchuria and were welcomed by young students there. By the late 1920s, New Literature flourished in the region.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, writers in Manchuria were also exposed to Russian language and literature, Japanese language or literature, or both, depending on their location and other circumstances. Writers from Harbin, including Shu Qun (舒群 1913–1989), Xiao Jun (蕭軍 1907–1988), and Xiao Hong, have recalled their experience of studying at Russian schools or learning Russian from local Russian people.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, certain writers from southern Manchuria, such as Gu Ding (古丁 1914 or 1916–1964), received a local Japanese education.<sup>25</sup>

In this dissertation, I discuss frontier Chinese writers in two groups. The first includes those who were born in Manchuria in the early twentieth century but who left Manchuria for China Proper during the late 1920s and the early 1930s. This group of writers, including Xiao Jun, Xiao Hong, and Duanmu Hongliang (端木蕻良 1912–1996), among others, are conventionally referred to as the “Northeastern writers” (*dongbei zuojia* 東北作家) or the “Northeastern Writers’ Group” (*dongbei zuojiaqun* 東北作家群) in modern Chinese literary history. Because their maturation as writers roughly coincided with the Japanese takeover of Manchuria, their home, in their early works they all dealt extensively with the radical social changes brought by the Japanese. Residing in China Proper away from Japanese censorship, they approached the topic mostly from a Chinese nationalist perspective. In 1935 and 1936, on the eve of the outbreak of total war between China

<sup>23</sup> Dongbei xiandai wenxue shi bianxiezu, *Dongbei xiandai wenxueshi* (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1989), 11–4.

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Shuqun, “Wode nüjiaoshi,” *Xinhua zhoubao* 1950.2; Xiao Hong, “Suofeiya de chouku,” *Xiao Hong quanji* II (Haerbin: Haerbin chubanshe, 1991), 948–53; Xiao Jun, “Di liu xin,” *Xiao Jun quanji*, vol. 9 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2008), 48–9.

<sup>25</sup> Gu Ding attended Changchun Gongxuetang in Changchun for primary school and Nanman Gongxuetang in Shenyang for middle school; both schools were run by the Japanese. See Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 24; “Gu Ding xiaozhuan,” in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 657.

and Japan (1937–1945), the call for a nationalist literature became increasingly urgent in China Proper. Works by the Northeastern writers were quickly elevated as the quintessential nationalist literature and were consequently canonized in later literary history. On the map of a literary territorialization of Manchuria, the Northeastern writers represents the group that reclaim Manchuria as a Chinese land which ought to be recovered from the Japanese hands.

Understandably, some Chinese writers chose to stay in Manchuria despite the Japanese takeover, for ideological as well as practical reasons. I refer to these writers as “Manchukuo Chinese writers,” for they flourished mostly in the late 1930s until shortly before the collapse of the Manchukuo regime. Accordingly, the central concern of their literary activity was how to write and promote a Chinese literature in Japanese Manchukuo. As a self-proclaimed multiethnic independent nation, Manchukuo, unlike other Japanese colonies such as Taiwan and Korea, legally gave writers the right to write in their own languages. At the same time, increasingly tightened ideological control and personal surveillance required writers to sacrifice much of their critical edge to maintain a space for writing and publishing. The Manchukuo Chinese writers, like the Northeastern writers, did their best to claim Manchuria for Chinese people, but within Japanese Manchukuo, it was impossible to call for political sovereignty over or military recovery of the land. Instead, they emphasized Chinese culture as an ethnic culture in Manchukuo, insisting on their cultural rights, such as writing and publishing in Chinese. At the same time, many of them employed various metaphorical and allegorical techniques to express their disagreement with the regime in indirect ways. In any case, whatever claims they made for the Chinese people, they had to come to terms with Japanese authority, which was the dominant power on the frontier at the time. In other words, their literary territorialization of Manchuria could only exist in the form of collaboration. As a result, most of their works were stigmatized as collaborationist literature from

the postwar years until at least the 1980s. This group of writers includes Shan Ding (山丁 1914–1997), Gu Ding, and Mei Niang (梅娘 1920–2013), among others. In this dissertation I will focus on the singular case of Gu Ding.

Japanese literature featuring Manchuria can be traced back to short pieces by Japanese soldiers during the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, but the first well-known case is no doubt Natsume Sōseki's 夏目漱石 "Travels in Manchuria and Korea" ("Man-Kan tokorodokoro" 滿韓ところどころ, 1909).<sup>26</sup> In 1909, he was invited by the Southern Manchurian Railway Corporation, the Japanese company that controlled the railway zone in southern Manchuria, to travel around Manchuria by railway and to write about his experience. In the 1920s, Japanese writers who resided in Manchuria started to form local literary bases in Changchun and Dalian. In particular, in Dalian, modernist poets such as Anzai Fuyue and Kitagawa Fuyuhiko established the poetry magazine *A* (A 亞). This magazine had a significant impact on poetry writing in mainland Japan and is conventionally considered the forerunner of Japanese modernist poetry. As Stephen Poland points out, the Japanese railway in Manchuria decisively shaped the perspective of early Japanese writers who wrote in and on Manchuria, whether they were short-term visitors or long-term residents.<sup>27</sup> In other words, while neither early Manchukuo Japanese writers nor their literature had close interaction with the writers or literatures of other peoples in the region, the way they perceived Manchurian time and space was tinted by a perspective that was deeply influenced by Japanese imperial expansion in the region.

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<sup>26</sup> For early representations of Manchuria by soldiers during the Russo-Japanese War, see Wei Shulin, "Manshū bungaku ni tsuite: Hasegawa Shun no sakuhin wo chūshin ni" (PhD diss., Kobe University, 2013), 10–1. For more discussion of Natsume Sōseki's work in relation to his Manchurian experience, see Stephen Poland, "Manchukuo as Method: Problematising Nationality in Literature, 1906–1945," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2017), 36–55.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Poland, "Manchukuo as Method," 24–5 and the entirety of Chapter 1.

In the Manchukuo era, Japanese literature in Manchuria encountered a bitter but ambitious transformation. Confronted with great difficulty in establishing a nation-building discourse, the Manchukuo government enlisted literature in the project. In particular, after a new order in East Asia aiming to integrate all of its colonies and collaborative governments for war mobilization was announced in metropolitan areas, the spontaneous literary activity that marked the 1920s was gradually replaced by the Manchurian Japanese writers' active participation in the newly conceived and heavily politicized "Manchukuo literature" (*manshū bungaku* 滿洲文学). In particular, converted former left-wing writers, such as Yamada Seizaburō (山田清三郎 1896–1987), and former Romanticist School writers, such as Kitamura Kenjirō (北村謙次郎 1904–1982), played leading roles in the construction of a new Manchukuo literature. Entering the 1940s, Manchukuo Japanese writers further expanded the notion of Manchukuo literature from one that primarily concerned Japanese people and Japanese writing to a multiethnic literature that would ideally represent all peoples in Manchukuo in all available languages. This new definition of Manchukuo literature not only transformed Manchukuo Japanese literature, but also had an immediate and profound impact on literature in other languages on the frontier.

The Korean community in Manchuria is concentrated around the border area between Manchuria and Korea. The area was first inhabited by border-crossing immigrants from Korea. In addition, during the Korean colonial period, especially in the late 1910s, the Korean settlement in Manchuria became an overseas base for Korean revolutionaries who fought for either national independence or proletarian liberation, or both. The topic of Manchuria entered Korean literature in the 1920s. This entrance is represented by a series of works by Ch'oe Sō-hae (최서해 1901–1932). Ch'oe stayed in Manchuria and actively participated in local revolutionary activity. Early Manchuria-related Korean works often highlight the pathetic life of Korean immigrants in

Manchuria. In order to arouse nationalist sympathy among readers in colonial Korea, this writing emphasizes how people had been forced to leave their hometowns and to live in the interstices between the local Chinese and the colonizing Japanese. What had truly pushed a group of Korean writers to march to Manchuria was the radicalization of Japanese assimilation since 1936. One major goal of this group was to replace Korean writing with Japanese writing in the Korean Peninsula. As a result, a number of Korean writers who were either unable or unwilling to write in Japanese moved to Manchuria and joined other local Manchurian-Korean writers to form a Korean writing force in multiethnic Japanese Manchukuo. Among others, these writers include the modern Korean literary master Yǒm Sang-sōp (염상섭 1897–1963) and a representative Manchurian-Korean writer, An Su-kil (안수길 1911–1977). In effect, this group of writers carved out a Korean cultural territory on the frontier to compensate for the colonial assimilation of their national culture in their homeland.

After the frontier was closed and the new nation-state orders were consequently established in East Asia, Manchuria quickly became a dangerous and unpleasant topic for both Chinese and Korean writers. All of their activities and writings carried out in the frontier under foreign rule were now deemed suspicious by their compatriots. In contrast, Japanese writers with Manchurian experience were eager to reflect on their frontier memories through literature. In Chapter Four, I argue that the Japanese writers' retrospective frontier writing served as an important way to mediate the nation's painful and traumatic deterritorialization from Manchuria.

In terms of reception, frontier literary works produced before 1945 assumed a complicated and troubling relationship with postwar national literary histories in all three countries. Some were celebrated as canonical patriotic literature, some were denounced as representative collaboration literature, and still others were completely neglected as irrelevant to national literature. As this

dissertation argues, these writers have all attempted to territorialize the frontier for the nation. And yet, the distinct postwar evaluations of this group of works suggest that a literature for the nation is essentially different from a national literature. Towards the end of each chapter, I will briefly review the postwar reception of each frontier work. This will further illuminate how the very concept of national literature in postwar East Asia was politically defined. It will also show how national literature could be both enabled and endangered in the frontier context.

## Literature Review and Chapter Outlines

The study of modern Manchurian literature is still an emerging field in both North America and East Asia. However, I was lucky enough to borrow from historians' work on modern Manchurian history. Among these, most of the early works written in English take a national perspective, as can be seen from their titles: Louise Young's *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (1998), Rana Mitter's *Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance and Collaboration in Modern China* (2000), Hyun Ok Park's *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria* (2005), Shao Dan's *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907–1985* (2011), and so on. Studies of literary history concerning Manchuria, though not as plentiful, are also written in relation to a single dominant perspective. This is true of works such as those by Norman Smith and Annika Culver.<sup>28</sup> These studies have provided abundant knowledge about the frontier players' respective points of view. Moreover, because the frontier setting, by definition,

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<sup>28</sup> Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Annika Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

obliges frontier subjects to deal with more than one nation and people, scholarship on those subjects also inevitably incorporates some version of a comparative multinational perspective. The historical studies of Manchuria from different national perspectives have established a firm foundation upon which more comprehensive comparative studies, with literature at their center, can be formulated.

In contrast, several works have emerged in recent years that treat Manchuria, rather than East Asian nations, as the theoretical container and distribute balanced attention to multiple groups of frontier subjects. The main forerunner of this approach is Prasenjit Duara. His book deals with the discursive nation-building of Manchukuo as an archetype of the similar processes that other East Asian nation-states underwent later. In this way, he puts Manchukuo at the center of the discussion and forges a Manchukuo-an perspective.<sup>29</sup> Mark Driscoll presents a similar case of a frontier-centered study with a more explicitly comparative approach. His book juxtaposes stories of Chinese coolies, Japanese pimps, and Korean farmers.<sup>30</sup> In addition, Kazuko Osada and Stephen Poland's dissertations are two of the rare works in English that investigate multilingual Manchukuo literature from a literary perspective.<sup>31</sup> All these studies have explored various ways of grappling with the historical significance and theoretical potential of the frontier from a multidimensional perspective. Yet they focus primarily on the Manchukuo period. Manchukuo is also the central historical period in my research. However, because literary territorialization in the frontier started before Manchukuo and its repercussions lingered well into the postwar years, my

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<sup>29</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Kazuko Osada, "Myths of Multiethnic Manchukuo: The Formation of Ethnicity and Language in Manchukuo Literature" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2012); Stephen Poland, "Manchukuo as Method."

discussion of frontier literature extends beyond the scope of Manchukuo.

This dissertation consists of four chapters. Each chapter focuses on a particular group of writers who share a common relationship to Manchuria. The first chapter studies the Northeastern writers, including Yu Chengze, Xiao Hong, and Duanmu Hongliang. While Yu Chengze is a less-known early Northeastern writer, works by the latter two have become part of the canon of modern Chinese literature. The chapter provides innovative readings of their works, focusing on how their transnational experiences on the frontier are reframed into evidence that supports Chinese claims to the frontier and expressions of Chinese nationalist sentiments. With a firm nationalist stance, supported by a variety of stylistic innovations inspired by both Chinese and foreign literary and cultural traditions, the Northeastern writers' works explored new possibilities for mapping out the nation through literature.

The second chapter moves the focus to Chinese writers who chose to stay in Manchuria throughout its frontier era. This chapter highlights one of their leaders, Gu Ding, and his novel *New Life* (*Xinsheng* 新生, 1944). The novel depicts how Chinese and Japanese people in Manchukuo united and fought against the bubonic plague that broke out in Xinjing in 1940, which has recently been revealed to have been a result of Japanese biochemical warfare. In this novel, Gu Ding experimented with a hybrid language that mixed Japanese vocabulary and syntax into standard vernacular Chinese, classical and local Chinese dialects, and other available linguistic elements. My contextualized close reading of the novel will reveal how a border-crossing writing strategy served to expand Chinese cultural territory under Japanese rule on the frontier. Moreover, in the postwar years, the novel was denounced as “a specimen of collaborationist literature,” and the writer was sentenced to death and then largely forgotten in national literary history for decades. Therefore, in Gu Ding’s case, we witness how a frontier subjectivity can be both critical and

collaborative, both empowering and impairing the frontier subject.

Chapter three considers issues concerning the translation of Korean literature written in and on Manchuria in the 1930s and the 1940s and explores how the enterprise of translation of a marginalized literature in Manchuria was mobilized by multiple national powers to both serve territorial claims and exert ideological control. In this complicated network of power relationships, Korean frontier writers, who were unable to claim political and cultural rights in their own country due to the colonial conditions, sought to demarcate an alternative national space on the frontier of Manchuria. However, their effort was barely recognized by either the Japanese or the Chinese. This lack of recognition is manifested not only in the manipulative Japanese and Chinese translations of the Korean writers' works, but also in the lack of translation in general. This chapter highlights the dilemma of a literary territorialization without the buttress of state power, while suggesting its potential as a shared platform upon which communication and conversation among the otherwise disfranchised peoples on the frontier became imaginable.

Chapter four studies the representations of the experience of child killing, or *kogoroshi* 子殺し, by women repatriates from Manchuria to Japan in postwar Japanese literature and media culture. In this chapter, I approach Japanese postwar repatriation literature as the literary space where Japan's traumatic withdrawal from formal colonies is reflected and mediated. In particular, I treat child killing in Japanese repatriation from Manchuria as a painful symbol of the larger self-consuming process of the empire-state transition. In other words, I study postwar literary and cultural engagement with implosive violence as a case of literary deterritorialization. In postwar Japan, literary representations of the child-killing experience during repatriation underwent considerable change, as did the reception of such representations. I argue that this evolution is closely related to the way Japan worked through its imperial past and reestablished itself as an

affluent nation-state. My exploration of the landscape and significance of frontier literature in and about Manchuria has ranged from the prewar to the postwar era and has travelled across East Asia. This chapter brings that exploration to a close.

## **Chapter One**

### **Recreating a Chinese Manchuria: Chinese Northeastern Writers Revisited**

#### **Introduction**

If a temporal narrative can be told in reverse order, then a spatial narrative can start with those who have left the place. This chapter, which opens my study of modern East Asian literature written in and about Manchuria, features three modern Chinese writers who originated in Manchuria but left their hometowns and wrote primarily in China Proper. The three writers range from the canonical masters of modern Chinese literature Xiao Hong (蕭紅 1911–1945) and Duanmu Hongliang (端木蕻良 1912–1996) to the less-known literary pioneer Yu Chengze (于成澤 1903–1982). On the conceptual map of literary territorialization, they stand for the group of writers who recreate the ambivalent Manchurian frontier in their literature as a Chinese land that ought to be recovered from foreign encroachment and occupation. Moreover, the canonization of Xiao Hong and Duanmu Hongliang in Chinese literary history also reveals how frontier writing became canonical national literature, or how modern Chinese national and nationalist literature was made on the frontiers as much as in the centers.

In modern Chinese literary history, writers who came from Manchuria and wrote about Manchuria in China Proper from a Chinese perspective, primarily in the 1930s, are conventionally regarded as the “Northeastern writers” (*dongbei zuojia* 東北作家), or the “Northeastern Writers’ Group” (*dongbei zuojiaqun* 東北作家群). In almost all textbooks on modern Chinese literary

history, this group of writers forms an indispensable chapter. Literary historians, in general, believe that their works from the mid-1930s decisively aroused the sentiment of resistant nationalism among Chinese people on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945)<sup>1</sup> and inaugurated Chinese wartime resistance literature, which dominated the Chinese literary world for almost a decade.<sup>2</sup>

Historically, these writers have never formed a formal group, nor do they share any common principles in terms of literary themes or styles. The name “Northeastern writers” was first coined in mid-1930s Shanghai, when a group of writers exiled from Japanese Manchuria caught local critics’ attention by their common literary engagement in Manchuria from a leftist nationalistic perspective.<sup>3</sup> The word “Northeastern” indicates a Chinese perspective on Manchuria that was shared by both the writers and their readers.<sup>4</sup> Later literary historians in China upgraded the somewhat loose term of “Northeastern writers” to “Northeastern Writers’ Group”; this term places more emphasis on the commonalities in ideological and stylistic preferences among the writers.<sup>5</sup> From then on, the term “Northeastern Writers’ Group” has been widely accepted by literary scholars, although they produce slightly different definitions and attributions of the term according to individual criteria.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter, however, I prefer to use the original and more flexible name

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<sup>1</sup> Wang Yao, *Zhongguo xin wenxue shi gao* (Beijing: Kaiming shudian, 1951), 291–5.

<sup>2</sup> Qian Liqun, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sanshinian* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 308; C.T. Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction 1917–1957* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 275.

<sup>3</sup> See Shen Weiwei, *Dongbei liuwang wenxue shilun* (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1992), 182.

<sup>4</sup> For the political meaning embedded in the proper name “Northeast,” see Fu Sinian, *Dongbei Shi gang* (Nanjing: Guoli zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1932), 3–6.

<sup>5</sup> Shen Weiwei, *Dongbei liuwang wenxue shilun*, 182–3.

<sup>6</sup> For a thorough list of different definitions and inclusions of the Northeastern Writers’ Group, see Okada Hideki, “Manshūga umidashita bungaku,” in *1930 nendai sekai no bungaku*, ed. Nagahara Makoto (Tōkyō: Yūhikaku, 1982), 265–86. For a brief account of the different rationalizations behind the definitions, see Shen Weiwei, *Dongbei liuwang wenxue shilun*, 182–4.

of “Northeastern writers” to include authors from a broader time span and to avoid any blanket understanding of the writers as a homogenous entirety. By this definition, all three writers featured in my discussion are “Northeastern writers.”

In the chapter, I argue that what made the Northeastern writers’ work part of the canon of nationalist literature is that they told frontier stories within the nationalist environment of China Proper through a combination of literary techniques they developed both on the frontier and in China Proper. In brief, the writers’ border-crossing and border-crossing writing made their work nationalist. The Northeastern writers’ deep involvement in both the frontier and metropolitan milieus enabled them to tell multinational stories from a nationalist perspective. Moreover, the social, cultural and political environments of the frontier where they grew up conditioned their writing, which incorporates traditions from China Proper but always provides something new. And when the new themes and styles in their work became a source of influence for writers in China Proper, changes arose in the general landscape of modern Chinese literature and in the way it constructs modern Chinese identities. In this way, this group’s frontier writing testifies to important moments of limitation and breakthrough in the development of modern Chinese literature and is therefore a milestone in modern Chinese literary history.

A key analytical approach in this chapter, as well as in the entire dissertation, is to examine the spatial-textual relationship embedded in creative texts by frontier writers. Instead of reading literary representation of Manchuria as an immediate re-rendering of the geographical space, I aim to peel off the multiple layers involved in the process of knowing, defining, writing, and reading the frontier/borderland space in literature. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre discusses what he calls “the double illusion” in the human comprehension of space. The first is “the illusion of transparency,” by which he means that space appears to be luminous and intelligible, ready to

be fully and immediately comprehended by human beings. The second is “the realistic illusion,” which renders space as a natural and substantial existence outside the range of language and other socially constructive processes.<sup>7</sup> The first illusion, which questions the readability and representability of space, is particularly relevant to my discussion of the literary representation of geographical space. My aim in this chapter is precisely to work against the illusion of transparency and reveal the complexity involved in the authors’ recreation of space and the readers’ re-imagination of it.

This approach not only is crucial to my project on literary territorialization, but also differentiates my work from previous scholarship on the Northeastern writers. In the English-speaking world, studies of the Northeastern writers as a group have been carried out by the literary scholars C.T. Hsia and Howard Goldblatt, as well as the historian James Reardon-Anderson.<sup>8</sup> In particular, Goldblatt approaches the Northeastern writers’ Manchuria-related works as the “local literature of *guanwai*” (*guanwai de xiangtu wenxue*),<sup>9</sup> and rightly points out that they distinguish themselves from local works about other regions of mainland China and Taiwan by their strong nationalist sentiments.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Goldblatt views the Northeastern writers’ frontier

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<sup>7</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), 27–30.

<sup>8</sup> C. T. Hsia, in his pioneering *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, published as early as 1961, touches upon Northeastern writers after the mid-1930s. He believes that this group of writers, except for Duanmu Hongliang, were all “slipshod writers untrained in the craft of fiction,” whose major contribution was that it “gained for the Communist Party a large public receptive” to its policies.

C. T. Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 272. James Reardon-Anderson approaches the Northeastern Writers’ Group writers as storytellers of life and culture of the Han Chinese communities in Manchuria in *Reluctant Pioneers: China’s Expansion Northward 1644–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Ge Haowen, “Guan wai de xiang tu wen xue,” in *Ge Haowen wenji lun Zhongguo wenxue*, 36. According to him, a similar version of the article in English was presented at the Annual Conference of the Association of Asian Studies in 1979 under the title of “Regional Literature beyond the Great Wall.” In this chapter, I translate the Chinese title of his article as “Local literature of *guanwai*,” because I use “local literature” to translate the Chinese term “xiangtu wenxue” throughout the chapter.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 36.

writings as one type of modern Chinese local literature that deals with the local as the embodiment of the national. I agree with Goldblatt's general understanding of these writers and their works; in this chapter, I will further examine why and how this was the case.

When it comes to the textual-spatial relationship, however, all three scholars tend to read the writers' literary representation of the geographical space of Manchuria as more realistic than fictional. For example, Hsia compares the geographical background of the hometowns of two Northeastern writers, Xiao Hong's Hulan and Duanmu Hongliang's Changtu; he bases his comparison on their fictional writings set in these places.<sup>11</sup> Goldblatt, too, in a study of Xiao Hong, introduces Xiao Hong's hometown strictly based on the fictional *Tales of Hulan River*.<sup>12</sup> Reardon-Anderson, in reading works by Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun, believes that they "portray Manchurian society with an uncompromising realism." He evokes this realism to support his argument that Chinese culture and life in Manchuria are no different from those in China Proper.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to these realist readings, my approach puts the seemingly transparent textual-spatial relationship under close scrutiny. All the works mentioned above are, after all, fiction. Local

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<sup>11</sup> In Hsia's "The Korchin Banner Plains: A Biographical and Critical Study" (1982), the author compares Xiao Hong's and Duanmu Hongliang's hometowns based on what he believes to be the memoirs of the writers' childhoods, namely, Xiao Hong's novel *Tales of Hulan River* and Duanmu's novella *The Korchin Banner Plains: A Family History*. His conclusion is that while Duanmu's hometown, Changtu (昌图), is marked by "insatiable" large landlords and "roaming" bandits not unlike the American West, Xiao Hong's hometown Hulan (呼兰) is trapped in stagnancy with a populace "steeped in cowardice, cruelty, and mindless stupor." He believes that the two writers' hometowns, "though equally bound to feudal customs," are in other respects quite different. He then attributes the writers' different writing styles to the different geographical backgrounds in which they were brought up. "The Korchin Banner Plains: A Biographical and Critical Study" (1982), in *On Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 332–4; Xiao Hong, Howard Goldblatt, trans., *Tales of Hulan River*, in *The Field of Life and Death & Tales of Hulan River* (Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company, 2002), 93–273; Duanmu Hongliang, *Keerqin qianshi* (title translated as "The Korchin Banner Plains: A Family History" in C.T. Hsia's study), serialized in *Shidai piping*, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65 (1940).

<sup>12</sup> Howard Goldblatt, too, in a study of Xiao Hong, introduces Xiao Hong's hometown as "little more than marketplaces where the peasants sold their excess produce, some shops which catered to their non-agricultural needs, schools, and residential areas," which is based on Xiao Hong's fictional *Tales of Hulan River*. Howard Goldblatt, *Hsaio Hung* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 16.

<sup>13</sup> James Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers*, 255–9.

scholars in Xiao Hong's hometown, drawing upon historical materials, have demonstrated extensive discrepancies between Xiao Hong's depiction in her autobiographical fiction and the real town.<sup>14</sup> In other words, all these works involve heavy mediation of the space, and it is in this moment of mediation that literary territorialization takes place. This mediation also reveals the difficulties of producing border-crossing writing. It shows how they adjusted their frontier perspective to a metropolitan milieu, overcame metropolitan prejudices toward peripheral people, and sometimes had to sacrifice their subjectivity as frontier writers in exchange for recognition in the centers.

To analyze the Northeastern writers' border-crossing life and writing, an overview of the ambivalent relationship between Manchuria and China Proper is necessary. Perhaps no word can capture this relationship better than the word *guanwai* 關外, which literally means “outside the pass.” Its opposite is *guannei*, “inside the pass.” The pass here refers to the Shanhai Pass, a fortress located towards the east end of the Great Wall, by the sea of Bohai.<sup>15</sup> After the pass was constructed in the Ming era, Chinese people on both sides started to refer to the vast land northeast of the pass as *guanwai*.<sup>16</sup> As the land gradually took shape as Manchuria in the eighteenth

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<sup>14</sup> Wang Huajue, Li Chonghua, “*Hulanhe zhuan kaolun*,” in *Hulan xueren shuo Xiao Hong*, 171–8. Also, Duanmu explicitly stated in his later years that *The Korchin Banner Plains: A Family History*, despite its misleading title, was not an autobiography but a work of fiction, and was published in the fiction column of the periodical. See Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan* (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2011), 10. While the evidence does not necessarily invalidate the authors’ fictional depictions of their hometowns, it impels us to give due attention to the fictionality of the authors’ literary representation of the geographical space.

<sup>15</sup> Rulers of the Ming dynasty also built border walls in the Southern Manchuria, which they called “Liaodong bianqiang” (the border walls of Liaodong). Shanhai Pass is the East end of the Great Wall in China Proper and the West end of the “Liaodong bianqiang” in Manchuria. For more details about Liaodong bianqiang in Southern Manchuria, see Hua Xiazi, *Ming Changcheng kaoshi* (Beijing: Dang'an chubanshe, 1988), 287–94.

<sup>16</sup> According to *Hanyu da cidian*, the word *guanwai* can be used to refer to the “region Eastern to the Shanhai Pass (today’s Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces).” *Hanyu da cidian* gives two examples that use *guanwai* to refer to Manchuria, one from the Qing and the other from the Republican period. See *Hanyu da cidian*, vol. 12 (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 2001), 157. Also, the first journal the CCP initiated in Manchuria was titled *Guanwai* (1927–1929). See Dongbei xiandai wenxueshi (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1989), 29. Similar usage of the word *guanwai* can also be found in the late Qing. See [Ming-Qing] Wang Duo,

century,<sup>17</sup> *guanwai* emerged as a conventional name for Manchuria in China and was used until at least the first half of the twentieth century. However, inscribed in the unchanging name of *guanwai* is a complicated history of the meaning of the land itself and its perceived relationship with China Proper.

The trans-pass relationship in Chinese history deserves a book-length discussion, but even a simple recapitulation of the issue can give a sense of its ambiguity. The Shanhai Pass was first erected in the Ming to guard China against possible incursions by groups of non-Han peoples from areas northeast of the pass.<sup>18</sup> At the time, the pass, like the rest of the Great Wall, was seen as roughly the outer boundary of China, or *Zhonghua*, and the land beyond the pass, except for a small area on its southern end, was regarded by residents of the central plains as the land of the “barbarians” (*yiren*) and the “wild men” (*yeren*).<sup>19</sup> In 1644, the Qing forces made their way

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“Taizi shaobao bingbu shangshu jiehuan yuangong shendaobei”: “In the winter, the enemies met in great number at *Dailin*, and captured the entire *Liaodong* when the moon became full. Mr Yuan reported the situation [to the Emperor], proposing that since there were tens of thousands remaining soldiers dispersed in *guanwai*, the Court had better incorporate those remaining soldiers so as to save the trouble of drawing soldiers from the West.” ([明清] 王鐸 “太子少保兵部尚書節環袁公神道碑”: “冬，敵乃大會蹠林，月盛攻陷全遼。公上其事，大約謂關外殘兵瓦解雲散者不下數萬，宜收其殘，省調募西兵便。”) The sentence describes the Qing forces’ capture of Liaodong in 1621 and the response to it by the Ming official Yuan Keli. Wang Duo, “Taizi shaobao bingbu shangshu jiehuan yuangong shendaobei,” in *Nishanyuan xuanji*, included in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, vol. 111 (Beijing: shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1997), 700. Note that *guanwai* does not always refer to the region beyond the Shanhai Pass. There are many passes along the Great Wall, and the word *guanwai* can be used to refer to the region beyond any pass when a particular pass is specified in the context. However, as the three examples show, when people refer to the region northeast of Shanhai Pass as *guanwai* in the Ming, the Qing and the Republican period, they do not necessarily need to specify the Shanhai Pass. In other word, *guanwai*, although literally meaning nothing more than “beyond the pass,” gradually became a general name for Manchuria.

<sup>17</sup> On how Manchurian regionality was fostered in the Qing in the eighteenth century, see Mark C. Elliott, “The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (2000): 603–46.

<sup>18</sup> The Shanhai Pass was first constructed in 1381, after which there were numerous reconstructions. See Guo Shuzu, *Shanghaiguan changcheng zhi* (Hebeisheng diming bangongshi, 1984), 1–3.

<sup>19</sup> The trans-pass relationship in the Ming is an understudied but complicated topic, and I can only give a very brief account here. In the vast land northeast of the Shanhai Pass, the southern area and the northern area were treated and viewed differently by the Chinese. The small area in the southern rim of the land beyond the pass was then called Liaodong, which is today’s Southern Liaoning. In the Ming, Liaodong was included in the realm of the political entity of China, or what the Ming people called *hua*, and its northern border was marked by the

through the pass and seized the city of Beijing, the former capital of the Ming dynasty, which they quickly announced as the capital of their own Qing dynasty.<sup>20</sup> In the Qing, with the joining of China Proper to Manchuria under the same state authority, the pass was transformed from the outer boundary of China to an internal cultural and ethnic boundary within the empire.<sup>21</sup> At the same

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border walls called “Liaodong bianqiang.” The land north of the defense line from Shanhai Pass to Liaodong bianqiang was regarded as non-Chinese without question. For example, in *Quanliaozhi*, the author asserts that “Liaodong is the very northeast end of China” (Liao zai Zhongguo wei dongbei jibian 遼在中國爲東北極邊). See Li Fu et. al., *Quanliaozhi* (1565, reprinted by Liaoyang: Liaohai shushe, 1934), vol.5, 176.

The land north of Liaodong, that of the Jurchens, were referred to as the land of the barbarians of Jianzhou (*Jianzhou yiren*). See, for example, *Quanliaozhi* vol. 1, 355–6. Even further, the land of the Nurgan (*Nu'ergan*) Kingdom, was represented in a Chinese writer’s essay in the Ming as follows: “...The Nurgan Kingdom in the Northeast is located even outside the realm where the language has to be translated three times, and its people is a mixture of the *jiliemi* [the Nivkh people] and several other groups of wild men (*yeren*). ...And their land grows no grains and produces no textiles, and the only livestock they raise are dogs. Some wild men raise dogs to drive sleighs and transport household utensils. Others make a living by catching fish. They eat fish meat and wear fish skin, and are good at shooting arrows.” (...東北奴兒幹國，道在三譯之表，其民曰吉列迷及諸種野人雜居然。...況其地不生五谷，不產布帛，畜養惟狗。或野人養狗駕舟，運器用諸物，或以捕魚爲業，食肉而衣皮，好弓矢。) See “Yongningsi ji” (Notes on Temple Yongning), in Fu Langyun, *Caotingle yu Yongningsi bei* (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1988), 42.

As for Liaodong, its relationship to China Proper was ambiguous. Although *Quanliaozhi* and other sources defined it as a region of China, Liaodong was in many ways different from China within the Shanhai Pass. The Ming rulers did not set up a civil administration there; only military posts were in the land beyond the Shanhai Pass, including Liaodong. The primary purpose of the Ming’s policies beyond the pass was to defuse the threats from non-Han peoples to Han Chinese in China Proper. For more details about the Chinese administration of Manchuria in the Ming, see Zhang Boquan, *Dongbei lidai jiangyu shi* (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1981), 255–81. Also, in a poem written by a poet who travelled from China Proper to Liaodong in the Ming, a mountain in Liaodong is referred to as a foreign terrain (*yiyu*): “I enjoy the scenery with several others in the foreign terrain,/ The wind from the sky fans the worldly dust for me.” (異域幾人同勝攬，天風爲我拂塵纓。) See Zhu Chi, “Jiuri you Qianshan” (Nine Days’ Travel in Mount Qian), in Ma Qingfu, *Dongbei wenxueshi* (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 363. Qianshan is near today’s Anshan city.

<sup>20</sup> When the Qing captured Beijing, the Ming had already been overthrown by the rebel army led by Li Zicheng. Li Zicheng seized the city in April 1644. After that, the former Ming general Wu Sangui aligned with the Qing forces and welcomed the latter through the Shanhai Pass. In June 1644, the joint forces took over Beijing from Li Zicheng’s hand, established the Qing Emperor Shunzhi as Emperor of China, and announced Beijing as the new capital of the Qing. For more about the Qing conquest of Ming, see Kenneth M. Swope, *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty, 1618–44* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 190–207.

<sup>21</sup> The formation of the identification of China during the Qing dynasty was a very complicated historical process. Shao Dan, in her book *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1909–1985*, argues that the process involves the Manchu rulers’ political and cultural negotiations with their own Manchu identities, the Han Chinese, other ethnic groups under their reign, foreign powers adjacent to Manchuria, and other international powers. For more details, see Shao Dan, “Introduction,” “Chapter 1: Remote Homeland, Contested Borderland,” in *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1909–1985* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011), 1–67. For how Manchuria was nevertheless treated as an ethnically and culturally different and separate space from China Proper in the Qing, see Mark C. Elliott, “The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies.”

time, Manchuria received an increasing number of Han Chinese immigrants and the consequent acculturation by Han culture. Towards the end of the Qing dynasty, the Han Chinese population made up an absolute majority of the total population of Manchuria.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, it is hard to tell to what extent the broader notion of China that encompassed both China Proper and Manchuria had been accepted by Chinese people on both sides of the Pass by then.<sup>23</sup> After the Qing, the last imperial dynasty of China, eventually fell in 1911, the accumulated ambiguity of the land beyond the pass led to a new round of controversy concerning the position of Manchuria in the framework of the modern nation of China, as we have seen in the Introduction. It was not until the PRC's formal incorporation of Manchuria as part of the new communist party-state in 1949 that the controversy was finally settled, by force as much as by discourse. As a result, although the pass has long been considered an inner boundary within China, until 1949 people from outside the pass were viewed as significantly different from those inside. This pass is the border the writers in this

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<sup>22</sup> According to *Manshū chishi* (1894), the Han Chinese population in Manchuria was estimated at 11,000,000, and the total population in Manchuria was estimated at 12,000,000. The estimation was based on the Qing governmental census and other fieldwork. See Sanbō Honbu, *Manshū chishi* (Tōkyō: Hakubunsha, 1894), 213–4. Between 1906–1908, the Bureau of Civil Affairs of the Qing launched a nation-wide census, and part of the data was preserved in *Manshūshi sōkō*. According to it, Han Chinese, including Han Bannermen (*hanjun*), made up 83.9% of the total population in Fengtian Province. See Kantō Totokufu Rikugun Keiribu, *Manshū shi sōkō dai 2 shū, kan 1* (Tōkyō: Kuresu Shuppan, 2001), 12. For more about the census and the demographical constitution in Manchuria in Late Qing, see Shao Dan, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1909–1985*, 58–66.

Scholars use different terms to describe the Han cultural influence on the Manchu in Manchuria, including “Sinicization,” “acculturation,” “limited assimilation,” and so on. Mark C. Elliott, in *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, uses the term “acculturation” to emphasize that the cultural assimilation of the Manchu by the Han in Manchuria in the Qing was limited and did not always signify the displacement of the Manchu ethnic identity by the Hans. See Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, 5–8. For a classic study of the “Sinicization” of Manchuria during the Qing dynasty, see Robert H.G. Lee, *The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 78–115.

<sup>23</sup> According to Hua Rui, in the early Qing, many Chinese intellectuals exiled from China Proper to Manchuria in the Qing did not regard Manchuria as part of China. Zhao Gang argues that it was not until the late Qing that the government started to popularize the concept of a broader China that encompassed both China Proper and Manchuria among ordinary Chinese people. Hua Rui, “Discovering Manchuria, Rediscovering China: the Exiled Han Chinese Literati in Ninguta and Their Frontier Encounters, 1658–1681,” unpublished research paper; Zhao Gang, “Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Modern China* 32, no. 1 (2006): 16–18.

chapter have crossed. It stands for the internal differentiation within the Chinese people that they all had to come to terms with in their life and work.

The chapter will start with Yu Chengze, the earliest writer among the three. Yu Chengze is a less-known but pioneering Northeastern writer. Writing about Manchuria in the mid-1920s in Beijing (then the cultural center of China), he explored, within the still-young traditions of modern vernacular Chinese literature, a full spectrum of possibilities for representing Manchuria as the frontier, many of which seem to have passed unnoticed by both contemporary and later audiences.

The second writer to be discussed is Xiao Hong. Her literary fame contrasts sharply with Yu's obscurity. Exiled from Japanese Manchuria to Shanghai in 1934, she established herself with her debut novella *The Field of Life and Death* (*Shengsi chang* 生死場, 1935), about rural Manchuria before and after the Japanese occupation. The novella has conventionally been read as proletarian literature, anti-Japanese literature and/or woman's literature, and my close reading will explore its potential as frontier literature. I will focus on how the novella was made possible only because it was written both in Manchuria and in China Proper with a set of literary strategies aimed at recreating a Chinese Manchuria in literature. This new frontier perspective will lead to a fresh understanding of the story, structure, and style of the novella, as well as a reconsideration of the development of modern Chinese local literature and the origin of wartime anti-Japanese literature.

Finally, the Manchu writer Duanmu Hongliang's renowned novel *The Korchin Banner Plains* (*Keerqinqi caoyuan* 科爾沁旗草原, 1939) will bring our attention to the issue of frontier ethnic minorities, one that was often neglected by Han Northeastern writers. It is a highly autobiographical novel that draws extensively upon the author's own family history, and yet the family in the novel is represented as Han, not Manchu. My reading, focusing on the author's representation of ethnic life in the frontier space and his unique way of dealing with ethnic history

in fiction, will further illuminate the importance of frontier literature to modern Chinese literature, history, and identity politics.

### **Yu Chengze: The Invention of Manchuria in Modern Chinese Literature**

Scholars are mostly right in asserting that before the 1930s, modern vernacular writers in China Proper, including those originating from Manchuria, seldom dealt with the land of Manchuria in their literary work.<sup>24</sup> Well-known early Northeastern writers who wrote in China Proper, like the poet Mu Mutian (穆木天 1900-1971)<sup>25</sup> and the playwright Yang Hui (楊晦 1899-1983), rarely identify Manchuria in their writings in the 1920s.<sup>26</sup>

One, and perhaps the only, exception is the Manchuria-born writer Yu Chengze. Within a year, from early 1925 to early 1926, he published around thirty creative works in all genres in major literary periodicals in Beijing, half of which were about Manchuria. He then gave up literature,

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<sup>24</sup> For example, see Pang Zengyu, *Dongbei xiandangdai wenxue yu wenhua lungao*(Beijing: Zhong guo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 2012), 27; Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan*, 6–7.

<sup>25</sup> Mu Mutian (1900–1971), a successful Manchurian-born poet in China Proper, seldom deals with Manchuria in his poems of the 1920s. In 1915, Mu went to Nankai Middle School; after graduating, he went to Japan to continue his study of literature and stayed until 1926. He was among the initiators of the Creation Society, an important and influential society of modern Chinese literature established in Tokyo in 1921. Throughout the 1920s, he searched for a poetics to bridge the “inner life” of the poet and the linguistic expressibility of poetry, and his only poem that mentions Manchuria, “Jiangxue” (Snow on the River) (1924), evokes the Manchurian landscape as a medium to reify a poetic pursuit of symbolism and mysticism. Mu Mutian, “Jiangxue” in *Lü Xin* (Shanghai: Chuangzaoshe, 1928), 11–3. For more about “Jiangxue” and his general aesthetics in the 1920s, see Mu Mutian, “Wode shige chuangzuo zhi huigu,” *Xiandai*, 4:4 (1934). For more about the poet, see Chen Fangjing, *Wenxueshi shang de shizongzhe Mu Mutian* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Yang Hui (1899–1983) was an active playwright in Beiping in the 1920s. Although quite a few of his plays, including “Laike” (“The Guest,” 1923) and “Laoshu de yinliang xiamian” (“In the Shadow of an Old Tree,” 1925), are set against the background of rural Manchuria, the author never makes this explicit. Moreover, those works all deal with social problems that are common across China rather than any that are specific to Manchuria. Yang Hui, “Laike,” *Chenbao fukan* (November 2–18, 1923); “Lao shu de yin liang xia mian,” *Chenzhong* 8 (1926), 450–72. For more about Yan Hui’s play writing, see Zhan Donghua, Liu Jinai, “Lun Yang Hui de xi ju chuang zuo,” *Jiangxi shifan daxue xuebao* 45, no. 2 (2012) : 54–61.

joined the warlord war, ran a school, worked for the government, and eventually assumed leadership of the Propaganda Department of the General Association of Northeast Salvation (Dongbei jiuwang zonghui), the biggest Northeast Salvation organization in China, founded in 1937. As an early, lonely but enthusiastic writer about Manchuria, Yu Chengze deserves closer investigation. Both his literary works and life trajectory indicate that a deep concern about Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria was foundational to his Manchuria writing from the very beginning. Written in the early days of modern Chinese literature, his works can be seen as a series of rudimentary experiments in capturing the unique reality of the frontier/borderland space of Manchuria by making use of the very limited stylistic resources the infant modern literary tradition could provide. His early abandonment of a purely literary career may well indicate his frustration with the pursuit of a specifically Manchurian literature. Although an isolated and short-lived case, Yu Chengze's frontier writings serve as an important reference point for discussions of Northeastern writers in the 1930s.

Yu Chengze's life can be summed up as a constant search for the right measures to strengthen his homeland, Manchuria, and his nation, China, among which literature was one serious try. Yu Chengze was born in 1903 in Shuangcheng, a town immediately south of Harbin; he moved to Tianjin with his parents when he was thirteen. After graduating from secondary school, he entered the Department of Mechanics at Tongji University in Shanghai, hoping to revive his nation through industrial reform. However, he was dismissed by the school after merely six months for keeping and reading radical publications. In 1922, he went to Beijing and started writing under the influence of Xu Dishan (1893–1941), a well-established writer and philosopher of the time. In 1924, he entered the Department of History at Yanjing University and joined the “Literary Association” (*wenxue yanjiuhui*), one of the most famous organizations in modern Chinese

literature.<sup>27</sup> In this period, the young writer, like many of his predecessors, including Lu Xun and Mao Dun, genuinely believed that literature could save China.<sup>28</sup>

Based on Yu Chengze's own writings, we know that in June 1925, he journeyed back to his homeland, where he stopped by Fengtian and Harbin; visited local officials and gentry in Baiquan County, a town about a hundred and thirty miles north of Harbin; checked a grain exchange station nearby; and passed by Qiqihar on his way back to Beijing. In the following months, he wrote extensively about Manchuria based on his travel experience and childhood memories. In genres ranging from travelogue, short story, and poetic prose to letters and news report, all were published in well-acknowledged literary supplements and magazines of the time.<sup>29</sup> However, in early 1926, he suddenly gave up creative writing and started to write political essays about Manchuria. In the years immediately following his graduation he seems to have tried out a number of other directions in pursuit of his Manchuria and China dream: he served as a soldier in the National Revolutionary Army (*guomin geming jun*), as the president of a middle school in Heilongjiang, and as an administrative secretary in Zhang Xueliang's Tianjin government. At certain point, he also replaced his first name, Chengze, with his courtesy name, Yifu, which means "a persevering man." After the Manchurian Incident, he devoted himself completely until 1945 to political movements that aimed to recover Manchuria. In 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded, he was elected the first Chairman of Heilongjiang Province.

In early 1925, before his trip to Manchuria, he published one short story about his homeland,

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<sup>27</sup> Michel Hockx, "The Literary Association (wenxue yanjiu hui, 1920–1947) and the Literary Field of Early Republican China," *The China Quarterly* 153 (March 1998): 50. See the same article for more details about the association.

<sup>28</sup> Biographical information in this and next paragraph is based on You Yan, Lin Jiang, "Wenren benshi gemingren: Yu Yifu tongzhi shengping jilue," in *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 3 (1983): 190–99. You Yan is Yu Chengze's daughter.

<sup>29</sup> They include: *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, *Xiandai pinglun*, *Jingbao fukan*, *Chenbao fukan*, and *Wenxue zhoukan*.

titled “The Snow,” in a journal sponsored by the Literary Association.<sup>30</sup> The story describes how Grandma Liu anxiously waits at home for a whole day and night in the severe snow for her husband, who has warmheartedly volunteered to walk to his fellow villager’s place to help solve a bandit-military dispute. Eventually she learns that her husband has frozen to death on his way home. This pathetic story of the poor Chinese follows the Literary Association tenet of “literature for the sake of life,” but aside from the tangential reference to the bandits, it is not very different from stories about the poor Chinese from any other corner of China, in part because it is written from the perspective of the wife, who only has only a vague idea of what her husband is up to. The best part of the story is the vivid depiction of the pervasive snow: snow buries people’s houses, people carve their way out of piles of snow, and people die due to snow.

The story is followed by a postscript by Wang Tongzhao, the leading member of the Literary Association and a renowned writer of the time.<sup>31</sup>

Mr Yu is from Heilongjiang and is now studying at Yanjing University. He is very familiar with the life in the extreme North (*ji beibian*) of China, which can be seen from this story. We believe that too few works in our current literary world deal with the local color of special regions (*teshu diyu*) in China. This story ... therefore calls for people’s attention.

We know from Wang’s comments that the region Yu Chengze wrote about, Northern Manchuria, though considered part of China, was seen as a “special” part. What we do not know for sure is what Wang means by “special,” because Northern Manchuria can be seen as special in many respects: for its weather, landscape, politics, culture, etc. In any case, Yu’s works about Manchuria were welcomed in China Proper primarily for the regional particularities represented. In Yu’s story,

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<sup>30</sup> “Xue.” *Wenxue xunkan* 59 (1925), page number unclear.

<sup>31</sup> The postscript was anonymous in the newspaper. Its author is illuminated by Gao Xiang in “Dongbei xiandai wenxue shiji,” *Xiandai Dongbei de wenxue shijie* (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 2007).

the frontier's particularity lies largely in its unique winter landscape. It was a time when “local literature,” or *xiangtu wenzxue*, was being encouraged, a literature highlighting indigenous Chinese elements across different regions in China.<sup>32</sup> Yu’s piece is typical of this trend.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps encouraged by his initial success, Yu started to write about Manchuria on a massive scale after returning from his Manchurian trip. Among all the genres with which he experimented, the travelogue allowed him the most freedom to depict a multifaceted Manchuria. In his two travelogues, serialized in major literary supplements, “A Trip to the Ancient Black Water”<sup>34</sup> (*Gu Heishui youji* 古黑水遊記, 1925) and “Notes from the Rural Trip” (*Xiangyou suoji* 鄉游瑣記, 1925–1926),<sup>35</sup> the narrator attempts to capture the people and things he “sees and hears” in Manchuria for “friends who have never been to Heilongjiang.”<sup>36</sup> Though seeing and hearing are always subjective activities, Yu Chengze’s travelogues nevertheless reveal the ambiguity and complexity of Manchuria better than those of many later Northeastern writers. For example, the narrator does not hide the fact that Harbin was constructed by the Russians, evolving from a fishing village to a grand metropolis on a par with Shanghai,<sup>37</sup> a fact seldom mentioned by the Northeastern writers of the 1930s, who denounced all foreign imperial influences in Manchuria. At the same time, the narrator does not hide the vulnerability of Manchuria to the Russian threat,

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<sup>32</sup> For more about *xiangtu wenzxue*, see Qian Liqun, *Zhongguo xiandai wenzxue sanshinian*, 67–72.

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed study of Yu’s local literature, see Youyan, “Yu Yifu yu Dongbei xinwenxue,” *Dongbei xiandai wenzxue yanjiu* 10 (1986.1): 107–11. Also, Yu himself proposed to enhance geographical diversity in modern Chinese literature at the time. See Yu Chengze, “Wei wentan shang de jiangzu men lei yitong gu,” *Jingbao wenzxue zhoukan* 35 (October 17, 1925).

<sup>34</sup> “Gu Heishui youji,” published on *Chenbao fukan*, Issue 108, 109, 110, 113, 117, 118, all in 1925. *Heishui*, the black water, is the ancient Chinese name for Amur River.

<sup>35</sup> “Xiangyou suoji,” published on *Jingbao fukan* 363, 364, 365, 366, 429, 434, 456, 458, missing Chapter 6; also, the last installment available seems to be unfinished, but I could not find additional installments of the same work.

<sup>36</sup> *Jingbao fukan*, 363.

<sup>37</sup> Yu Chengze, “Gu Heishui youji,” *Chenbao fukan* 113 (1925): 7–8.

as he is fully aware that in case of war, a Russian Harbin would enable Russia to take over most of the major cities in Manchuria within a few days.<sup>38</sup> With regard to the Japanese, the narrator appreciates the clean compartment on the Japanese train, but is also indignant about a Japanese passenger's bullying of the Chinese. Witnessing the bullying scene, the narrator even imagines himself shooting the Japanese; what stops this fantasy is a patriotic worry that his impulse would bring trouble to the Chinese government already in a sensitive relationship to Japan.<sup>39</sup> It is fair to say that although his travelogue takes a clearly anti-imperial nationalist stand in general, this stand does not completely rule out some more subtle and ambiguous feelings towards the two imperial powers deriving from his everyday experiences in the borderland space.

This ambiguity fades but lingers when the narrator turns to the countryside and the wilderness of Manchuria. In his eyes, to the poor Chinese in the countryside, the complexity of Manchuria means nothing but multiple forms of oppression. However, the relationships among the oppressors themselves can be messy. A rural woman thanks Chinese officers for rescuing her son from the bandits;<sup>40</sup> on a different occasion, a Chinese officer subserviently backs up an American salt dealer in his maltreatment of Chinese people, but before long this American dealer is reported to have been kidnapped and killed by Chinese bandits.<sup>41</sup> Thus the three predators at the top of the food chain form a circle that bends back on itself. Situated in chaos like this, the narrator experiences moments when he must suspend his moral judgment and simply deliver what he sees and hears. The only exception is the bandits, towards whom he always evinces an absolute detestation. It is a distinctly different attitude from the one we see in works by Northeastern writers

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> “Gu Heishui youji,” 7.

<sup>40</sup> “Xiangyou suoji,” *Jingbao fukan* 364 (1925): 5–7.

<sup>41</sup> “Xiangyou suoji,” *Jingbao fukan* 456 (1926): 6–7.

in the 1930s, where bandits are often elevated and glorified as heroes of national resistance.

Compared to the travelogues, Yu's frontier writings in other genres seem more selective, perhaps in an effort to meet the established conventions of the genres. His short stories deal only with the pathetic life of the poor Chinese in Manchuria under domestic oppressors such as the bandits, as in “The Dawn” (Poxiao 破曉, 1926),<sup>42</sup> and the conscription officers, as in “Granny Sun’s Concern” (Lao Sunniang de Youlü 老孫娘的憂慮, 1925).<sup>43</sup> No signs of foreigners are mentioned in his short stories. His poetic prose, though written in modern vernacular Chinese, often draw on the imagery and sensibility of classical frontier military poetry, including a sketch of the silhouette of a lonely front-line soldier galloping across the wild Manchurian plain against a sea of enemies.<sup>44</sup> For example, in “In the Twinkling of an Eye” (Zhigujian 指顧間), marked as written on the plain of Heilongjiang, we find the following lines: “In the Twinkling of an Eye,/ I drive the Qingcong horse with iron-colored bridle and saddle./ …/ In the rumblings of drums,/ Be a hero to kill enemies without sparing my own life! (指顧間/ 我控抑著鐵色鞍轡的青聰/ …/ 在鼓角聲裏/ 逞個‘殺敵不顧命’的英雄!)” These lines remind us of those by the well-known Tang poet Yang Jiong: “Our ironclad horses encircle Dragon Fort./ …/ As winds intensify, they mix with the rumblings of drums./ I would rather be appointed a Leader of a Hundred Men,/ Than to be a lone bookworm. (鐵騎繞龍城,/ …/ 風多雜鼓聲./ 寧為百夫長,/ 勝作壹書生.)”<sup>45</sup>

Among other things, the genre conventions followed in his short stories indicate the

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<sup>42</sup> *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 17, no. 4 (1926): 80–3.

<sup>43</sup> *Wenxue zhoukan* 44 (1925): 1–2.

<sup>44</sup> For example, see “Qianshao,” *Xiandai pinglun* 3, no. 55 (1925): 16–7; “Zhigujian,” *Chenbao fukan* (July 13, 1925): 8.

<sup>45</sup> Yang Jiong, “Congjunxing.” The English translation is from Paul W. Kroll, *Reading Medieval Chinese Poetry: Text, Context, and Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 148.

insufficiency of the young modern Chinese literary traditions developed primarily in inland metropolises to capture frontier realities, and the pervasive foreign influences on the frontier particular. At the time, Chinese fiction about urban life only touched upon Western cultural influences among students and intellectuals living abroad or in the cities of China Proper;<sup>46</sup> meanwhile, rural local literature, promoted and produced mostly by members of the Literary Association, largely engaged with the essential Chinese elements in rural areas.<sup>47</sup> Though Anti-Imperialism had been a major slogan of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, it was not until the late 1920s that fiction writers extended their antennae to foreign influences among factory workers;<sup>48</sup> it was not until the early 1930s that they started to conduct a thorough scrutiny of foreign influences in all aspects of Chinese social life, mostly in the form of a leftist revolutionary or nationalist discourse.<sup>49</sup>

It may seem that local literature, with its emphasis on Chinese elements, would work well to recreate Manchuria as a pure Chinese space, but this Chinese space does not necessarily mean the sovereign space of the modern nation of China. As many scholars have pointed out, Chinese local

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<sup>46</sup> Works of this kind include those by writers studying in Japan, such as Yu Dafu's "The Sinking" ("Chen lun," 1921), or the so called "Problem Fiction" (wenti xiaoshuo), which delineates Chinese urban intellectuals' life under the influence of Western thought. See Qian Liqun, *Zhongguo wenxue sanshinian*, 61–83.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, *Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi xiaoshuo erji* for stories of local literature. Zhao Jiabi and Lu Xun, eds., *Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi xiaoshuo erji* (Shanghai: Liangyou tushu yinshua gongsi, 1935). Also see Lu Xun's comments on local literature in the preface of the book, in which he notes the common Chinese qualities in local literature writers' representation of peripheral regions: "Guizhou [a Chinese city on the Southwest frontier of China] is far, but our situations are the same; in local literature... we only see the looming nostalgia towards one's hometown, and hardly see any exotic taste to open the readers' eyes, or to boast the author's own scope."

<sup>48</sup> Wang Aisong, "1930 nian dai fandi kangri wenxue zonglun," *Wuling xuekan* 36, no. 4 (2011): 106–11. Also see Wang Peiyuan, "Guanyu Zhongguo xiandai fandi aiguo wenxue de sikao," *Wenxue pinglun* (May 1987): 52–61.

<sup>49</sup> In particular, fiction dealing with foreign influences is illuminated by Marxist socioeconomics. In this regard, the modern Chinese writer Mao Dun is an indisputable milestone. His masterpiece *The Midnight* (*Ziye*, 1933) and short stories "The Spring Silkworms" ("Chuncan," 1932) systematically investigate foreign influences in both the urban and rural context in areas near Shanghai. *Ziye*, (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1933); "Chuncan," *Xiandai* 2, no 1 (November 1932): 9–26.

literature in its early period does not necessarily endorse a nationalist ideology. Rather, without explicitly nationalist cues embedded in the text, which did not appear until the 1930s, a literature emphasizing locality—and thus, prioritizing a local identity over the national one—may dangerously undermine the centralized homogeneity presumed by the notion of nation.<sup>50</sup> Things become even more complicated when it comes to literature about the complicated frontier/borderland area of Manchuria, and we will go into detail on this question in our discussion of Xiao Hong's work.

Classical Chinese frontier military poetry, in contrast, provided Yu with rich stylistic resources to represent Manchuria as the Chinese frontier to be guarded from foreign invasions, while at the same time diluting the realistic relevance of his work. Frontier military poetry prospered during the Tang dynasty along with the empire's rapid expansion; for this reason, this classical literary tradition uses the imagery of an ancient empire rather than that of a modern nation.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, because most writers of frontier military poetry had in fact never been to the frontier, the genre of frontier military poetry is characterized not by realism but by the imaginative freedom that frontier imagery triggered for these metropolitan poets.<sup>52</sup> In this sense, what Yu Chengze does in his poetic prose is to project ancient poets' imagination of the ancient frontier onto the modern frontier space using a modern language. It is of course a meaningful literary experiment, as pieces like "In the Twinkling of an Eye" may convey a sense of history or use

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2003), 210–17; Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 228–31.

<sup>51</sup> Frontier military poetry, or *biansai shi*, started to take shape in the Han dynasty and first matured in the Southern dynasties. The Tang dynasty witnessed the peak of frontier military poetry, which often draws upon the war experience of Tang armies in the Central Asia, that is, Tang Empire's Northwest frontier. For more about Chinese frontier military poetry, see Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, eds., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 310–3.

<sup>52</sup> Paul W. Kroll, *Reading Medieval Chinese Poetry: Text, Context, and Culture*, 132.

metaphors to evoke nationalism or patriotism. Nevertheless, the fact that the author draws heavily upon classical literary traditions in his vernacular poetry about Manchuria indicates his unwillingness to engage with the social landscape of modern Manchuria in a straightforward way in the genre of vernacular poetry, or his discomfort with doing so—especially in contrast to his greater engagement in the genre of the travelogue.

To be sure, Yu is not the only writer to encounter constraints when applying literary traditions formed in a cultural center to its frontier/borderland space. Tian Xiaofei, in *Visionary Journeys: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China*, discusses the great efforts of Huang Zongxian, the late Qing poet, to represent the multifarious character of Japanese colonial Taiwan in *yuefu* poetry, the classical Chinese ballad genre. Tian argues that because classical Chinese literary tradition, like all literary traditions, presumes a certain way of seeing the world, one has to stretch it to its utmost limit to capture experiences outside the realm of its normal application.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, when Tom Trusky, a scholar of American literature, accounts for the peculiar obscurity of early poets of the American West writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, a reason he suggests is that the poets were “unduly burdened” with excess old-world poetic traditions, both vocabularies and forms, that were “unsuited to the American, specifically trans-Mississippi experience.”<sup>54</sup> If we view America as a remote frontier of the European Old World and the American West as the frontier of a frontier, then Trusky’s observation well articulates the incongruity between literary traditions formed in the cultural centers and experience in the frontier.

If Yu Chengze’s brief literary career explored the *possibilities* of writing about Manchuria in

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<sup>53</sup> Tian Xiaofei, *Visionary Journeys: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asian Center, 2011), 9; 254–60.

<sup>54</sup> Tom Trusky, “Western Poetry, 1850–1950,” in *A Literary History of the American West* (Western Literature Association, 1987), 181.

1920s China Proper, then his early abandonment of that career suggests the *impossibility* of doing so. The immediate cause of his career turn in early 1926 was the aftershocks of Guo Songling's failed rebellion against Zhang Zuolin, the dictatorial warlord ruler of Manchuria backed up by Japanese imperial power.<sup>55</sup> It was a time when China, after the fall of the Qing dynasty, was divided by a number of warlords constantly fighting against each other. By the end of 1925, Zhang Zuolin and his followers had East China as far as Shanghai under their control, and Japanese imperial encroachment followed wherever his power went. Zhang's imperial-warlord style of expansion gave rise to increasing discontent among people in China Proper.<sup>56</sup> Thus, when Guo Songling, a high-ranking officer in his camp, launched a mutiny against him from south of the Great Wall, people in China Proper quickly extolled him as an anti-warlord and anti-imperialist fighter.<sup>57</sup> After a mere three months, Guo was defeated by Zhang with the help of the Japanese military force. In the aftermath, violent attacks against Zhang Zuolin, Japanese imperialism, and even ordinary Chinese people in Manchuria were predominant themes in the disappointed public opinion in Beijing.<sup>58</sup>

From December 1925 to January 1926, Yu wrote three political essays in a row about Guo's rebellion and Manchurian affairs to dispute this public opinion. These essays mark his turn from a

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<sup>55</sup> For a detailed account of the Guo rebellion, see Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–1928* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 146–87.

<sup>56</sup> Shen Shu, "Guo Songling fanfeng shimo," in Xu Che, ed., *Guo Songling fanfeng jianwen*, 201–21. Also see Ren Song, "Shilun Guo Songling fanfeng," 121–22.

<sup>57</sup> Ren Song, "Shilun Guo Songling fanfeng," 130. Also see Wang Lianjie, "Lun Guogong hezuo duoqu dongbei zhengquan de yici changshi," *Dongbei shidi* 2010.2: 71–7. For more about the KMT's sympathetic take on Guo during the rebellion, see Qi Shiying, *Qi Shiying Xiansheng fangwen ji lu* (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1990), 29–63.

<sup>58</sup> This can also be seen from a number of news reports following the incident published in Beijing, such as "Shu Guo Songling," *Jiayin* 1, no. 25 (1926): 6–8; "Guo Songling de zhansi," *Xiandai pinglun* 3, no. 56 (1926): 1–2; and so on.

lyrical writer to a political essayist.<sup>59</sup> His main points are two: first, the “Japanese Capitalist Imperialism” is not the only evil imperial power; the other is about what he calls “Soviet Proletarian Nationalism.” He argues that Soviet Russia, although receiving sympathy from people in China Proper at the time, is in fact a competing imperial power in Manchuria and is taking advantage of Guo’s rebellion to expand its influence in the region.<sup>60</sup> Second, to rebut a Beijing journalist’s accusation that Manchurian Chinese are indifferent to China’s future and obedient to the Japanese and Zhang Zuolin, he emphasizes the oppressive effect of the surveillance operated by the two powers in the region. His position as reflected in these articles bespeaks the different views of Manchurian affairs held by the people of China Proper and Manchuria. Moreover, the escalation of rhetorical intensity in the titles of the three articles, from “The Russian and Japanese Military Escalation and the Three Northeast Provinces,” to “Chinese People Please Pay Attention to Russia and Japan’s Moves and The Three Northeast Provinces,” and then to “Do People in the Three Northeast Provinces Really Show No Action against the Japanese and Zhang [Zuolin]?,” conveys increasing desperation at the prejudiced attitude of *guannei* people towards *guanwai* and a sense of emergency that necessitates changes in these attitudes.

A deeper reason behind Yu’s conversion from literature to politics, though, is the prejudice toward Manchuria on the part of people from China Proper. A series of mutually responsive articles about Manchuria published in Beijing around the same time, titled “Lamenting Fengtian” (“Ai

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<sup>59</sup> They include “Ri E zengbing yu Dongsansheng” (The Russian and Japanese Military Escalation and the Three Northeast Provinces), on *Chenbao fukan guoji* 13 (1926): 1–4; “qing guoren zhuyi Ri E de juzhi yu Dongsansheng” (Chinese People Please Pay Attention to Russia and Japan’s Moves and The Three Northeast Provinces), *Chenbao fukan shehui* 16 (1926): 16; “Dongsansheng renmin zhenwu fan Ri fan Zhang de judong ma” (Do People in the Three Northeast Provinces Really Show No Action against the Japanese and Zhang [Zuolin]), *Xiandai pinglun* 3, no. 57 (1926): 18–20.

<sup>60</sup> Yu’s analysis of the changing Sino-Russian relations behind the Guo’s rebellion is not groundless. For a historical account of the matter, see McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–1928*, 217–22.

Fengtian” 哀奉天 1925), “Reading *Lamenting Fengtian*” (“Du ‘Ai Fengtian’ 讀“哀奉天”, 1926), and “Comforts after Lamenting” (“Aihou de anwei” 哀後的安慰 1926), provide a good picture of this prejudice.<sup>61</sup> They all portray the Manchurian Chinese community as comparable to that of the overseas Chinese or Americans: as a community that, though obviously bound to its parent country, has a culture both derivative and inauthentic. As for the non-Han indigenous communities in Manchuria, they are completely excluded from discussion in all three articles. In “Lamenting Fengtian,” the author even calls Manchurian Chinese the “new Manchu *minzu* (*xin manzhou minzu* 新滿洲民族),” which he defines as an uncultivated Chinese *minzu* characterized by obedience and conformism. In the same article, the author summarizes three popular opinions in China Proper on Manchurian affairs. According to him, Chinese people in general fear that “the Northeasterners will rule China”; some scholars are inclined to give up Manchuria, the “dragging big tail” of China (*weida budiao* 尾大不掉); there are also rumors that the “Northeastern schemers” are ambitiously planning to build a ‘Nation of Manchuria’” (*Manzhouguo* 滿洲國) independent of China Proper. At the end of the article, the author sighs with regret that if any man of letters feels disgruntled about the “new Manchu *minzu*,” all he can do is write “lamenting elegies” for this group of wasted people.

Indeed, in the mid-1920s, the pass that divided Manchuria from China Proper existed not only geographically in the real world, but also mentally in the inlanders’ minds. Within the pass was China; beyond the pass was an ambivalent land ruled by aggressive warlords leading a group of apathetic Chinese people. Although Yu Chengze certainly considered Manchuria to be one part of China and had made every effort to overcome the “pass,” he had probably realized that his

<sup>61</sup> ST, “Ai fengtian,” *Chenbao fukan* (January 6, 1925), 1–3; Hua Dong, “Du Ai Fengtian,” *Chenbao fukan* (January 18, 1926), 30–1; ST, “Aihou de anwei,” *Chenbao fukan* (January 18, 1926), 31–2.

assiduous production of literature about Manchuria would not lead to the social change he desired. His literary dedication to the frontier, although valued in the literary world as a specimen of local literature, brought him more frustration than fulfillment. Judging from his entire literary and political career, we have reason to believe he had hoped his literary works would familiarize *guannei* people with both the natural and social landscapes of Manchuria and would strengthen the sense of solidarity and unity between *guannei* and *guanwai*. This, for him, was to be an important part of the “nation salvation” program. But literature did not serve his purpose well.

Yu Chengze’s career choice reminds us of Lu Xun (1881–1936), the master of modern Chinese literature, who also aimed to save the nation by taking up the pen to write about his hometown, Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province. Unlike Yu Chengze, his literary career lasted through his entire life and proved successful. Leaving aside possible discrepancies in literary talent between the two figures and the problem of literary tradition discussed above, their hometowns’ different geographical locations and cultural significance in the Chinese world also anticipated their different endpoints in their literary careers. Lu Xun’s hometown, Shaoxing, is located in what is considered to be the central and essential area of the traditional Han Chinese culture; anything good or bad about Shaoxing has the potential to become an allegory for the larger Chinese culture. This is one reason stories by Lu Xun like “Kong Yiji” (“Kong Yiji” 孔乙己, 1919) and “The Blessing” (“Zhufu” 祝福, 1924), while depicting the bleak and blind life in rural settings similar to his own hometown, can at the same time be read allegorically as a critique of the pathology of traditional Chinese culture as a whole.<sup>62</sup> Stories about Manchuria, on the other hand, were unlikely to gain currency among readers in China Proper who viewed the land as a cultureless chaos that

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<sup>62</sup> Fredric Jameson has a good discussion of the allegorical reading of Lu Xun’s works in China. See Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), 65–88.

may not even have been a real part of China. In this sense, Manchuria was even more ambiguous than the Chinese Southwest featured in Shen Congwen (1902–1988)'s stories, which, though also set far from the Chinese cultural center, was at least indubitably Chinese and therefore could be represented as an *alternative within* to the decadent orthodox Chinese culture.

Not until the early 1930s—after Zhang Xueliang, Zhangzuolin's successor, had pledged allegiance to the Chinese Nationalist Party's (*kuo-min tang*, henceforth abbreviated as KMT) national government and after Manchuria had undergone Japanese occupation—was it possible for general Chinese readers to find stories about Manchuria truly relevant to them.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, entering the mid-1930s, China in its entirety was threatened by the same fate of Japanese invasion to which Manchuria had been subjected. In the new historical context, Manchuria was suddenly extolled as the epitome of a resistant China through an avalanche of stories of anti-Japanese resistance in Manchuria by a group of Northeastern writers. The following section will discuss one of the earliest among them.

### ***The Field of Life and Death: The Origin of Anti-Japanese Literature***

In modern China, the next writer to write extensively about rural Manchuria was Xiao Hong. Her novella *The Field of Life and Death* depicts the hard life of Chinese peasants in a village near Harbin and their resistance to the Japanese occupation in the 1920s and the 1930s.<sup>64</sup> It is one of

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<sup>63</sup> In 1929, Zhang Xueliang's government in Manchuria declared allegiance to the KMT national government in Nanjing and announced the replacement of all banners of the Beiyang Government with the KMT flag, thus symbolizing the reunification of China after more than a decade of warlord conflicts. The incident is historically referred to as “The Flag Replacement of the Northeast” (*Dongbei yizhi*). For more about the flag replacement, see Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 20–53.

<sup>64</sup> Xiao Hong, *Sheng si chang*, (Shanghai: Rongguang shuju, 1935, reprinted in 1936). For an English translation, see Xiao Hong, Howard Goldblatt, trans., *The Field of Life and Death*, in *The Field of Life and Death & Tales of*

the earliest anti-Japanese fictional works in China and has been extremely widely read from the time it was published until today.<sup>65</sup> Although the novella has long been regarded as a pioneering and classic work of anti-Japanese fiction, its peculiar structure has confounded many readers. The text is clearly and abruptly divided into two parts. The first part, which makes up two-thirds of the novella, deals solely with Chinese peasants' life in Manchuria before the Japanese occupation, with absolutely no indication of the forthcoming Japanese takeover or any other imperial powers in the region. Then, all of a sudden, a Japanese flag "was raised," and the story of anti-Japanese resistance starts to unfold. Because of the structural disproportion and the rather gratuitous appearance of the Japanese in the text, Howard Goldblatt refuses to read it as an example of anti-Japanese fiction and contends that "the author's intention was to write about the lives of peasants in her homeland and of the marginal existence that was most of their lot."<sup>66</sup> Other scholars have solved the structural puzzle of the novella in different ways.<sup>67</sup>

Why was the novella written in this split fashion? What is the relationship between the first part, which has no mention of the Japanese, and the anti-Japanese theme highlighted in the second part? Why has it been read first and foremost as anti-Japanese fiction? How is it related to earlier

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*Hulan River.*

<sup>65</sup> The book was reprinted six times in 1936, and numerous times since then. See Zhang Haining, "Preface," in *Sheng si chang* (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chuban zongshe, 2014), 3; 12-24.

<sup>66</sup> Howard Goldblatt, *Hsiao Hung*, 47.

<sup>67</sup> For example, see Lynn Kalinauskas, "The Conflation of Missing Remembrances in Xiao Hong's Fiction," in *East Asian Cultural and Historical Perspectives: History and Society / Culture and Literatures*, ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Jennifer W. Jay (Alberta: Research Institute for Comparative Literature and Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alberta, 1997), 234. Instead of dealing with the rupture in the text, Lydia Liu finds continuity from a gendered perspective. She notes that in the novella, women are the unchanging victims of the patriarchy before and after the Japanese occupation, and argues that "the female body in this novel is the field of life and death as well as the ultimate source from which the work derives its meaning." See Lydia H. Liu, "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: Manchuria in Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death*," in *Body, Subject and Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 173–4. Howard Goldblatt, too, seems to have been recently convinced by Lydia Liu's reading. See Ge Haowen, Zhang Li, "Chijiuli he Qinqiegan: Liangdai yanjiuzhe guanyu Xiao Hong de duitan," *Wenyi zhengming* (March 2011): 27.

and contemporaneous writings about Manchuria in modern Chinese literature, and how did it change the broad landscape of modern Chinese literature? In the following pages, I will approach these questions from the point of view of literary territorialization. In other words, I will try to illuminate the text of this unique novella as well as its meaning in modern Chinese literary history by examining how the author endeavored to recreate a Chinese Manchuria, what she achieved, and how her achievements were accepted by her readers.

One thing that many Xiao Hong readers know but have yet to fully comprehend is the fact that *The Field of Life and Death* is a truly *breakthrough* text. It not only is a milestone in Chinese literary history, but also literally *breaks through* both geographical and temporal “passes.” Geographically, the text travels from Manchuria to China Proper, or from *guanwai* to *guannei*. The first two chapters were written and published in Japanese Manchukuo in 1934, the first completed draft finished in Qingdao by the end of the year, and the final work published in Shanghai in 1935. The novella thus takes its shape from the author’s journey of exile. Temporally, the novella covers a timespan from before the Japanese occupation to after the establishment of Manchukuo, which is rare in Northeastern writers’ work at the time. In the 1930s, most works by Northeastern writers focus predominantly on the anti-Japanese struggle in post-occupation Manchuria, with occasional exceptions concentrating on the pre-occupation time,<sup>68</sup> but none of them resembles *The Field of Life and Death* in its effort to capture the two periods in a somewhat balanced way, or “unbalanced” to those who insist on treating the novella as essentially an anti-Japanese fiction.

To borrow the terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the writing and reading of the text can be best described as a process that involves an entanglement of territorialization,

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<sup>68</sup> One example is Duanmu Hongliang, *The Korchin Banner Plains*, which we will discuss in the next section.

deteritorialization, and reterritorialization.<sup>69</sup> The first part of the novella, depicting the rural life of Chinese peasants with no mention of a national awareness, territorializes Manchuria into a local Chinese land while at the same time deteritorializing it from any claim of sovereignty in the name of the modern nation-state. In other words, this part of the novella, started while the author was still in Manchuria under tightened Japanese surveillance, recreates a Chinese Manchuria through an obscuration of modern national identity. While remaining politically ambiguous, it embodies and gives voice to the author's personalized and gendered perspectives on land and life. The second part then reterritorializes both the geographical space of Manchuria and the textual space of the first part as distinctively modern Chinese spaces. The reterritorialization was emphasized and finalized when the text was published and read in Shanghai, which set the tone for its reception in China over the next several decades. A multi-layered territorial relationship is thus established

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<sup>69</sup> De/Re-territorialization is one of the key concepts in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, and has been well summarized in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. For Deleuze, territorialization refers to the process of making something *territorial* to a certain milieu. In the Deleuzian world, things, ranging from physical atoms to biological organs to cultural products, are constantly caught in the process of being released from one set of environmental relations and captured into another, and Deleuze uses *de-territorialization* and *re-territorialization* to denominate the two seamlessly supplemented processes. The process is permanently in motion; also, the thing itself is in constant change during the process. Deleuze finds the concept illuminating in describing and understanding many natural and social changes, such as the release of free labor from a previously productive relationship, which is crucial to the emergence of capitalist society. My work, on the other hand, is more concerned with the making and unmaking of certain geographical space, in most cases the frontier/borderland of Manchuria, a *territory* for a certain group of people through literature, and its impact on literature, politics, and the ontological experience of the authors. To be sure, making something *territorial* and making something a *territory* may not be as different/opposite as they appear, especially when I deal with an imaginary territory rather than the geographical one, such as a literary text. To make a text a territory of a certain ideological environment, and to make it territorial to the environment, seen from the result, are essentially the same thing. However, in dealing with imaginary territory, my focus is not so much on the territorialization of a cultural product *per se* as on how the process alters the territorializing relationship between the cultural product and the geographical space. Accordingly, in my work, I use *de-territorialization* to refer to the release of a geographical space from previous territorial claims in the name of certain groups of people, and *re-territorialization* as a new round of territorial claims on it. Although I evoke Deleuze's terminology not in its original sense—and Deleuze himself does not believe in the concept of an original sense—my work is generally inspired by his way of delineating the dynamics of de/re-territorialization, the involvement of a coding/decoding system, and the changes in the thing itself while being repeatedly released and captured, as can be discerned throughout my dissertation. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), and pp. 508–10 in particular.

between the geographical space and the text, which can be visualized as a dynamic topology that involves ever-changing environments, subjects, and texts. Moreover, the dynamics vividly illustrate how one of the first anti-Japanese pieces of fiction in China was invented and canonized; at the same time, the primitive energy charged with a strong gendered perspective that we see in the first part of the novella keeps defying any attempt at national territorialization, which bespeaks a unique frontier vitality and potentiality.

Furthermore, the novella marks a new development in Chinese local literature. Unlike Yu Chengze's short stories that attempt to invent a literary Manchuria largely within the existing tradition of modern Chinese local literature, Xiao Hong's traveling text contests the genre by reframing the local from the perspective of the national. Stories about the stagnant agricultural life of the Chinese peasants in Manchuria before the occupation push the local dimension of local literature to its extreme. The text not only represents the peasants' lives as specific to the local time and space of Manchuria, but also portrays them as natural and timeless existences in an almost primordial space. This emphasis on a primitive locality, prior to any national space, bears an ambivalent relationship to modern nationalism, although it establishes pre-occupation Manchuria as a homeland to the Chinese people. The following story of resistance, however, sharply transforms the primordial attachment to the native land into an explicit call for sovereignty, thus nailing the Chinese locality onto the frame of modern Chinese nationalism.

Let us start with the first part of the novella. The first two chapters, which make up a third of the pre-occupation story, were first published together under the title "The Field of Wheat" ("Maichang" 麥場) in the spring of 1934 in a supplement to the *International Association Newspaper* in Harbin, a literary periodical run by Xiao Hong and her leftist friends with a secret

connection to the Chinese Communist Party (henceforth abbreviated as CCP).<sup>70</sup> It was published in an environment of severe surveillance by the Japanese government, and therefore had gone through careful self-censorship by the author during the writing process. Scholars of Xiao Hong's work have different opinions on whether the author wrote the other chapters in the pre-occupation part in Manchukuo or Qingdao. In either case, I see them as a continuation of the first two chapters, based on their similarities in theme, scope, and style.<sup>71</sup>

Ever since the Manchukuo regime was established in 1932, the Japanese had actively interfered with cultural affairs in Manchuria so as to promote the construction of a nation-building discourse, that is, a discourse to define Manchukuo as an independent multiethnic nation.<sup>72</sup> By 1934, though the full-scale nation-building campaign had yet to be carried out, the colonial government had made it clear that messages of Chinese nationalism, Communist revolution, and anti-Japanese or anti-Manchukuo resistance would not be allowed in the public cultural sphere in Manchukuo. In other words, Chinese writers' writing was only allowed when the Chineseness it embodied was a benign ethnic identity compatible with the Manchukuo nation-building discourse. In December 1933, the Japanese had shut down a literary supplement affiliated with a different newspaper run by Xiao Hong and her friends for publishing anti-Japanese articles, and had banned

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<sup>70</sup> The chief editor of the supplement, Bai Lang, was the wife of Luo Feng, an early leader in the Manchurian Committee of the CCP. Bai Lang applied for the job of journalist and editor at the newspaper at the encouragement of Luo Feng, who was in charge of CCP propaganda in Harbin. See Jin Yuliang, *Luoying wusheng: Yi fuqin muqin Luo Feng Bai Lang* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2009), 138–5.

<sup>71</sup> According to Tie Feng, Xiao Hong finished all ten chapters of the pre-occupation part in Harbin. According to Zhang Haining, another Xiao Hong specialist, Xiao Hong was in the middle of Chapter 3 when she moved to Qingdao. Tie Feng, *Xiao Hong zhuan*, 163; Zhang Haining, “Xiao Hong de yisheng: relie er jianshi,” in *Bandao dushibao*, November 10, 2014.

[http://www.weibo.com/p/230418614307120102v525?pid=Pl\\_Official\\_CardMixFeed\\_4&feed\\_filter=1](http://www.weibo.com/p/230418614307120102v525?pid=Pl_Official_CardMixFeed_4&feed_filter=1)

<sup>72</sup> For more information about how a nation-building discourse was constructed in Manchuria, see Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*.

a collection of works by Xiao Jun and Xiao Hong for unclear political reasons.<sup>73</sup> Afterward, Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun lived in constant terror of arrest until they left Manchukuo.<sup>74</sup> In early 1934, when the same group of people opened a new literary supplement at the *International Association Newspaper*, they decided to tone down their articles to avoid censorship.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, in March 1934, one month before Xiao Hong published “The Field of Wheat,” a poem alluding to the Manchukuo anniversary celebration written by Xiao Hong’s friend was caught by censors, and the supplement was almost closed down.<sup>76</sup> It is in this context that the first two and possibly more chapters about Chinese peasants’ life in *The Field of Life and Death* were written.

Because Xiao Hong aimed to publish it in Manchukuo, the story of the hard life of Chinese peasants could not prefigure an anti-Japanese ending. Instead, the text recreates rural Manchuria as a primordial agricultural totality shared by plants, animals, and peasants in a mythical time. It also depicts Chinese peasants as natural inhabitants of a primordial totality. Moreover, this native world is exclusively Chinese, as traces of the foreigners who were common in the area are obliterated in the text. The mystification of the Chinese world, with no mention of history or politics, was apparently designed to protect the work from Japanese censorship. It may have attempted to reclaim Manchuria as an inherently Chinese land that had been unjustly occupied by

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<sup>73</sup> In December 1933, the Japanese closed down *Yeshao fukan* (Night Sentinel Supplement) of *Datong bao* (Datong Newspaper), a literary supplement Xiao Hong and her leftist colleagues initiated, because it had serialized Li Wenguang’s *Lu* (The Road), a novella about Chinese soldiers in the anti-Japanese army. In the same month, the Japanese also banned a collection of Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun’s works, titled *Ba she* (The Trudge), for its revolutionary tendency. *Ba she* (Harbin: Wuri huabao yinshua she, 1933) was published in October 1933. For a detailed account of the supplement as well as Xiao Hong’s involvement in it, see Liu Shanshan, “Fukan Yeshao yu Yeshao zuojiaqun de wenxue huodong,” *Henan keji daxue xuebao* (May 2014). For details related to *Ba She*, see Xiao Hong, “Cezi,” in *Shang shi jie* (Shanghai: Wen hua sheng huo chu ban she, 1936).

<sup>74</sup> See Xiao Hong, “Cezi,” “Jutuan,” “Bai miakong,” “Menqian de heiying,” in *Shangshijie* (Shanghai: Wen hua sheng huo chu ban she, 1936).

<sup>75</sup> See Jin Yuliang, *Luoying wusheng: Yi fuqin muqin Luo Feng Bai Lang*, 143.

<sup>76</sup> The poem is Luo Feng’s “Shaihei le nide lian,” published in *International Association Newspaper* (March 2, 1934). For the storm it caused, see Ji Hongzhen, *Xiao Hong zhuan*, 158.

a foreign power, although we are not sure whether or to what extent the author intended this. Without explicit traces of modern Chinese nationalism, however, the pre-national Chineseness of the land does not necessarily contradict the Japanese nation-building discourse of Manchukuo. Let us first consider how a Chinese-exclusive primordial totality is constructed in the first part of the novella.

What decisively portrays Manchuria as a native Chinese land in Xiao Hong's text is the deep-rooted relation between the Chinese peasants and the land, or more precisely, between the peasants and the crops and animals living on the land. Many scholars have discussed the peasants' strong ties to the animals and their excessive love for plants. The author frequently draws parallels between the stages of human existence and those of animal existence, such as aging, giving birth, and dying.<sup>77</sup> One striking and often-discussed instance is in Chapter 6, titled "Days of Punishment," where a long and compassionate description of four women's painful labors is followed by a scene of a sow giving birth at the foot of the wall.<sup>78</sup> The author also depicts women's love for plants as more intense than their love for children. For example, in Chapter 2, after Golden Bough's mother kicks her daughter for picking green tomatoes, the narrator comments, "For farming people, one vegetable or a single straw is worth more than a human being."<sup>79</sup> To further emphasize the human-plant and human-animal ties, the novella also incorporates plants, the animals, and people into a single empathetic space. In Chapter 3, when old Mother Wang drives her old horse to the slaughterhouse, "a falling leaf landed on Mother Wang's head and lay there silently. She drove her old mare ahead, wearing a yellow leaf on her head; the old horse, the old woman, the old leaf—

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<sup>77</sup> For example, see Howard Goldblatt, *Hsiao Hung*, 50–1; Liu, "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: Manchuria in Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death*," 164–5.

<sup>78</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, 47.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 23.

moved down the road into town.” Lydia Liu remarks that “The dying animal, the old woman, and the fallen leaf are coordinated in a single syntactic sequence—reminiscent of classical Chinese song-poetry—that emphasizes the process of aging involving all three.”<sup>80</sup>

I argue that this deeply rooted relationship is further manifested by a primordial intersubjective intimacy between the plants, the animals, and the peasants. In this space, humans, animals, and plants are all represented as trans-bordering subjects who cross-mimic each other’s appearance, behaviors, and feelings and communicate with each other. This world reveals itself in the first chapter:

A goat gnawed at the exposed roots of an elm tree by the side of the road.  
A little boy made his way slowly through a vegetable plot. His straw hat made him look like a big mushroom.  
Before long a limping farmer also appeared in the vegetable plot. The cabbage patch was about the same color as the goat.

...  
The goat was lonesome. It had finished its nap and its meal of bark, and was ready to go home. But no, it wasn’t heading home. It passed under the trees and listened to each whispering leaf. Might it be heading into town, too? Yes, it trotted off toward the road leading into town.

“Baa-aa — baa-aa —” The bleating of a goat? No, just someone out looking for the goat. Two-and-a-Half Li was louder than anyone, but he didn’t sound like a goat. More like a cow.

A line of carts carrying bricks passed beneath the shade trees, the drivers’ shouts wakening the goat from its nap. Still half asleep, it scratched itself with its horns. The leafy green of the trees turned its coat a pale yellow.<sup>81</sup>

The chapter, no doubt written and published in Manchukuo, tells how Two-and-a-Half Li loses and retrieves his goat. As the opening chapter of the entire novella, it also unfolds the pre-occupation Manchurian space in front of the readers. In it, boy resembles mushroom, cabbage takes on a goat’s color, man mimic a goat’s bleating, the goat feels and behaves like a human, and

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<sup>80</sup> Lydia H. Liu, “The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: Manchuria in Xiao Hong’s *Field of Life and Death*,” 165.

<sup>81</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, 5–8.

trees are reflected on the goat. Moreover, the human and non-human subjects are in constant communication with each other. Sometimes the communication goes smoothly, such as when the goat listens to the whisper of the leaves; sometimes it goes awry, as seen in Two-and-a-Half Li's cow-like bleating. Even the cross-mimicry can be seen as a type of silent dialogue, as it is a conscious or unconscious self-adjustment to surrounding elements. The depiction is at the same time a realistic narrative about what is happening in the village and a rhetorical encapsulation of the space into a world of primordial totality, in which Human/Nature and Self/Other are not clearly distinguished. As the story unfolds, other instances of the intimate relationship between humans, animals, and plants, such as the parallel between women and animals, reinforce this view of the world.

In this space of totality, every element is inseparable from it. When anything is detached from the space, trauma results. When Two-and-a-Half Li's goat crosses the boundary of this space, Two-and-a-Half Li is so eager to retrieve it that he tramples another family's vegetables and gets beaten up. He pulls up a sapling beside him but still fails to defend himself. The beating hurts him so badly that the scene repeatedly returns to him as flashbacks: "Quick, grab that little tree! Grab it! This unhappy thought kept running through his head." The flashbacks become so intolerable that Two-and-a-Half Li almost wants to sell the goat as soon as he finds it (Chapter 1). Zhao San, Mother Wang's husband, quits farming after a failed attempt to assassinate his exploitative landlord, and starts a small business selling chicken cages in town. But Mother Wang is discontented with his quitting, and he also feels embarrassed when other villagers talk about their harvest. Before long, the business fails (Chapter 5, 7, 8). The peasants seem to place such a value on the primordial agricultural space they share with the animals and plants that they try every means to keep it whole and intact. The inseparability between the peasants and the land not only intensifies their native

ties to the land, but also justifies the peasants' abhorrence of the Japanese in the latter part of the novella, when the Japanese brutally sever these ties.

Finally, Chapter 10, which closes the story of pre-occupation Manchuria, frames the preceding episodes in a temporality of timelessness. Though there have been occasional hints of a cyclic temporality reflecting the *samsara* of life and death in previous chapters, it is not until Chapter 10 that the narrator zooms out to take an extreme long shot, in both the spatial and the temporal senses: “The hill in the village and the stream at its base remained the same as ten years before. The water flowed gently, and the slope changed its garb with the season. In the village, the cycle of life and death went on exactly as it had ten years earlier.”<sup>82</sup> Though the wheel of time only turns for ten years, the way it is narrated leaves readers with the impression that the peasants have always lived in a closed world of humans and nature within an endless cycle of life and death—until the Japanese arrive.

The pre-occupation rural Manchuria is not only primordial, but also exclusively Chinese, with hardly any trace of foreign influence. Only in Chapter 9, “Epidemics,” the penultimate chapter of the pre-occupation part, do we see a passing mention of Western doctors and nurses who provide medical care for the sick but are shunned by the villagers as unwelcome “ghosts.” But if we compare the novella with historical accounts, we realize that a large part of reality was filtered out by the author so as to represent a purely Chinese Manchuria. Scholars generally believe that the village in the novella is based on Hulan, Xiao Hong’s hometown, and Acheng, where she lived for a year in 1931,<sup>83</sup> although the anonymity of the village suggests that the same story could have taken place in any village near Harbin. In any case, let us take a brief look at some historical

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>83</sup> Wang Huajue, “Shengsi chang suoyi,” in *Hulan xueren shuo Xiao Hong*, ed. Li Chonghua (Harbin: Haerbin chubanshe, 1991), 70.

accounts dealing with Hulan, a county north of Harbin and the Sungari River. The 1930 Hulan Gazetteer defines the county in the opening paragraph as a land that “chokes the throat of the frontier fortress (*e biansai zhi yaochong* 扼邊塞之要衝).”<sup>84</sup> In 1860, the Qing government lifted the ban on Han immigration to Manchuria and opened Hulan to Han agricultural immigrants, a policy that “deprived local tribal people of some of the best hunting grounds.”<sup>85</sup> Entering the twentieth century, Hulan, like Harbin and its vicinities, both struggled and prospered under foreign influences. By the 1930s, the turbulent village had witnessed the Russians’ mass railway construction, a development which had made the Russian ruble the most commonly used currency in the region,<sup>86</sup> the brutal Sino-Russo war that brought the Russian military station to the region for five years,<sup>87</sup> the flush of Japanese daily supplies under the pro-Japanese Zhang Zuolin regime until 1928,<sup>88</sup> and the eventual Japanese occupation in 1931. If we turn to Harbin, a city described as merely a half day’s walk from the village in the novella, then foreign influences would be ubiquitous.

In such a transnational environment, Xiao Hong’s representation of pre-occupation

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<sup>84</sup> Liao Feipeng. *Hulan xianzhi*, vol.1 (Harbin: xinhua yinshuguan, 1930), 2.

<sup>85</sup> Robert H. G Lee, *The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History*, 122.

<sup>86</sup> In 1899, the Russians started to construct the Chinese Eastern Railway in Hulan and expropriated a total of 37.45 square kilometers of agricultural land. Before long, the Russian ruble, or what local people called *qiang tie*, became the most commonly used currency and later the standard currency on the market until 1924. See The Bureau of Land Management of Hulan, *Hulan xian tudizhi* (Hulan Land Gazatteer) (2000), 121; Jiang Shizhong, et.al.. *Heilongjiang sheng Hulan xianzhi* (Gazatteer of Hulan in Heilongjiang) (Beijing: Zhonghua shu u, 1994), 447. For a detailed background of the Chinese Eastern Railway, see Victor Zatsepine, “Russia, Railways, and Urban Developement in Manchuria, 1896–1930,” in *Harbin to Hanoi: The Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840 to 1940*, ed. Laura Victoir and Victor Zatsepine (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 17–36.

<sup>87</sup> During the Boxer Uprising in 1900, the Russian army invaded Manchuria and besieged Hulan. Many local people joined the defense, but the Russian Army finally occupied Hulan and was stationed in the region for five years until the end of the Russo-Japanese war. See Jiang Shizhong, ed.. *Hulan shihua* (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1990), 111–3.

<sup>88</sup> Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977).

Manchuria as an exclusively Chinese world is unusual and intriguing. Xiao Hong's later works about her early life in Hulan and Harbin recount many memories related to foreigners, suggesting that the author was clearly aware of foreign influences in both urban and rural Manchuria before the Japanese occupation. However, we find no traces of such memories in *The Field of Life and Death*.<sup>89</sup> If part of Yu Chengze's reason for limiting his fiction writing to the domestic Chinese world was the constraints of the genre of modern Chinese fiction, then Xiao Hong's seemingly similar frontier representation has more to do with her active stylistic choice. Writing in 1934, Xiao Hong, unlike Yu Chengze, was well acquainted with a variety of fictional traditions, both Chinese and foreign, that deal with foreign influences of different kinds in different ways.<sup>90</sup> In addition, at the time, a transnational culture typical of the frontier/borderland space was highlighted rather than bypassed in the Manchurian Chinese literary world in general. In this regard, a glance at the newspaper page where the fourth installment of "The Field of Wheat" was published is illuminating.<sup>91</sup> Titled the "International Park," the literary supplement of the issue published two other installments of fictional works by Chinese authors. One, titled "The Easter Night"

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<sup>89</sup> In her autobiographical novel *Tales of Hulan River*, written in 1940, the narrator recalls that Uncle You was frequently disturbed by traumatic flashbacks to the Russian invasion in his dreams at night. See Xiao Hong, *Tales of Hulan River*, in *The Field of Life and Death & Tales of Hulan River*, 249–50. In her other autobiographical essays, she recalls her participation in demonstration and fundraising activities against Japan and Russia's railway expansion in Harbin as a student in 1928 and 1929, her family's failed investment in the Russian ruble since 1929, and her extensive encounters with Russian people and culture in Harbin in the early 1930s before and after the establishment of Manchukuo. See Xiao Hong, "Yitiao tielu de wancheng" (1937), "1929 nian de yumei" (1937), in *Xiao Hong quanji* 1068–79; "Ouluoba lüguan," "E" in *Shangshijie* (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1936), "Fangwen," "Suofeiya de chouku," "Chudong," in *Qiao* (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1936).

<sup>90</sup> During her middle school years between 1928 and 1930, Xiao Hong had read nearly every book by Lu Xun, Mao Dun and Guo Moruo that was kept in the school library, as well as a number of translated works by writers like Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, Guy de Maupassant, Maxim Gorky, Agnes Smedley, Upton Sinclair, and so on. In particular, Xiao Jun and Xiao Hong kept Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* at home. See Liu Junmin, "Wo de tongxue Xiao Hong," in Zhang Haining, *Xiao Hong yinxiang: jiyi* (Harbin: Heilongjiang daxue chubanshe, 2011), 186; Yuan Shijie, "Qianniufang yiji," in *Xiao Hong yinxiang: jiyi*, 199; Zhang Hua, "Waigu wenxue yu Xiao Hong de shenmei guanzhao," Wuhan daxue xuebao vol. 57, issue 5 (2004), 546; Xiao Hong "Cezi" in *Shangshijie* (Shanghai: Wen hua sheng huo chu ban she, 1936).

<sup>91</sup> Xiao Hong, "The Field of Wheat," installment 4, *International Association Newspaper*, April 24, 1934.

(“Fuhuojie zhiye” 復活節之夜), tells a story of a foreign girl migrating from her home country to Russia, and after 1917 from Russia to Manchuria.<sup>92</sup> The other, titled “Drifting” (“Langji” 浪跡), features a love story between two drifters whose final destination is a town in Northern Manchuria that borders two countries.<sup>93</sup> Surrounded by so many literary engagements with frontiers, and with foreign influences identifiable in the title of the supplement, the title of the stories and the stories themselves, the image of an exclusively Chinese Manchuria in “The Field of Wheat” demonstrates not the limitation of Xiao Hong’s literary environment, but rather her strong will to challenge it for the sake of her own agenda.

As has been shown, the author employed a variety of strategies to reconstruct pre-occupation rural Manchuria as a native Chinese world in which Chinese peasants are the natural, inherent, and exclusive human constituent. If we view this Manchurian space, well-established since the first two chapters of the novella, as the author’s self-censored response to the newly established Japanese Manchukuo, then the response can be seen as confrontational to different extents. It may simply suggest the author’s indifference to the Japanese. More radically, it may imply that Manchuria is a land of the Chinese, not the Japanese, or that the Japanese occupation and reclamation taking place in the real world merely established an exterior link to the land, while the agricultural Chinese remain its unchanging essence. Besides, although the author does not make it explicit in the novella, the peasants in her work were most likely Han Chinese, as Han Chinese made up more than 90% of the entire population in the region at the time.<sup>94</sup> If so, then a narrative

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<sup>92</sup> Xu Yi, “Fuhuojie zhiye,” installment 1, *International Association Newspaper*, April 24, 1934.

<sup>93</sup> Wei Jing, “Langji,” installment 4, *International Association Newspaper*, April 24, 1934.

<sup>94</sup> According to the statistics on Manchurian population by ethnicity quoted in *Manshū chishi* (1906), Han Chinese make up 89% of the total population in Manchuria. Quoted in Zhao Yinglan, *Qingdai dongbei renkou shehui yanjiu* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 159–60.

about their local rootedness in Manchuria stands in opposition to popular Japanese narratives about the same group of people at the same time. Throughout the 1930s, the Japanese emphasized the immigrant background of the Han Chinese population in Manchuria in political and academic publications, so as to disqualify Han Chinese from governing Manchuria and justify themselves as their legitimate and better successors.<sup>95</sup> Xiao Hong's story neither exploits nor rebuts the historical immigrant origin of the Han Chinese peasants, but nevertheless creates a fictional world that embodies a set of values, identities, and affects more typical of an indigenous people than of an immigrant community.

On the other hand, to make Manchuria a homeland to the Chinese is not equal to making it an integral part of a sovereign China. We have discussed earlier how local literature in general has the potential to undermine a homogenized national ideology. More specifically, in Xiao Hong's case, the highlighting of the Chinese local tie to Manchuria, though not incompatible with a modern form of Chinese nationalism, does not exempt the land from being reclaimed as a political territory of the Japanese multiethnic Manchukuo at the same time.

The tension between a Chinese local world and a Manchukuo nation-building discourse is best argued in Presenjit Duara's reading of another novel written by a Manchukuo Chinese writer and published in Manchukuo in the 1940s, *The Green Valley* (*Liüse de gu* 綠色的谷, 1942–1943) by Shan Ding. The novel contains far more explicitly nationalist and anti-Japanese messages than the first two chapters of *The Field of Life and Death*, such as a sarcastic comment on “goodwill” (*qinshan* 親善), the key term of Japanese imperial policy. However, the Japanese, with just an occasional cross-out of such lines, readily translated it into Japanese and presented it as a sample

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<sup>95</sup> Mariko Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 11–12.

of the multiethnic culture of Manchukuo. Duara argues that by highlighting the local world of the rural Chinese in Manchuria, the novel celebrates an indigenous authenticity, which may in effect endorse the Japanese discourse of an independent multiethnic Manchukuo. Like any nation-building discourse, a discourse that underpins the nation-building project of Manchukuo entails the construction of an authentic and timeless essence that can anchor a collective national identity. In the case of Manchukuo, the Japanese, as the apparent latecomers to the land, have to seek a potential national essence among populations with a longer history there, such as the Manchu, the Oroqen, and the Chinese.<sup>96</sup>

The Chinese world depicted in Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death* bears the same ambiguity. To be sure, it was written in 1934, when the Japanese had just started to build up Manchukuo, and not the 1940s, when they had already made sufficient connections between the local world of multiethnic people and the regime's legitimacy in the literary and cultural spheres. However, throughout the regime, Chinese writers were always eager to establish a native rural Chinese world in their works. Xiao Hong wrote towards the beginning of this period and Shan Ding took the lead later. Back in Harbin, Shan Ding had been an important author for the two literary supplements with which Xiao Hong was involved and had traveled to Harbin to meet with Xiao Hong and her friends. After most of them left Manchuria to become "Northeastern writers" in China Proper, Shan Ding, who chose to stay, started to actively promote local literature in 1938.<sup>97</sup> In this sense, Xiao Hong and Shan Ding both contributed to a tradition of Manchukuo Chinese local literature that was later absorbed into the Japanese nation-building discourse of

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<sup>96</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, 209–243, and 235 in particular.

<sup>97</sup> For more about Shan Ding and local literature in Manchukuo, see Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru "Manshūkoku" no isō* (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 2000), 87–110.

Manchukuo. Compared to the green valley in Shan Ding's work, the rural village in Xiao Hong's is even more primitive and stagnant, and closer to the image of a political entity's indigenous and timeless essence. Imagine that the latter part of the novella, starting with the Japanese flag raised high, were not about the peasants' anti-Japanese resistance but about their new life under the Manchukuo regime; with such a change, the meaning of the first part would be completely reversed. Not only would the local life of the Chinese peasants become a perfect pre-history of the new nation, but even worse, their subaltern life, if contrasted with better conditions in the new regime, would serve to justify and glorify Manchukuo.

Even a vague class consciousness cannot save the story from this ambiguity. Chapter 4 tells the story of Zhao San's failed assassination of his exploitative landlord, and Chapter 10 features the death of Mother Wang's son, a "red-beard bandit," a phrase that refers to the Communists. These two chapters were not published in Manchukuo, and we are not sure where the author wrote them, but even in Manchukuo they would not necessarily have incurred censorship. The Japanese Manchukuo, at least before the system of war propaganda was put in place in 1941, had always been tolerant of social criticism in literary works, including those targeting the exploitative relationship between peasants and landlords, as long as they did not explicitly call for a Communist revolution.<sup>98</sup> Xiao Hong's earlier stories sometimes employ tendentious narrators to utter rather obvious calls for proletarian revolution, as in "The Night Wind" ("Yefeng" 夜風, 1933), but in the first part of *The Field of Life and Death* the narrator is merely sympathetic towards the misfortunes the family suffers by having members involved in revolutionary actions. Moreover,

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<sup>98</sup> The "red beard" in Chapter 10 is a clear marker of Communism, but the narrator's attitude is ambivalent. Mother Wang is grieved by her Communist son's death and attempts suicide; Zhao San, the boy's stepfather, feels it to be "disgraceful" that his wife's suicide attempt involves a bandit case. The two voices about the death of the Communist contradict each other and cancel each other out, and no clear moral judgment can be found in the text except for a vague sympathy for a broken family.

all the radical messages in Xiao Hong's works published in Manchuria were later absorbed into Manchukuo literary history written from the Japanese perspective. In *Twenty Years of Literature in Manchuria* (*Manshū bungaku nijū nen* 滿洲文學二十年, 1944), an authoritative review of literature in modern Manchuria and Manchukuo in particular by the Manchukuo Japanese critic Ōuchi Takao (大内隆雄, 1907—1980), Xiao Hong's early works were represented as a showcase of the prosperity of Manchurian literature after Manchukuo was established and were valued as “a realistic representation of the oppressed and the violated.”<sup>99</sup> Therefore, though certain episodes in the first part of *The Field of Life and Death* can easily be read as a proletarian awakening by readers initiated into the Communist ideology, when read outside the domain of Communism their meaning becomes less clear, and would not necessarily be associated with an awareness of modern Chinese nationalism.

As we have seen, Xiao Hong's literary recreation of a native Chinese Manchuria, although written with careful consideration of Manchukuo's cultural and political circumstances, cannot completely evade recuperation by the very environment it means to bypass. Or rather, precisely because it is written in reconciliation with the environment, it is doomed to be “territorialized” by the environment from the very beginning. In the end, the recreation of Manchuria can only be an equivocal narrative, with its political implications depending on how and where the text is written, published, and read. More precisely, when an author reclaims the frontier as a native space for a certain group of people, he/she paradoxically *deterritorializes* Manchuria from any claims made in the name of a modern political entity. At the same time, this deterritorialization prepares the

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<sup>99</sup> Ōuchi Takao, *Manshū bungaku nijū nen* (Shinkyo: Kokumin Gahōsha, 1944), 334–52, and 348 in particular. Ōuchi divided modern Chinese Manchurian literary history into three periods: the pre-Manchukuo period of “Northeastern literature and art” (Tōhoku bungei), “literature and art after the foundation of Manchukuo” (kenkoku go no bungei), and “literature and art of recent years” (“kinnen rai no bungei.”) Xiao Hong was featured in the second period.

frontier for a *reterritorialization* by any power that can successfully establish a network of relations that connect the native people to the founding discourse of the regime.

My argument about the pre-occupation part of Xiao Hong's novella is not that Xiao Hong wrote to resist the Japanese occupation of Manchukuo, or that the story facilitated the nation-building project of Manchukuo. Rather, it shows how the polemics of the geographical space of Manchuria and that of frontier local literature intertwine with each other. In the archetypal discourse of the modern nation-state, where the static boundaries of a people are transformed into the state's natural boundaries, a narrative of a native homeland may perfectly serve to support the claim that it is a sovereign territory of the nation-state. However, this ideal seldom occurs in reality, especially in frontier/borderland areas like Manchuria where various peoples live and multiple powers contest the land. On the contrary, for Han Chinese people in Manchuria, the polemics lies primarily in the disparity between their constant demographic dominance and their ever-changing political status. As we have discussed, they have made up the vast majority of the total population ever since the late nineteenth century, while having been subjected to Manchu, Russian, modern Chinese, and Japanese governments since then. As a result, claiming a local tie to the land prior to any political identity is all the Han Chinese in Manchuria can do to anchor themselves with any certainty. But such a tie is a cultural resource that different political powers can appropriate for their own ends. Frontier local literature as seen in the first part of Xiao Hong's novella exemplifies this dilemma, and in this sense, it is intrinsically "Manchurian."

However, what this frontier woman writer projects onto the primitive landscape of a Chinese rural Manchuria is also a gendered mindscape that is not overwritten by a national awareness. Scholars have noted that the entire novella is deeply concerned with women's suffering caused by men or by the patriarchal society, a problem that is neither addressed nor solved by nationalist

resistance featured in the second part of the text. As Lydia Liu points out, “the author’s refusal to sublimate or displace the female body leads to a gendered position that intervenes in a nationalist discourse the novel seemingly establishes but in actuality subverts.”<sup>100</sup> In other words, the author constantly endeavors to carve out a gendered space that refuses a complete territorialization in the name of the nation. In this way, the story of the pre-national local space of Chinese rural Manchuria captures the author’s transnational gendered sensibility. Both the space and the sensibility share a frontier perspective that evades and questions “the national.” Moreover, while Xiao Hong adhered to a leftist nationalist ideology beginning when she was in Manchuria and continuing after she moved to China Proper, it is in this double frontier that she seeks her spiritual home, although not without a critical eye.<sup>101</sup> As a result, the political ambiguity caused by the complicated frontier reality paradoxically releases the author’s memories of her hometown as a woman. This critical eye gives the work the power to criticize nationalist ideology.

In June 1934, in order to flee the increasingly stringent surveillance in Manchukuo, Xiao Hong moved to Qingdao with Xiao Jun, where she finished the draft of the novella.<sup>102</sup> It is likely that while writing in this new location in China Proper, she had *guannei* coordinates in mind. According to Xiao Jun, neither of them were certain that what they were writing would meet the expectations for mainstream Chinese leftist literature, and so they wrote a letter to Lu Xun in Shanghai, the cultural leader in the leftist camp at the time, asking what kind of literature was needed in China at the moment.<sup>103</sup> Lu Xun replied, “Do not ask what is needed; ask what you can

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>101</sup> For Xiao Hong’s strong nostalgia for a spiritual “home” and its relations to her view on nation and gender, see Lynn Kalinauskas, “The Conflation of Missing Remembrances in Xiao Hong’s Fiction,” 232–3.

<sup>102</sup> For how they ended up in Qingdao, see Ji Hongzhen, *Xiao Hong zhuan* (Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2000), 158–69.

<sup>103</sup> *Xiao Jun quanji* (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2008), vol. 9, 15.

do. What is needed now is a literature of fighting. If the author is a fighter, then whatever he writes, it must be about fighting.”<sup>104</sup> Xiao Hong could not leave behind what she had already written in Manchukuo, however; she felt compelled to awkwardly proceed despite the changed environment. When Xiao Hong read the complete draft of the novella to a critic friend, the feedback was that it lacked structural coherence. Xiao Hong agreed, but said, “For now there is nothing more I can do with it, so I have to leave it as it is.”<sup>105</sup>

Although we are not sure what exactly the “mainstream” meant to Xiao Hong, the post-occupation part of the novella rescues frontier local literature from its ambiguity and invents a new type of nationalist local literature that firmly connects locality to nationality.<sup>106</sup> In other word, this new local literature of nationalism, which echoes throughout the period of the Sino-Japanese war, was invented from the frontier writer’s attempt to nationalize a frontier locality in her literature. The novella achieves this goal in two ways. First, unlike the pre-occupation story that obscures foreign influences, the post-occupation story makes foreigners, especially the Japanese, highly visible but in a negative light. It not only reinforces the exclusive Chineseness highlighted in the first part, but also straightforwardly denounces the foreigners as invaders, thus invalidating their claims to the land. Second, the story seeks to establish an explicit continuity between a primordial attachment to the land and a modern consciousness of Chinese nationalism, which, towards the end of the novella, further develops into active resistance. In this way, the second part casts the politically ambivalent first part as its foundation or prelude; it also redefines the whole novella as

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>105</sup> Mei Lin, “Yi Xiao Hong,” in *Xiao Hong yinxiang: jiyi*, ed. Zhang Haining (Harbin: Heilongjiang daxue chubanshe, 2011), 15.

<sup>106</sup> Howard Goldblatt also uses a similar term to capture the character of Northeastern writers’ writings in general: *Minzu xiangtu zhuyi* (National Localism). See Ge Haowen, “Guanwai de xiangtu wenxue,” *Ge Haowen wenji* (Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 2014), 36.

a narrative of the inception of an anti-imperial Chinese nationalism.

Chapter 11 is titled “The Wheel of Time Turns,” which indicates a shift in temporality from cyclic time to linear time, or a primitive mythical time to a modern historical time. Many readers consider this chapter to be an abrupt transition between the two parts of the novella, but the abruptness in effect bespeaks the foreignness of the Japanese as well as the innocence of the Chinese peasants in terms of foreign influences. In the chapter’s opening sentence, the Japanese makes their first appearance in the novella, symbolized by a “flag never before seen by the villagers.” They are depicted as coming from nowhere, leaving the readers with the impression that the villagers’ encounter with the Japanese is unprecedented. What follows the flag-raising scene is a series of questions asked by the villagers in a confusion of time and space: “What is happening now? Has the Chinese nation had a dynastic change?” Its implication is that the villagers have always lived in a pure and pre-modern Chinese space, and therefore can only comprehend social changes within the framework of a dynastic China. This short chapter depicts a group of Chinese who have no experience or imagination of any foreign power whatsoever; as a result, their encounter with the Japanese is a typical experience of trauma. In other words, it is an event that cannot be “assimilated into full cognition” because it is “in excess of our frames of reference.”<sup>107</sup>

In the following chapters, Japanese, Koreans, and Russians all come to the fore with their proper nationalities; nevertheless, each group is depicted as an overpowering but drifting presence, superior to the rooted Chinese and yet essentially exterior to the land. The appearance of the Japanese is symbolized by a flag *fluttering* high. Japanese motorcars whiz across with *flying dust*, and scraps of Japanese paper fall, *whirling* and whistling in the wind. Cars carrying Japanese,

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<sup>107</sup> Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 5.

Koreans, and swaggering Chinese, *flash* by “giving the impression that the people in the cars had sprouted *wings* and were *airborne*.<sup>108</sup> A Japanese airplane *flies* over, “and the sky was filled with *flying* and *flipping* scraps of paper” (Chapter 12).<sup>109</sup> The images of flying over and across indicate domination and intrusion, but also suggest transience, distance and a lack of rootedness. Later, the Russians appear in the city of Harbin, where Golden Bough seeks refuge and makes a living by sewing. Her encounters with everything Russian are depicted as a first-time and overwhelming experience, indicating that they have never been part of the more rooted world of a Manchuria inhabited by the Chinese. Golden Bough stands outside the screened window of a Russian pastry shop, gazing at a busy display of foods inside with great curiosity. When a “beautiful” Russian woman comes out, Golden Bough “hastens” to notice her red toenails, but the woman walks too fast for Golden Bough’s eyes to follow (Chapter 14).

More importantly, the story sets up a direct connection between attachment to the native land and awareness of the nation. The first step is to *relate* the loss of the native land to the loss of the nation. In the post-occupation story, the relationship between the peasants and the land is cruelly severed by the Japanese. They trample the plants and kill the animals, and men and women have to leave their home for other villages and the city in order to avoid being killed or raped. It is in the grief of being torn from their plants and animals that the peasants come to an understanding of the significance of nationhood: “The country is lost. We can no longer plant wheat, and even the animals have to die off.”<sup>110</sup> This rudimentary national awareness soon develops into a full-fledged nationalist awakening during the oath-taking ceremony of the peasant resistance troops: “The time

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<sup>108</sup> Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death*, 61.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 62, translation slightly modified.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 65, translation slightly modified.

to save our country has come. No hot-blooded person would ever submit to being a slave to the invader. ... I am Chinese! I want a Chinese flag" (Chapter 13).<sup>111</sup> The second step, then, is to *replace* the native land with the nation. This step is allegorized by Two-and-a-Half-Li's departure from his goat. Two-and-a-half-Li loves the goat more than anything else, and even when the peasant resistance troops ask him to submit the goat as a ritual sacrifice, he dodges by sending a rooster instead. However, at the very end of the novella, even the selfish Two-and-a-Half-Li departs in tears with his goat to join the resistance army (Chapter 17). At this point, primordial attachments are replaced by patriotism, and the native land is subsumed by the nation.

This nationalist and rather heroic image of resistant peasants, however, is probably also a selective reconstruction of reality. Rana Mitter, in *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*, demonstrates that narratives in Beijing and Shanghai about anti-Japanese resistance in Manchuria, though certainly not utter fabrications, nevertheless transformed armed anti-Japanese actions with different backgrounds, purposes, and forms into a uniformly heroic resistance propelled by a spontaneous and strong consciousness of Chinese nationalism.<sup>112</sup> In reality, resistance troops in Manchuria could fight for a small, individual community, or for a concept of China different from the modern nation-state.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, during the fight, most of them were involved in banditry activities such as killing and plundering, because the troops cooperated with the local bandits and were themselves short of supplies.<sup>114</sup> *The Field of Life and Death* certainly engaged in a similar embellishment of reality, although we are not sure

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>112</sup> Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*, Chapters 1, 5, 6, and 175–184 in particular.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Chapter 7, especially his case study of the Manchurian resistance leader Ma Zhanshan, 203–24.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 196–99.

whether Xiao Hong intended it or whether it was due to her limited information about resistance activities in Manchuria, since she had already left Manchuria when she wrote the second part.

In this way, the second part of the novella maintains a certain degree of continuity with the first part, because it is built largely upon messages given in the first part, either reinforcing or transforming them. Nonetheless, the discontinuity in the text, resulting from being written at two locations under two regimes, is still salient. Instead of devaluing this discontinuity as a structural failure, I want to argue that it embodies the geographical span from the frontier to the inland metropolis, as well as the political and cultural difference between them. Moreover, it also metaphorically represents the frontier writer's disrupted experience of exile. Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun's departure from Manchuria in May 1934 was a hasty decision that brought much physical and psychological turbulence to their life.<sup>115</sup> When they finally made their way to China Proper, Xiao Jun claimed that they were very excited to come back to their homeland;<sup>116</sup> however, it proved difficult to adjust from being at home in a foreigners' land to living in a homeland foreign to them—just as difficult as stitching two distinct stories into one text.

The text has not completed its journey yet. Though it was finished in Qingdao, it was published and read in its entirety in Shanghai, which again alters its relationship to the frontier space. Xiao Jun and Xiao Hong moved to Shanghai, then the cultural center of China, to evade a KMT purge of CCP-related intellectuals in Qingdao towards the end of 1934.<sup>117</sup> In Shanghai in

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<sup>115</sup> They had only a couple months to prepare for the departure. On their way from Dalian to Qingdao, Xiao Hong was extremely sick, and Xiao Jun was nearly pulled off the ship by the police. For more details about their preparation for the trip and experience during the trip, see Xiao Hong, "Bai miankong," "Menqian de heiying," "Jueyi," "Shisan tian," "Paimai jiaju," "Zuihou de yige xingqi," in *Shangshijie* (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1936); Xiao Jun, "Dalianwan shang" (1935), in *Xiao Jun quanji*, vol. 11, 79–82.

<sup>116</sup> Xiao Jun, "Dalianwan shang" (1935), *Xiao Jun quanji*, vol. 11, 82.

<sup>117</sup> In October 1934, the newspaper they worked for in Qingdao was targeted by the KMT for pro-Communist activities, and the Xiaos were quickly transferred from Qingdao to Shanghai to avoid imprisonment. See Zhang Yumao, *Xiao Jun zhuan* (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1992), 121–29.

the 1930s, unlike in Beijing in the 1920s, the idea that Manchuria formed an integral part of China had already become deeply rooted in intellectuals' minds; moreover, Shanghai metropolitans had gradually realized that they themselves were under the same threat of Japanese invasion to which Manchuria had been subjected.<sup>118</sup> This perception made Manchuria one of their central concerns, and thus created a receptive environment for Xiao Hong's novella. However, the KMT national government, in consideration of its diplomatic relationship with Japan, had prohibited both the military resistance against the Japanese in Manchuria and other forms of anti-Japanese activity in China in general, and so the novella was published by an underground publisher with the support of Lu Xun in December 1935.<sup>119</sup>

Leftist readers in Shanghai quickly discerned a possible inner continuity in the disrupted novella according to their own ideological agendas. In the book, the text was sandwiched between a preface by Lu Xun and a postscript by Hu Feng, another leading leftist critic in Shanghai. Both the preface and the postscript interpret the text as a powerful representation of the persevering struggle of the rural peasants against domestic exploiters and imperial invaders, and thus celebrate it as an exemplary work of proletarian awakening and revolution.<sup>120</sup> Hu Feng reads the first part as a story of the peasants' suffering under the "natural tyrant and the biped tyrant," and the second part as that of the peasants' even more miserable suffering brought by the foreign invaders and the domestic "slaves"—the non-resistant KMT government. In this way, the theme that runs through the whole novella is proletarian suffering that eventually leads to the peasants' awakening. As a

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<sup>118</sup> This process is well delineated in Rana Mitter's book. See *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*, Chapter 5, 6 (130–88).

<sup>119</sup> Ji Hongzhen, *Xiao Hong zhuan*, 203; 210–6.

<sup>120</sup> Lu Xun, "Xu." Hu Feng, "Duhouji," in Xiao Hong, *Shengsi chang* (Shanghai: Rongguang shuju, 1935), postscript 1–6. Also see Howard Goldblatt and Lydia Liu for a detailed analysis of the preface and the postscript. Howard Goldblatt, *Hsiao Hung*, 49–50; 52–3; Liu, "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: Manchuria in Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death*," 159–60.

result, the novella appears as a story about the origin and development of proletarian revolution, of which the anti-Japanese resistance, or what Hu Feng calls “the national revolutionary war” (*minzu geming zhanzheng* 民族革命戰爭), is but one component. Manchuria in this light becomes a revolutionary holy land, an epitome of “China’s part and whole, now and future, death and life.”<sup>121</sup> Neither of the two readers elaborates much on the native and exclusive Chineseness highlighted in the first part of the novella, since in the metropolis in China Proper, one not yet occupied by foreigners, Chineseness as such was never considered and therefore would bear little revolutionary significance.

Another popular way of reading the novella in China Proper was as an informational or educational report about Manchurian affairs. As one reader explicitly asks in the beginning of a review,

[Under the occupation,] how is their [the Manchurian Chinese’] life different from before? Are all of them, like those foreigners say, sick people and stupid and meek pigs? Have they forgotten their motherland? Are they willing to be other people’s slaves? ... For us *guannei* people, none of the questions are imaginable, but we are all very concerned about them and hope to get detailed answers, or a report about the facts.<sup>122</sup>

The author then introduces the novella. We may remember, from Yu Chengze’s case, that it was not only foreigners who used to think of Manchurian Chinese as stupid and meek pigs, but also Chinese people in China Proper. In other word, the rhetorical questions raised by this reviewer reveal a distrust of Chinese people in *guanwai* by the *guannei* people, an attitude that lasted well through the 1920s. And now their distrust was disproved by Xiao Hong’s “report about the facts.” Other reviews too value the novella as an informational introduction of Manchurian affairs.<sup>123</sup> At

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<sup>121</sup> Hu Feng, “Duhouji,” postscript 3.

<sup>122</sup> Cheng Yan, “*Shengsi chang duhouji*,” *Zhongxuesheng wenyi jikan* 2, no. 2 (1936): 8.

<sup>123</sup> For example, see Hu Feng, “Duhouji,” postscript 6; Shi, “*Shengsi chang*,” *Qinghua zhouskan* 44, no. 1 (1936):

the time in Shanghai, there existed a huge gap between the urgent concern about Manchuria and the scarcity of firsthand knowledge of it, due to both the *guannei* people's previous indifference to Manchuria and the geographical inaccessibility of this remote frontier. This informational gap propelled inland metropolitan readers to read the novella as, among other things, a factual report on Manchurian affairs.<sup>124</sup> In this mode of reading, the author's mediation involved in the represented space is flattened out, and the text is read as an immediate and transparent record of the natural and social landscape of the geographical space.

As the Sino-Japanese war approached and eventually broke out in 1937, even more emphasis was given to the episode of resistance in the latter part of the novella. When more and more literary works followed Xiao Hong's precedent to create stories about the anti-Japanese resistance in rural China, her novella was retrospectively deemed a pioneering milestone of anti-Japanese literature. In this way, Xiao Hong's novella became canonized in Shanghai, but only as the textual-spatial relationship was altered, the rich spatiality embedded in the text obscured.

To conclude, Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death* was possible only because it was written and read in three places from the frontier to the inland metropolis, and under two regimes, the Japanese and the Chinese. The text addresses two central concerns from a frontier perspective: it defines Manchuria in relation to a Chinese identity, and it represents a female experience of

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84; Bai Li, "Shengsi chang," *Dushu shenghuo* 4, no. 9 (1936): 487.

<sup>124</sup> Rana Mitter, in his discussion of the propagandist reports on the anti-Japanese activities in Manchuria written by nationalist activists exiled from Manchuria, argues that the geographical and political inaccessibility of Manchuria at the time facilitated the more or less exaggerated statement of Manchurian resistance to gain more credits among readers in Beijing and Shanghai. See Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*, 175. This certainly applies to the case of the reception of Xiao Hong's novella too. Chinese people in China Proper had been indifferent to Manchuria for a long time; after 1931, though people's passions about the land were aroused, they were no longer able to enter the region freely and safely due to the Japanese blockade. See, for example, Li Huiying's "Huanxiangji" and Wang Kedao's *Cong Weiman guilai* for what it was like to travel to Manchuria in the 1930s. Li Huiying, "Huanxiangji," *Zaisheng ji* (Shanghai: Xinzong shuju, 1936), 247–72; Wang Kedao, *Cong Weiman guilai* (Shanghai: Duli chubanshe, 1939).

suffering that subtly subverts the nationalist discourse. These two somewhat paradoxical concerns make up the internal driving forces that sustain the text, but both were more or less bypassed during the reading process in the inland metropolis. The novella reveals the complicated relations involved in the literary territorialization of a frontier/borderland space, as well as the frontier writer's and inland readers' engagement with it. As a classic text of modern Chinese literature and one of the origins of anti-Japanese literature, the novella crosses textual and geographical boundaries, fuses the two poles of modern Chinese local literature, and opens a new page of modern Chinese literature, while leaving numerous elusive traces for later readers to (re)interpret.

### ***The Korchin Banners Plain: The Frontier through a Manchu's Eyes***

While Yu Chengze deals only with Chinese communities in the frontier/borderland space of Manchuria, Xiao Hong represents Manchuria as an antagonistic space contested by the Chinese peasants and the Japanese invaders. In both their works, however, one important constituent of the Manchurian frontier is missing—its ethnic minorities.

This section discusses the narrative of Manchurian ethnic life in the Northeastern writer Duanmu Hongliang's novel *The Korchin Banner Plains*, written in 1933 and published in 1939. Completed one year before Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death* and five times as long, this ambitious novel narrates the vicissitudes of a wealthy and powerful Han Chinese landlord family in the Korchin Banner, based on the author's own family history. Korchin Banner is a Mongolian land in West Manchuria inhabited by Han Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, and other minority groups, and was partially occupied by the Japanese in 1931.<sup>125</sup> The novel unfolds a multi-layered natural

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<sup>125</sup> For more about the geography and history of Korchin Banner, see *Jiuzhi hebi* (Changtu: Changtu xianshi bangongshi, 1996).

and social frontier landscape, where the Han Chinese, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Japanese, the Russians, and the Koreans are all woven into a complicated web of relations centering on the Ding, a Han family. Written when the author was only twenty-one, this debut novel has been highly evaluated by C.T. Hsia, who asserts that it had the potential to win “eventual recognition as the greatest Chinese novel produced in the thirties” had its publication not been delayed from 1934 to 1939.<sup>126</sup> Chinese scholars, too, regard the novel as an incomparable epic about the Manchurian plains.<sup>127</sup> However, one fact that often passes unnoticed is that this story of a Han family, otherwise highly autobiographical, is written by a Manchu author. In other words, although Duanmu Hongliang came from a Manchu family, he transposed the literary counterpart of his family into the Han ethnicity.

By portraying the Han family as the frontier’s superpower, the author redefines *guanwai* not merely as a land that is part of the modern nation of China, but more specifically as a multiethnic land dominated by the Han Chinese. The novel can be seen as an early but ambitious example of literary participation in the ongoing intellectual construction of a Han-centered multiethnic Chinese racial and territorial identity in the early and mid-1930s. For a Manchu author to fulfill this mission in an epic autobiographical novel involved not only a simple substitution of the ethnicity of his real family with a fictional one, but also a complete inversion of the ethnic family history the author had experienced, as well as the ethnic relations involved in it. The ahistorical

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<sup>126</sup> C.T. Hsia, “The Korchin Banner Plains: A Biographical and Critical Study” (1982), in *On Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 346. The book was finished in 1933, but was turned down by Beijing publishers because Duanmu refused to cut out politically sensitive content at the publisher’s request. In 1936, Duanmu brought the draft to Shanghai, where he found a publisher who agreed to publish it. However, before long the printing process was suspended due to the breakout of the Sino-Japanese war in Shanghai in August, 1938. The book finally came out in 1939. For more about the publication of the book, see Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan* (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2011), 62–3; 73; 100.

<sup>127</sup> For example, see Qian Liqun, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sanshinian*, 311; Ma Yun, *Duanmu Hongliang yu Zhongguo xiandai wenxue* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2001), 210–3.

treatment of ethnicity highlights an extreme case of the fictionality upon which the literary construction of a Han-centered, multiethnic Manchurian frontier is built. This fictionality in turn bespeaks the author's conformity to and negotiation of the broader discursive environment concerning the Chinese frontier and ethnicity in China Proper. By examining this talented but troubled minority writer's frontier saga, I will delineate the intricate and ironic relationship between the the minority subject and the literature and history involved in the discourse of a Han-centered multiethnic Chinese identity.

At first glance, the mismatch between the author's real ethnic background and that in his fiction seems to deserve little consideration. First, being a Manchu appears insignificant to both the author and his readers. Even today, not everyone who reads Duanmu Hongliang in China knows his ethnic identity; those who do know make little of it. His most famous fictional works all feature Han Chinese protagonists, including *The Korchin Banner Plains*. It appears that for Duanmu, "Manchu" means nothing more than an ethnic indicator that often follows his name in formal introductions. Second, *The Korchin Banner Plains* is, after all, a work of fiction, and there is nothing unusual in the embellishment of real family stories with fictional background in such a work.

However, a closer look suggests that the truth is probably the opposite. In fact, after the publication of the novel, Duanmu made several attempts to invite an autobiographical reading of it, especially in terms of family background. At the same time, he was extremely sensitive about the ethnic background of his protagonists in the novel and other related writings, where he deliberately and cautiously highlighted a Han identity at the expense of a Manchu identity. The result is that many readers read his fictional writing autobiographically and believed that the author, just like his protagonists, was Han. It is precisely this thoughtful cover-up that betrays the weight

of the ethnic issue to the author and his works.

In 1940, one year after the novel was published, Duanmu published a novella titled *The Pre-History of Korchin* (*Keerqin qianshi* 科爾沁前史).<sup>128</sup> The novella has a misleading title and reads so much like nonfiction that almost all critical readers, including C.T. Hsia, have taken it as an autobiographical memoir that was intended as a background introduction to his novel. In this novella-titled-as-history, the author buries the narrator's family stories, as he does in the novel, in a long narrative about the history of Han expansion in the plain. The piece not only leaves the readers with the impression that the author, too, comes from a Han family, but also encourages an autobiographical reading of the preceding novel. To be fair, the narrator does mention in passing that his ancestor used to wear a yellow belt, which is an indicator of members of the Qing royal family.<sup>129</sup> However, this detail would not catch uninformed readers' eyes. The autobiographical reading of the novel is further authorized by an essay published by Duanmu in 1942, titled "My Writing Experience" ("wode chuangzuo jingyan" 我的創作經驗).<sup>130</sup> Here Duanmu states that all of the characters and stories in *The Korchin Banner Plains* have a firm factual basis, to the extent that he often wrote his own family name "Cao" instead of "Ding" in the draft. It was not until Duanmu's very late years that he made explicit clarifications that overturned readers' assumptions. In one interview, he revealed that *The Pre-History of Korchin* was in fact a work of

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<sup>128</sup> Duanmu Hongliang, *Keerqin qianshi*, serialized in *Shidai Piping* from December 16, 1940 to February 16, 1941.

<sup>129</sup> The yellow belt (*huang daizi*) was the symbol for the Qing royal family. Note that it is a different concept from the Yellow Banner, one of the banners in the Qing banner system. See *Lidai guanzhi jiansi* (Liaoning Sheng bo wu guan, 1976), 91. For more information about the historical and cultural meaning of the yellow belt, see Li Yingfa, "Huang daizi he hong daizi," in *Wenshi shiqu, Book I* (Shanghai: Shanghai fanyi chuban gongsi, 1986), 51–6.

<sup>130</sup> Duanmu Hongliang, "Wode chuangzuo jingyan", *Wenxue bao* 1(1942), 13–4; 30–1.

fiction, published in a magazine's fiction column;<sup>131</sup> in another, he explained that *The Korchin Banner Plains*, highly autobiographical otherwise, does not reflect the true ethnic identity of his own family.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, one revision of the novel by the author further demonstrates his obsession with the issue of ethnicity. In the first edition published in 1939, the ancestor of the Ding family, a Han immigrant from Shandong to Manchuria, marries a "Manchu girl" (*manzhu shaonü* 滿珠少女). Because this girl is introduced as the only wife of the Ding ancestor, a logical inference is that all Ding descendants are half Han and half Manchu by blood. In all later versions, however, the modifier "Manchu" before the word "girl" is gone.<sup>133</sup> The author kept the narrator's descriptions of the girl that mark her Manchu identity, such as the fact that she does not have bound feet and that she does her hair in a square shape, but uninitiated readers could easily miss these ethnic cues or, at least, take the girl's ethnic identity less seriously. In short, through revision, the interethnic background of the Ding family is obscured, and the Han aspects of the family are highlighted.

Paul de Man, in "Autobiography as Defacement," considers autobiography not as a literary genre or mode, but as moments that occur in the process of reading or understanding; not as an inherent or embedded nature of the text, but as a legal contract between the author and the readers.<sup>134</sup> In this light, Duanmu's secondary writings following the publication of the novel can

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<sup>131</sup> Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan*, 10.

<sup>132</sup> Fu Hu, "Wenzi dixia de xuelei gushi: Fang lao zuojia Duanmu Hongliang," *Kangzhan wenyi yanjiu* 2 (1984), 121.

<sup>133</sup> See Duanmu Hongliang, *Keerqinqi caoyuan* (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1939), 17–8: "...A Manzhu girl joined the family." Manzhu, 滿珠, is another term for Manchu. In all late editions, the word "Manzhu" disappeared. See *Keerqinqi caoyuan* (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1956), 14; *Keerqinqi caoyuan* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), 13; *Keerqinqi caoyuan* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1997), 14; *Duanmu Hongliang wenji*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1998), 17, and all later editions available.

<sup>134</sup> Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," *MLN* 94, no. 5 (December 1979): 21–2.

be read as supportive documents that have presented the readers with many more autobiographical moments than the novel itself is committed to, thus pushing the contractual relationship between the author and the readers from one of fiction towards one of autobiography. The fact that Duanmu had to make explicit clarification late in life to invalidate autobiographical readings of his fiction further proves the success of his maneuver. Examined from this perspective, the author's repeated obscuration of his protagonists' ethnic background in a series of works is by no means insignificant, but invites further investigation as a symptom of, if not a self-fashioned resolution to, his difficult negotiation of the issue of ethnic identity, which, as I will show, pervades the novel.

At this point, a brief review of Duanmu's true biography in its historical context may help. Although the author's evasive attitude to his family history makes this task more challenging than it should be, scholars have been able to put together a relatively objective picture based on his memory, his brother's memory, and other historical materials.<sup>135</sup> Duanmu Hongliang, original name Cao Jingping, was born to a wealthy Manchu family in Changtu, the political center of the Korchin Banner plains, in 1912; he was brought up in a domestic and social environment where Han identity was privileged over Manchu identity. His great-grandfather, wearing a yellow belt, was possibly a descendent of Nurhaci, the ancestor of the Qing royal family. However, his father seems to have been extremely fascinated by China Proper and the Han Chinese culture. He used the word "han" in all four of his sons' names as the generation marker, usually the first character in a first name, and so Duanmu was named Cao Hanping, which he later changed to Cao Jingping.<sup>136</sup> In Duanmu's late years, he recalled that his father often made trips to Southern China

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<sup>135</sup> For example, see Sun Yihan, "Keerqinqi caoyuan qingjie yu lishi de zhenshi," *Manzu yanjiu* 1 (2000): 76–83; Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan*.

<sup>136</sup> After Duanmu went to Tianjin for middle school education, he changed his name to Cao Jingping. Two more brothers changed their names following Duanmu's precedent. Only one brother kept his original name throughout his life, Cao Hanqi. Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan*, 17.

and had been deeply influenced by the many types of new thought in China Proper. In particular, many Han Chinese revolutionaries at the time advocated anti-Manchuism and rose up to overthrow the Manchu Qing dynasty. This too was easily accepted by Duanmu's Manchu father. While at home, his father subscribed to several newspapers from China Proper and strictly avoided opium.<sup>137</sup> When Duanmu grew up, his rich and enlightened father sent him to Tianjin for a middle school education, and in 1932, he entered the Department of History at Qinghua University in Beiping.<sup>138</sup>

At the time, Manchu identity was cruelly suppressed in China Proper and in Manchuria to a lesser degree.<sup>139</sup> By the time Duanmu was born in Manchuria, Manchu people in Manchuria had adopted Han culture in almost all aspects of daily life, and Duanmu recalled that in his childhood everyone around him spoke Mandarin.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, after the Qing dynasty fell in 1911, one year before Duanmu was born, the Manchu people in Manchuria had lost the political and economic privileges they had once enjoyed, and were thus quickly marginalized.<sup>141</sup> We are not sure to what extent the 1911 revolution and its aftermath influenced Duanmu's father, as he seems to have lost neither his life nor his fortune during those turbulent years.<sup>142</sup> In Tianjin and Beiping, where

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<sup>137</sup> Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan*, 13–4. For more about anti-Manchuism before and during the 1911 revolution, see Shao Dan, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907–1985* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011), 69–74.

<sup>138</sup> For more about his education in Tianjin and Beijing, see Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan*, 36–58.

<sup>139</sup> For the suppression of Manchu identity before, during and after the 1911 revolution in China Proper and Manchuria, see Shao Dan, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907–1985*, 69–88.

<sup>140</sup> Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan*, 8.

<sup>141</sup> For more about the political and economic marginalization of the Manchu people and other Banner people in Manchuria, see Shao Dan, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907–1985*, 88–90.

<sup>142</sup> Duanmu's family was extremely rich during Duanmu's childhood. For example, due to the high exchange rate between currencies in Manchuria and in China Proper, it took a great fortune for a Manchurian to send four sons to Tianjin for a middle school education. See Duanmu Hongliang, “Woshi zenyang xiezuo qilai de?” *Xuesheng*

Duanmu spent his formative years, many Manchu people hid their Manchu identity and passed as Han so as to evade severe ethnic discrimination from Han people.<sup>143</sup> Manchu writers in China Proper, too, were subject to ethnic oppression or repression; few revealed their ethnic identity in real life or their works in the 1930s and earlier.<sup>144</sup> In this sense, Duanmu was not an isolated case of a Manchu writer troubled by his ethnicity.

However, what is uniquely intriguing about Duanmu is that, on the one hand, he is coy about the implication of minority status regarding his autobiographical protagonists; on the other, he is blatantly enthusiastic in depicting the colorful and intricate frontier ethnic landscape. This tension makes Duanmu a complicated case instead of a wary, self-censoring Manchu writer, because he could simply, like almost all other Manchu writers of the time, have avoided the motif of ethnicity entirely. A good contrast would be Lao She, arguably the most renowned Manchu Chinese writer. He was deeply concerned about the fate of Manchu people in the modern Chinese nation and published two masterpieces featuring the Manchu community during the PRC regime, but his works published during the Republican period never even allude to Manchu people due to the antagonistic environment.<sup>145</sup> By contrast, Duanmu's strategy in *The Korchin Banner Plains* was to confront, rather than evade, the multiethnic constitution of the Manchurian frontier, while highlighting the Han identity of the dominant family.

In doing so, the author situated his work in the broader intellectual discourse of a Han-

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Zazhi 12, no. 9 (1940): 17–29.

<sup>143</sup> Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China 1861–1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 268–70.

<sup>144</sup> Lu Di and Guan Jixin, eds., *Dangdai Manzu zuojia lun* (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 2004), 7.

<sup>145</sup> Lu Di and Guan Jixin, eds., *Dangdai Manzu zuojia lun*, 7. The two works are the play *Chaguan* (written in 1956, premier performance in 1958) and the unfinished novel *Zheng hongqi xia* (written in 1961 and 1962, unfinished, published in 1980). Beijing: Renmin wenzxue chubanshe, 1980)

centered multiethnic Chinese racial and territorial identity that was taking shape in China Proper in the early and mid-1930s. After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the problem of ethnic minorities in Manchuria suddenly became an extremely important and sensitive issue in China Proper. In order to counteract the Japanese separatist activities in Manchuria and Mongolia based on the discourse of “national self-determination,” Chinese historians, anthropologists, and ethnologists worked hard to argue that minorities in Manchuria and other frontiers surrounding China Proper were inherent members of the nation of China.<sup>146</sup> Driven by a predetermined conclusion, their extensive and otherwise productive studies of minorities across fields share a common perspective of Han-centralism and treat minority populations as the Sinicized outer rims of the Han community.<sup>147</sup> In the mid-1930s, scholars further put forward the identity of a Chinese race (*Zhonghua minzu*) that would include all ethnic groups in China, so as to further consolidate China Proper and its frontiers into an indiscriminate territorial whole.<sup>148</sup> Duanmu wrote his novel in 1933, when scholars were trying hard to prove the inseparable—but not necessarily equal—historical and cultural relationship between the Han and frontier minorities, especially those in

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<sup>146</sup> Examples include historian Fu Sinian’s *An Outlined History of the Northeast* (*Dongbei shigang*) (1933), anthropologist Ling Chunsheng’s *The Hezhe People in the Lower Reaches of Songhua River* (*Songhuajiang xiayou de Hezhezu*) (1934), historians Gu Jiegang and Shi Nianhai’s *A History of Chinese Territory* (*Zhongguo jiangyu yangeshi*) (1936), and so on. For more, see Ge Zhaoguang, *Hewei Zhongguo* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2014), 90–109.

<sup>147</sup> For example, Prasenjit Duara discusses how Ling Chunsheng reconstructed the historical connections between the Han Chinese in China proper and the Hezhe people in the Northeast by locating and examining records of Hezhe people in Han historiographies; Ge Zhaoguang argues that Gu Jiegang’s idea of the history of Chinese territory is a constant process of an outward territorialization by Han Chinese from the center. Shao Dan, too, points out that Ling Chunsheng’s study of frontier minorities defined them as culturally inferior, and that scholars of ethnography and frontier studies (*bianjiang yanjiu*) in China Proper in the 1930s and the 1940s in general equated Han culture with Chinese culture and “viewed the Han expansion in history in as evidence of the irresistible power of Chinese culture to acculturate and civilize others.” Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, 194–5; Ge Zhaoguang, *Hewei Zhongguo*, 103; Shao Dan, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria*, 1907–1985, 176–7.

<sup>148</sup> For more about this process, see Ge Zhaoguang, *Hewei Zhongguo*, 75–109. In the book, he draws upon an ancient Chinese phrase to define the process as that of “bringing frontiers of four directions into China” (*na siyi ru Zhonghua*).

Manchuria. As a student of history at one of the best universities in China, he must have been aware of the ongoing discussion. As a talented minority writer, however, he engaged with the issue through literature.

We are now ready to move to the text of *The Korchin Banner Plains*, to examine how it fictionalizes ethnic history and why this fictionalization is significant. In the novel, ethnic history is fictionalized in a way that justifies a Han-centered multiethnic frontier through a double displacement of history with myth and figure. It therefore supplements and subtly problematizes the approach adopted by academic scholars, mostly Han, who based their arguments primarily on locating and interpreting historical accounts. At the same time, in each type of displacement we find reoccurring paradoxes and dilemmas that betray the author's covert attachment to minority life, culture, and people. In the multifold chiaroscuro between the highlighted Han and the shadowed minorities, the absence of history and the presence of story outline a self-contradictory subject at the intersection of major and minor ethnic identities. Through the utterance of a heavily mediated minority voice, the novel urges us to reflect on the intellectual construction of the multiethnic Chinese race and Chinese frontier not only methodologically, but also ontologically.

From the very beginning of the novel, the narrator displaces history with an anti-myth myth-making. The first chapter depicts the initial migration of the Han Chinese, who were driven by a flood some two hundred years ago to the lands of the Manchus and the Mongols. At the time, Han immigration to Manchuria was illegal, and the immigration necessarily involved the illegal appropriation of the indigenous people's land.<sup>149</sup> However, the narrator bypasses these historical ambiguities by representing the migration as an epic of human resistance against their doomed fate.

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<sup>149</sup> The Qing rulers lifted the ban on Han immigration to Manchuria in 1860. For the history of illegal and legal immigration of Han Chinese to Manchuria, see Robert H.G. Lee, *The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History*, 78–115.

The chapter starts in a mythical tone: “This is a tale that all descendants by Lake Cilu can repeat from their memory, and is the most unforgettable and grievous piece of memory among all.”

Immediately afterward, the narrator compares the journey of refuge to a divine punishment:

This snake-like caravan bears the most inauspicious fate of a human being, wretched and deprived, like the snake that has been driven out of the Garden of Eden by the God’s magic wand. In the scorching poisonous wind, they flatten their feet uneasily on the trunk road covered by burnt sands. They hope, they tremble, and they march towards the country of the “Manzhouzi,”<sup>150</sup> the once forbidden kingdom.<sup>151</sup>

What follows is a lengthy description of human suffering along the journey: flood, hunger, thirst, heat, plague, insanity, and death. The flood reminds us of the Flood in Genesis or other flood myths, and the repeated mention of the flies and the inauspicious appearance of a toad seem to allude to the biblical plagues of flies and frogs in Exodus, which are also forms of divine punishment.<sup>152</sup> The migrants are described as people “abandoned by the human world” who therefore must “recreate their own fate with their own hands.” Later, the migrants’ accusation that their homeland government has neglected its duty of water-control changes the source of their misfortune from divine punishment to man-made calamities. But the migrants themselves, out of desperation, start to pray to their local god, the Sky God (*tianshen* 天神), for mercy.<sup>153</sup> During the prayer, however, a woman becomes insane and disturbs the ritual. At a critical moment, an old man named Ding, the ancestor of the Ding family, shows up and calms the insane woman by chanting incantations.

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<sup>150</sup> According to the author’s note, it is a disparaging name for Manchu. See *Duanmu Hongliang wenji*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1998), 5.

<sup>151</sup> *Duanmu Hongliang, Keerqinqi caoyuan*, 1.

<sup>152</sup> In Exodus, frogs and the flies were plagues Israel’s God inflicted upon Egypt to persuade the Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery and let them leave the country.

<sup>153</sup> *Tianshen*, or the deity Sky God, is a Chinese god who lives in the sky, holds court in the celestial realm, and keeps a record of every human action. Miriam Van Scott, *Encyclopedia of Heaven* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 250.

When asked, he answers that all of the sufferings are ordeals he sent to test the people, and he is then worshipped by the people as their own Half-Celestial (*banxian* 半仙). Finally, the narrator briefly relates how the community settles down in their new land; the chapter ends with a statement that “this is a tale that everyone by the Lake of Cilu can tell and everyone by the Lake of Cilu, like the descendants of the Ding family, firmly believes in.”

Apparently, the author is obsessed with the making and unmaking of myth. On the one hand, he frames the whole story of the origin of the Han Chinese in Manchuria as a mythical tale rather than a historical narrative. His narrative of the Han immigration is dominated by the entanglements among men, gods, and the half-man-half-god, whereas the indigenous minority people, from whom the Han immigrants have procured land and other supplies, are almost non-existent. In doing so, he successfully replaces the tension of the Han-minority relationship necessarily involved in the history of Han immigration to Manchuria with that of a human-God relationship. On the other hand, however, he makes it clear that gods are all man-made, thus unmaking the people’s myths. The narrator, in both the prayer and the chanting scenes, conveys the message that gods are human creations used when people need a transcendental power, which is a typical materialistic understanding of myth and religion popular among enlightened intellectuals in China of the time.<sup>154</sup>

In the second chapter, the narrator again displaces a story potentially about ethnic conflicts with one about myth-making. The chapter tells how Great-Grandfather Ding decisively expands

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<sup>154</sup> Criticism of superstition in the name of science started with the May Fourth Movement in 1919. At the same time, religion became an issue of controversy. During 1922–1927, a long Anti-Religion Movement (*fanzongjiao yundong*) was launched, and many students were involved in it. One major theory they used to criticize religion was Marxist Materialism. For more about controversies over the problem of religion before, during and after the May Fourth Movement, see Yang Jianlong, *Jidujiao wenhua dui wusi xinwenxue de yingxiang* (Taipei: Xinrui wenchuang, 2012), 23–100. For the Anti-Religion Movement, see Ka-che Yip, *Religion, Nationalism, and Chinese Students: The Anti-Christian movement of 1922–1927* (Bellingham: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 1980).

his land and power by entrapping the biggest local landlord, “the North Heaven King” (“Beitianwang” 北天王), in jail. From the story, we know that the North Heaven King is a high-ranking officer directly associated with the Qing central government as well as a hypersexual Buddhist master, and a well-informed reader can gather that he is likely to be a Manchu or a Mongol.<sup>155</sup> However, the story does not explicitly indicate his ethnic identity. Great-Grandfather Ding has been coveting the North Heaven King’s land for a long time; quite coincidentally, the local magistrate wants to sweep the North Heaven King from power. The two, brought together by their common enemy, scheme a ceremony of sorcery, during which the sorceress accuses the North Heaven King of conspiracy against the Court in the voice of a fox spirit and identifies Great-Grandfather Ding as the fox-spirit-blessed person who deserves more fortune by the will of the divine. In this way, Great-Grandfather Ding eliminates the North Heaven King and takes over all of his land with the help of the magistrate.

This chapter, too, reveals the author’s obsession with myth. The chapter is in essence a story about how a Han Chinese immigrant, with no legal right to any land in Manchuria at the time, colludes with a government officer to seize the land of a local minority landlord. In Qing history, the Han Chinese immigrants’ land reclamation in Manchuria was a serious social problem and a major reason for the economic marginalization of the Manchus and other Banner people in Manchuria.<sup>156</sup> In the novel, however, because the ethnic identity of the North Heaven King and the historical background of the whole story are obscured, a potential ethnic conflict is cast as witchy strife between two greedy exploiters. While mystifying ethnic history himself, the author

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<sup>155</sup> As later discussion will show, Duanmu’s description of Buddhist culture and architecture in his writing mostly comes from his memory of the Mongol Buddhist temples in his hometown.

<sup>156</sup> Shao Dan, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907–1985*, 44–5.

casts his character's myth-making in a negative light, as it is represented as part of an evil scheme.

Moreover, if we move our focus from story to discourse, we immediately notice the implied author's fascination with myth-writing. In the first two chapters, the author indulges in a busy depiction of all kinds of supernatural details. The description of divine signs in the migration journey in the first chapter and the focus on every sound and image of the sorcery ceremony in the second continue page after page and make up a considerable proportion of each chapter. In the rest of the novel, two more chapters involve heavy myth-writing. Chapter Sixteen is wholly devoted to the Buddhist ritual that the young protagonist's mother holds after his father's death, even though at the end of the previous chapter, the protagonist utters unveiled criticism of his mother's "superstitious" plan to hold a religious ritual. The last chapter and the climax of the whole novel portrays mass anti-Japanese resistance on a night following the Manchurian Incident, but the story of revolution is ironically rendered under the guise of fantasy, featuring a mysterious bandit chieftain of obscure origin and background as the revolutionary leader. This chieftain, after overhearing a rumor that the Japanese have launched a sudden occupation of the neighborhood area, miraculously transforms his bandit troops into an Anti-Japanese Volunteer Force (*kangri yiyongjun* 抗日義勇軍) and mobilizes sweeping violence against townspeople who either have a connection with the Japanese or have oppressed the poor. The stunning scene of a sea of people, bandits and civilians alike, who hold torches high in the dark night and are hell-bent on destroying anything to do with the Old World, in Hsia's words, evokes "a vision of a new Jerusalem in Manchuria," one that is "divorced from reality."<sup>157</sup>

How should we account for the author's passion for myth? Admittedly, myth-writing plays a crucial role in both the ethical and aesthetic formation of the novel. It obscures the ambiguities of

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<sup>157</sup> C.T Hsia, *On Chinese Literature*, 364–5.

the historical ethnic encounters and justifies the Han as the proper center of the frontier. It also demonstrates the author's aesthetic appreciation of the cultural and social landscape there. But more importantly, myth reveals the author's inner identification with minority life. Studies have shown that most of the sorcery scenes depicted in the novel are in fact Shamanic ceremonies, a religious tradition common to the Tongus people, including the Manchus and the Mongols.<sup>158</sup> In addition, the depiction of Buddhist temples may have been drawn from the author's familiarity with Mongol Buddhist temples. In *The Pre-History of Korchin*, the narrator recalls that when he lived in Manchuria, he was always fascinated by a huge Lama temple in his town, where Sengge Rinchen, the famous Mongol general of the Qing era, had studied.<sup>159</sup> In short, many mythical scenes in the novel are made possible only because of the author's life experience as an ethnic minority, and the author's indulgence in myth-writing, therefore, bespeaks his intensive emotional attachment to that part of his life.

If this is the case, then the author's obsession with myth is a subversion of a subversion. First, to bypass history through myth means that the author suppresses his personal minority connections by means of what he aims to suppress, as it is the author's minority self that provides him with sources that enable him to displace his minority family history in fiction. Accordingly, although the author's own minority identity is suppressed in the storyline, it is overcompensated for by a surge of minority sensibility expressed discursively. Second, the author's passion for myth constantly challenges his own critical attitude towards the characters' conjurations. As a result, the narrator keeps calling into question the very foundation upon which the author fictionalizes ethnic

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<sup>158</sup> Yan Qiuhong, *Xiandai Dongbei wenxue yu Samanjiao wenhua* (Guangzhou: Jinan daxue chubanshe, 2012), 33–54.

<sup>159</sup> Duanmu Hongliang, *Keerqin qianshi*, *Shidai piping* 60 (1940): 18–9. For more about Sengge Rinchen (1811–1865), see James Z. Gao, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Modern China (1800–1949)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 312.

history, to the extent that a careful reader may feel unconvinced: Why should one follow the author's mythical narrative to make sense of the ethnic social life on the remote Manchurian frontier, if his own autobiographical narrator constantly denies the legitimacy of his characters' myth-making? Does the narrator's criticism of myth-making not render the author's mythical narrative guilty? In the end, readers are left with a permanent indeterminacy between the making and unmaking of myth.

Aside from myth, ethnic history is also displaced with figure. In the novel, the author maps out a Han-centered, multiethnic familial structure as a figuration of the larger and more abstract social-ethnic structure. Because ethnicity is traditionally determined by male lineage, all men in the Ding family are considered Han descendants, although statistically speaking, their Han blood has probably been heavily diluted after generations of cross-ethnic intermarriage. The wife of the featured patriarch in the novel, the young protagonist's mother, is also Han. However, the wife of the Ding ancestor in the first chapter, whose ethnicity indicator was later crossed out by the author, is a Manchu, and a concubine of the patriarch Ding's brother is a Mongol. The use of a multiethnic family embodies and naturalizes the abstract conception of ethnic unification in the form of a blood bond, while the gendered distribution of ethnicity, with Han males in the center and minority females at the remote margins of the family, indicates hierarchical ethnic relations. In short, this map of familial topology can be read as an epitome of the author's configuration of the social-ethnic topology of the frontier space, which corresponds to that outlined by academic scholars of the time.

The implied parallel between gender and ethnic power relationships, however, implies a powerful critique of the mainstream discourse of frontier ethnicity, although we cannot be sure that the author intended it. If we apply the classical theory of gender politics here, we may argue

that even though ethnic relations are *naturalized* in the ethnic-gender analogy, they are not *natural*, just as no gender relations are natural. It is widely acknowledged that subjection of female family members to the patriarch often implies political oppression; articulation of their victimization is one powerful way to empower them. Ethnic relationship in the Ding family, too, can be read as not only an embodiment of a Han-centered, multiethnic discourse of ethnicity, but also a critique of it. By effeminating minorities as marginalized women who are kind and nice but underprivileged and marginalized, the text implies an ethnic relationship that is not only interdependent, but also oppressive, and speaks in a doubly wounded voice that may lead to the empowerment of both women and minorities.

The first wounded voice comes from the Ding ancestor's Manchu wife, an adorable minority girl:

This young girl has a pair of black and shining eyes, in which a boundless timidity is often reflected as an expression of her kind loyalty to the old man. Working is all her life, and she has no more thoughts about other things. In the dark night, when the autumn crickets sob in chirrs, everything is dark, and under the bleak sparkle of the oil lamp, she spins quietly alone. ...

What a marvelous feeling this delicate woman is to those refugee women with coarse hands and feet. Why doesn't she bind her feet, she must have metamorphosed from a fox with nine tails, why does she do up her hair in a square, there's no openings in her hem... But when it comes to the tales in Manchuria or the technique of growing maize, no one can compare to her.<sup>160</sup>

This short description of less than a page contains perhaps the finest image in the entire novel. In the novel, all male protagonists are torn between intractable desire and unenforceable morality, and all women have problems handling their pain and sores, except this Manchu girl. She has a noble spirit and a calm temperament, and even the pain she experiences as the wife of an old man

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<sup>160</sup> Duanmu Hongliang, *Keerqinqi caoyuan*, 18. My translation.

and as an alien to the women around her is aestheticized into the figure of a lonely beauty. At the same time, the aestheticization of the character does not displace the pain, but rather expands our imagination of it: Why must she marry an old Han immigrant, when the descriptions above indicate that she comes from a much better background than the Han immigrants? Why must she bury her sorrows in silence? Is it because she, as a Manchu of some two hundred years ago with no previous encounter with the Han people, cannot yet speak Mandarin well? What the text gives us is a refined young minority woman with unspeakable pain.

The second wounded voice that articulates the double suffering of a woman and a minority comes from the Mongol concubine in the Ding family. She, too, is portrayed as a tender woman with a kind heart and rich inner world who was pitifully maltreated by her husband and his Han concubine. Chapter Seven depicts the young protagonist Ding Ning's visit to the two concubines of his uncle, one Mongol and the other Han. The Mongol concubine is portrayed as someone with "mysophobia" (*qingjie pi*) and a "traditional morality" (*chuantong de lunliguan*), who "is forever timid and docile, without ever wanting to obtain something from other people."<sup>161</sup> On the contrary, she is always used by her husband and the Han concubine. She confides to Ding Ning in tears that her husband has always neglected and abused her, but after he hears that her Mongol brother has been assigned the position of "signboard" (*huangzi*) in the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, an actually existing bureau in the Republic of China at the time, he suddenly draws close to her and even wishes he were a Mongol also.<sup>162</sup> Putting a minority in the minority commission as a "signboard" is already a sarcastic jab at the national administrative system of minority affairs, and the changing attitude of the husband further indicates that all he cares about

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<sup>161</sup> Duanmu Hongliang, *Keerqinqi caoyuan*, 192.

<sup>162</sup> For more about the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, see John Powers and David Templeman, *Historical Dictionary of Tibet* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 456.

in his minority concubine is her use value. The Han concubine, too, constantly manipulates the Mongol concubine, although she is the younger and more recently arrived concubine in the family. The night of Ding Ning's visit, she cheats Ding Ning into drinking an aphrodisiac and participates in a crazy incestuous encounter with him in a room connected to the Mongol concubine's room. This affair psychologically destroys the already sick Mongol concubine, who has always cherished Ding Ning, and she dies before long.

The close reading above shows how a Han-centered multiethnic frontier space is carefully carved out in the novel through a fictionalization of ethnic history; for the author, such a space is by no means something to be taken for granted. Biographically, all the stories discussed above are the exact opposite of the author's own experience in terms of ethnic identity. The author's ancestor was not an immigrant; rather, he was someone who encountered Han immigrants in his native land. His personal family history was not about the victory of the outsiders; rather, it was about the consolidation and expansion of an indigenous Manchu family despite its increasingly empowered Han rivals. Men in his family are all Manchu by paternal lineage, although they may have married Han women. Textually, the ironies and paradoxes indicate that the author is caught between the compulsion to at once highlight Han identity and show sympathy with the minority, and the desire to testify to the great difficulty he has gone through to make his narrative cogent and coherent.

If constructing a Han-centered multiethnic frontier is such an unnatural and painstaking task, then what propels the author to do so? If his covert passion for the minority sensibility comes from his own life experience in a Manchu family, then how can we account for his overt conformity to a Han identity? It is possible that he, like other Manchu writers of the same time, wanted to hide his Manchu identity due to the discouraging environment. Or, by doing so, he may simply have hoped to gain more currency for his work in the literary world of China Proper. The author himself

gives a more intriguing answer to the question. In his late years, when Duanmu confided that *The Korchin Banner Plains* was not based on the real ethnic identity of his family, he explained, “I feel like only by writing about themes like refuge can it [the novel] be typical and can it reveal the spirit of the time (*shidai fengmao* 時代風貌). What I hope to emphasize is the historical reality/truth (*lishi zhenshi* 歷史真實) of the geographical background and economic environment [of Manchuria].”<sup>163</sup> Terms like “typical,” “the spirit of the time,” and “the historical truth” clearly show the influence of a Hegelian-Marxist view of history on the author. The entire answer suggests that the author believes what he pictures in his novel, though at odds with his personal experience, is a convincing narrative about the general geographical and economic trend in the region, and that it reveals the objective and materialist historical progress of his time.

Duanmu is probably right, as “historical truth” frequently reflects an ideological discourse formulated by the ruling power. In modern Chinese history, as the Han Chinese rose to power, a historical truth about ethnicity can hardly be anything but a Han-dominant one. Therefore, what is at stake here is not whether a Han-centered, multiethnic frontier is or is not the “historical truth,” but how Duanmu, a Manchu writer, accepts the Han Chinese hegemonic truth as “historical truth.” We already know that Duanmu was brought up in a pro-Han and anti-Manchu environment. We may also notice that for his father, the Han-Manchu ethnic opposition is more or less equated with the opposition between enlightenment and ignorance, between revolution and reaction. Though not all Manchus adopted Han values in this way, Duanmu’s father’s view would certainly have had a great influence on Duanmu.<sup>164</sup> In Duanmu’s own explanation, too, we find a similar equation.

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<sup>163</sup> Fu Hu, “Wenzi dixia de xuelei gushi,” 121.

<sup>164</sup> The intellectual history of the Manchu people is a field yet to be explored. In Shao Dan’s discussion of the 1911 revolution in Manchuria, we can get an idea of how Manchu people make sense of the revolutionary thoughts and the revolution in relation to their own ethnic identities. See Shao Dan, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907–1985*, Chapter 2.

The term “historical reality/truth” is clearly associated with an enlightened and scientific view of history. Duanmu’s statement that a Han-centered, multiethnic frontier conforms to the historical reality/truth of the geographical, cultural, and economic environment of Manchuria indicates that for him, a Han hegemonic discourse coincides with enlightened and scientific truth. I believe this is the deeper call that drives the minority author to identify with the Han.

If we reexamine the author’s obsession with myth from this perspective, we realize that the obsession is in fact a manifestation of the irreducible paradox embedded in the “historical truth” concerning ethnicity. On the one hand, because the “historical truth” is in fact the inversion of the author’s personal family history, building up the historical truth in fiction necessarily involves a mystification of the known history. After all, the long process of accepting pro-Hanism in the name of other social values that are not necessarily tied to ethnicity—i.e., progress and enlightenment—is itself a process of mystification for ethnic minorities like Duanmu’s father and Duanmu. On the other hand, because historical truth is by definition established as a rational value, adopting the point of view of historical truth in a fictional account demands that anything irrational, including myth, be exorcised. This is why the author has to constantly deny the legitimacy of myth-making through his narrator. When the hegemonic truth is taken as the historical truth, it necessarily entails crossing an indeterminate boundary between myth and history. Moreover, because the historical truth is essentially about Han domination while the author’s myth-writing largely draws upon minority culture, the paradox more specifically bespeaks the impossibility of a thorough reconciliation between the major and the minor ethnic identity in a minority writer’s pro-Han narrative. In the end, the text exhibits an endless process of self-deconstruction.

Many scholars have discussed the characterization of the young protagonist, Ding Ning, by

focusing on his inner split.<sup>165</sup> This, too, is not irrelevant to the author's own ethnic split. The protagonist, whom we have not discussed much so far, belongs to the youngest generation of the Ding family and is determined to change his hometown to accord with what he has learned as a student in China Proper. However, not only does he fail in almost every attempt to rescue his loved ones from misfortune, but he himself is often seduced or entrapped into committing immoral acts towards already impoverished tenants or powerless women. Ding Ning constantly feels angry about the people's benighted conditions and is rueful about his own weakness and impotence, yet he can never find a way out. Ding Ning is a pure Han Chinese and is not troubled by any ethnic issues. But just as he is hopelessly torn between the rational self on a mission of enlightenment and the irrational self that cannot resist the temptation of sin coming from the local people, the author, too, is constantly seduced by the mythical power of his native culture on the one hand while trying to keep a rational and critical distance from it on the other. Therefore, I believe we can also read the protagonist's inner struggle as an empathetic representation of the author's conflict between, among other things, two ethnic identities and the two types of life they represent.

To conclude, I argue that Duanmu's work presents a powerful case of a literary engagement in the construction of the new Chinese ethnic and territorial identity in the 1930s. It is at the same time an endorsement and a problematization, both on the methodological and the ontological levels. The minority voice it articulates suggests that the minority writer's apparent identification with the mainstream ethnic perspective may in fact involve quite a different process of justification from that of the Han scholars. Han Chinese in China Proper, when calling for the integration of ethnic

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<sup>165</sup> See C.T. Hsia, *On Chinese Literature*, 358: "As a modern youth pulled in every contrary direction, however, Ting Ning remains largely in a state of self-debate because [he is] never given the chance to prove himself in action." A contemporary reviewer, Ba Ren, also approaches the personality of Ding Ning through focusing the split between the rational realm (*lizhi de lingyu*) of the protagonist and the secret realm in his heart (*xin de aomi*). See Ba Ren, "Zhili qilai de Keerqinqi caoyuan," in *Zhaiimen ji* (Xianggang: Haiyan shudian, 1941), 169.

minorities on Chinese frontiers, were first and foremost concerned with Chinese identity and sovereignty. The minority writer's response to the call, however, involves a much longer history of uncertainty about his own minority identity. This is due to external oppression and internalization and to the displacement of his personal history with a so-called historical truth, which can only be manifested, ironically, through myth. In other words, for the minority writer, a Han-centered, multiethnic Chinese identity signifies a forever incomplete attempt to internalize an Other's value as the progressive and universal value, or vice versa. Such an identity gives rise to a mentality of perpetual liminality and melancholy—a condition that the author can project nowhere except onto the land and people he represents in his literature.

In China Proper in the 1930s, most influential academic works about ethnic minorities were written by Han scholars.<sup>166</sup> In the literary world, however, works dealing with ethnic minorities were written primarily by minority writers, and yet they all adopted a Han-centered perspective. Aside from Duanmu Hongliang, minority Northeastern writers include the Manchu writer Ma Jia, who wrote a novel titled *Before and After the Enthronement* (*Dengji qianhou* 登基前後, 1936),<sup>167</sup> a title alluding to the Manchu Emperor Pu Yi's enthronement in Manchukuo, and the Manchu writer Shu Qun, who wrote about the anti-Japanese resistance among the Mongols. Ma Jia's novel captures the ceremony of the Manchu Emperor's enthronement parade in a sarcastic tone and contrasts it with the pathetic life of the Chinese peasants in Manchuria. Shu Qun's short story "The Spark in the Sands" ("Shamo zhong de huohua" 沙漠中的火花, 1936) depicts a Mongol construction worker named Ahutai who, after being recruited and maltreated by the Japanese,

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<sup>166</sup> Well-known scholars in minority studies in the 1930s, such as historians Fu Sinian, Gu Jiegang, Tan Muyu, anthropologist Ling Chunsheng, and archaeologist Li Ji, were all Han Chinese.

<sup>167</sup> Bai Xiaoguang, *Dengji qianhou* (Shanghai: Shanghai zazhi gongsi, 1936).

stands up to resist.<sup>168</sup> As the first member of the construction team to resist the Japanese, Ahutai is portrayed as the only Mongol who has been to China Proper and can converse in Chinese. Another of his short stories, “The Night in Mongolia” (“Menggu zhi ye” 蒙古之夜, 1936), is told from the perspective of a Chinese soldier about a Mongol girl who takes care of him and helps him escape, but who is eventually killed by the Japanese.<sup>169</sup>

All these stories endorse Han-centralism, either by deprecating the minority character or by implying the superiority of the Han culture or people. On the surface, they fit perfectly into the discourse of a Han-centered, multiethnic Chinese race that prevailed in the first half of the 1930s, or into the ethnic unification promoted under the guideline of the Chinese United Front formulated in the mid-1930s.<sup>170</sup> However, after Duanmu Hongliang’s *The Korchin Banner Plains*, we are no longer sure we can read these stories straightforwardly and innocently. Beyond works by the Northeastern writers, there are also works by writers from frontiers in other regions but who also write while living in inland metropolises. What about their works? Does Duanmu Hongliang’s *The Korchin Banner Plains* also shed new light on these? These questions are beyond the scope of this

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<sup>168</sup> Shu Qun, “Shamo zhong de huohua,” *Wenxuejie* 1 (June 5, 1936): 33–54. By 1933, part of Eastern Mongolia was taken under Manchukuo control. In April 1936, a puppet regime named the “Mongol Military Government” was established by the Japanese in Mongolia. The two stories were published in June 1936, so the Japanese occupation in his story probably refers to the occupation by the Manchukuo regime.

<sup>169</sup> Shu Qun, “Menggu zhi ye,” *Guangming* 1, no. 1 (June 10, 1936): 6–10.

<sup>170</sup> The proposal for a Chinese National United Front (*kang ri min zu tong yi zhan xian*) was first crystallized in the CCP’s “Open Letter to All Compatriots on Resistance against Japanese and National Salvation” (“Wei kang ri gao quan ti tong bao shu” announced in August, 1935, later known as the “August 1<sup>st</sup> Declaration” (Bayi xuanyan). It addresses all Chinese people who love their country, all people in the world who are against imperialism, and all nations sympathetic or neutral to China’s national liberation movement. In particular, the declaration explicitly names the following as comrades and allies: members of other parties, overseas Chinese, all minorities in China— Mongol, Hui, Korea, Tibet, Miao, Yao, Li, She (蒙, 回, 韩, 藏, 苗, 瑶, 黎, 畲), Japanese Proletarian, and people in Taiwan and Korea. See “Zhongguo Suweiai zhengfu, Zhongguo Gongchandang wei kangri jiuguo gao quanti tongbao shu” (Bayi xuanyan), in *Zhonggong Zhongyang wenjian xuanji*, vol. 10, 1934–1935 (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1985), 518–25. For a detailed account of the CCP’s United Front policy before and after 1935, see Jiang Huaxuan and Wang Defu, eds., *Zhong Guo Gong Chan Dang tongyi zhanxian shigao* (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1989), 151–237.

chapter, but our reading of Duanmu's novel urges us to reexamine frontier literature with a closer attention to the relationship between the minority subject, the frontier space, and collective territorial identity.

## Conclusion

Among all of the cases discussed in the dissertation, works by the Northeastern writers in the 1930s were those most canonized in the postwar period. This phenomenon is, of course, related to the rapidly increasing significance of Manchuria in China Proper in the 1930s, as we have seen through the contrast between Yu Chengze and later Northeastern writers. Another key reason is that their works were mostly written and published in China Proper—especially Shanghai, the cultural center of China in the 1930s. More importantly, both Xiao Hong and Duanmu Hongliang adopted mainstream nationalist discourses from China Proper in their representations of frontier space. Xiao Hong, in his novella, evokes the leftist nationalist discourse and successfully reclaims Manchuria first as a rural native Chinese land and then an integral part of the modern Chinese nation. The work's ideological tendencies were further crystallized during the publishing and reading process, which primarily involved leftist critics and readers in Shanghai. Duanmu's novel, on the other hand, recreates frontier space as a Han-centered, multiethnic national frontier, a discourse that dominated intellectual discussions about national frontiers and ethnic minorities in the 1930s.

However, their conformity to *guannei* mainstream discourses does not mean that they relinquished frontier ambiguities. Rather, it is precisely because their works manifest the transformation of frontier ambiguities into national determinants that they can be said to have attested to, reinvented, and problematized modern Chinese literary traditions. Xiao Hong's novella

establishes a new paradigm for nationalizing native China, one that has been followed by numerous writers of anti-Japanese wartime literature and beyond. At the same time, the political ambiguity and the gendered sensibility shown in the novella, both of which are indebted to a frontier perspective, subtly undermine the nationalist reading. Duanmu's novel, although also a pioneering work in its depiction of frontier ethnic life from a nationalist perspective, had only a limited influence on wartime and later writers, primarily because of its belated publication. However, the Manchu writer's struggle over the ethnic structure of the frontier space as seen in the text retrospectively reveals the difficulty frontier minority intellectuals may have experienced in their endorsement of a Han-centered, multiethnic Chinese identity. The fictionality of frontier ethnic history represented in the work also shows the unique engagement of literature, as distinct from other academic disciplines, with the construction and confirmation of a *minzu* identity.

In this sense, an investigation of frontier literature written in Chinese and in China Proper promises a deepened understanding of the formation and development of Chinese nationalist literature at a time of national crisis. National literature, especially that which concerns territorial sovereignty and integrity, entails a redefinition or a super-definition of national territory and identity in relation to political and cultural others. This project finds perfect soil in the frontier and borderland space of Manchuria, where multiple foreign powers and ethnic influences coexisted. Therefore, in frontier literature by the Northeastern writers, spatial imagination and nation-making, or modern Chinese literature and the collective territorial identity of the modern Chinese nation, embody each other and find their best expressions in each other. At the same time, the residue of the authors' frontier perspective that constantly evades a thorough nationalist territorialization generates a self-reflexive critical power and supplies an enduring charm.

## Chapter Two

### National Language, Frontier Subjectivity, and Sinophone Literature: On the Manchukuo Chinese Writer Gu Ding and His Novel *New Life*

#### Introduction

In October 1940, a bubonic plague broke out in Xinjing, the newly constructed capital of Manchukuo. More than three thousand people died in the plague; people who had had contact with the sick and the dead—Chinese and Japanese alike—were quarantined in a Japanese hospital and lived under the same roof for approximately two months.<sup>1</sup> Because one of their neighbors had died of the plague, Gu Ding, the leading Manchukuo Chinese writer, and his entire family were among those sent to the hospital. Three years later, in February 1944, Gu Ding published what he called the era-changing novel *New Life* (*Xinsheng* 新生), based on his experience at the hospital. The novel depicts the life patterns in both the Chinese and the Japanese wards and the contrasts and communications between them. The story has a happy ending: the plague is eliminated, everyone is safely released, and the narrator becomes good friends with the Japanese in the hospital.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the plague, see Ruth Rogaski, “Vampires in Plagueland: The Multiple Meanings of Weisheng in Manchuria,” in *Health and Hygiene in Chinese East Asia: Policies and Publics in the Long Twentieth Century*, ed. Angela Ki Che Leung and Charlotte Furth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 132–58. The number of deaths, however, comes from a newly discovered historical record of the plague, *Kaneko Junichi ronbun*. See note 5 for more information.

<sup>2</sup> The chapter uses the following text if not otherwise noted: Gu Ding, *Xinsheng*, in *Zhongguo lunxianqu wenxue daxi xinwenyi xiaoshuojuan II*, ed. Fan Zhihong (Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 732–815. The novel was first published in *Yiwenzhi* 4 (February 1944): 111–219, but some characters are illegible in the reprinted

Dealing extensively with the theme of Sino-Japanese unification under Japanese rule, the novel was fated to be controversial. It earned a Pan-East Asian Literary Award in 1944, but was conversely condemned as “a specimen of the collaborationist novel” in the 1950s in the PRC. Moreover, Gu Ding was labeled a “number one cultural collaborator”; targets of the accusation included his novel, his close collaboration with the Japanese during the Manchukuo period, and his betrayal of the Communist revolution back in the 1930s in Beijing.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the 1980s, scholars in both China and Japan have attempted to approach *New Life* from more nuanced perspectives, arguing, for example, that the colonial intellectual’s anxiety regarding the enlightenment and modernization of the Chinese people is evident in the novel.<sup>4</sup> In 2012, the plague, which appears to provide an opportunity to showcase Japanese modernity in Gu Ding’s novel, was discovered to have been engineered by the Japanese 731 Unit as part of their experimentation with biochemical weapons.<sup>5</sup> The belatedly revealed cruel truth of the plague adds another bitter and ironic layer to the already dramatic fate of the novel and its author.

In this chapter, I focus on an innovative type of language that the novel uses and examine its relationship to frontier territorialization. *New Life* features a hybrid language that mixes various

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version.

<sup>3</sup> Cai Tianxin, “Chedi suqing fandong de hanjian wenyi sixiang,” and Jiang Fan, “Hanjian wenyi de biaoben: chi Gu Ding de *Xinsheng*,” in *Chedi suqing fandong de hanjian wenyi sixiang* (Shenyang: Liaoning wenyi chubanshe, 1958), 16; 41–3.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Li Chunyan, “Shehui he lishi de zhenshi xiezha: ping Gu Ding changpian xiaoshuo *Xinsheng*,” *Liaoning daxue xuebao shehui zhexue kexuan ban* 2001:5, 43–6; Okada Hideki, “Shinsei sairon: keimōshugisha toshite no saishuppatsu,” *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō* (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 2013), 45–9.

<sup>5</sup> See Matsumura Takao, “Kyu Nihongun ni you saikin heiki kogeki no jijitsu: shin hakken shiryo *Kaneko Junichi ronbun* wa 731 butai ni you saikinsen no nani o akiraka ni shita no ka,” *Gekkanhodanren* 1102 (2012–8): 10–15. *Kaneko Junichi ronbun* 金子順一論文 is newly discovered historical material that was first published in 1949. The author records in detail how the biochemical experiment that caused the bubonic plague in 1940 in Xinjing was carried out. According to the report, in June 1940, researchers from the 731 Unit used a plane to spread the bubonic virus twice over Xinjing. The attacks, which resulted in three thousand deaths, were the first two of a series of biochemical experiments carried out in various locales in China between 1940 and 1942.

elements of Japanese vocabulary and syntax, classical and local Chinese, and other available linguistic elements into standard vernacular Chinese; it also exhibits a collage of different literary styles. The all-inclusive language of the novel, which pushes modern Chinese literature and language to an experimental edge, testifies to the author's ambition to "enrich [his] beloved Han language" and "invent a fixed shape of vernacular language (*baihua* 白話)." By doing so, he wished to promote Chinese language and literature in Japanese Manchukuo. This final goal runs through the course of Gu Ding's writing career in the Manchukuo period, and has been seen by many scholars as a demonstration of his firm alignment with a Chinese national identity in a colonial society.<sup>6</sup>

Through a case study of *New Life*, this chapter presents a much more complicated view of the landscape of Chinese language, Chinese literature, and their relationship to national allegiance on the transnational frontier of Japanese Manchukuo. The chapter argues that, rather than embodying an exclusively Chinese national identity, Gu Ding's experimental Chinese language and literature speak simultaneously of a Chinese national identity, a Manchukuo "national" identity, a Japanese imperial identity, and an aspiration to achieve a cosmopolitan literature. In other words, frontier national language and literature exhibit highly equivocal allegiances with nationhood when approached from the different perspectives of the regional, the national, the imperial, and the cosmopolitan. The chapter also demonstrates how Gu Ding's negotiation between the national and the transnational is motivated by what I call a "frontier subjectivity." Gu Ding's frontier subjectivity, I argue, is marked by his continuing prioritization of a vital desire to survive and thrive over an ideological belief committed exclusively to a specific nation or class. This prioritization functions as a philosophical pivot in his life and work, and relates to cultural

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see Feng Weiqun, "Guanyu Gu Ding jiushi lunshi da Tie Feng," in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 580–91.

traditions and historical conditions specific to the geographical setting of the frontier.

Gu Ding's experimental literary practice therefore points to a wide range of theoretical potentials of frontier literature in the context of East Asia and beyond. First, a thorough examination of his work puts the very notion of national language and literature at stake. It not only brings new light to current discussions about the internal linguistic variety in Chinese and other East Asian national literatures, but also showcases the transnational linguistic hybridity found across the former Japanese empire. Second, the paradox of his intention, means, and ends poses ethical questions about frontier subjectivity, a topic that has seldom been dealt with in the context of Chinese and East Asian studies: Are there forms of frontier subjectivity that are more successful or more desirable than others? Is frontier subjectivity all about strategies of survival, or ought it to pursue a higher end? Where does the critical power of such a subjectivity lie? My study of frontier literature attends to these questions as well.

My work is the first to approach *New Life* from the perspective of language. Junko Agnew, in her pioneering article about Gu Ding's linguistic politics as reflected in his short story "The Wild" ("Yuanye" 原野, 1938)<sup>7</sup> and other essays, argues that Gu Ding treats linguistic colonization as a modernization of his native Chinese language, thus painting linguistic nationalism as not only unnecessary but also a hindrance.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, my study of Gu Ding's same essay within the context of the discussion of "national language" in Manchukuo, and of his novel *New Life* published four years after the essay, shows that Gu Ding's linguistic politics involve a deep-rooted linguistic nationalism and transnationalism at the same time. In Asia, Okada Hideki and Mei

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<sup>7</sup> Gu Ding, "Yuanye," in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, ed. Li Chunyan (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1995), 258–318.

<sup>8</sup> Junko Agnew, "The Politics of Language in Manchukuo: Hinata Nobuo and Gu Ding," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2015): 87.

Ding'e have examined Gu Ding's linguistic thought in general in various productive ways, but none of these works address *New Life*.<sup>9</sup> The study of *New Life*, on the other hand, has been mired in controversy about whether the novel is collaborationist, patriotic, or ambivalent regarding the role of colonial intellectuals in colonial modernity. Scholars have approached the controversy primarily through close readings of the story presented in the novel, but have seldom carried out formal analyses.<sup>10</sup>

The chapter begins with a review of Gu Ding's life and work, in which I show how his frontier subjectivity is shaped by his life experience and expressed in his work. Indeed, his frontier subjectivity underlies the variety of experiments he carries out in *New Life*. It then focuses on the linguistic aspect of the novel, examining how the author uses a transnationally hybrid language in order to negotiate for more cultural territory for Chinese language and literature in the Manchukuo society. Next, I turn to Gu Ding's essay “Words about ‘Words’” (“‘Hua’ de hua” “話”的話 1940) that he wrote right before he was sent to the hospital,<sup>11</sup> in which he calls for a linguistic renovation in Manchukuo Chinese literature. In many ways, the essay prefigures the linguistic experimentation the author later carried out in *New Life*. Through a comprehensive analysis of the essay with reference to the discussion on “Manchukuo national language” that took place among Japanese and Chinese intellectuals in Manchukuo in the 1940s, I delineate the map of a multinational connectivity that contextualizes the essay as well as the novel. In the last section, I revisit Zhou Zuoren's concept of an “ideal national language” in light of Gu Ding's frontier

<sup>9</sup> See Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 59–75; Mei Ding'e, *Ko Tei Kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni ikita bunkajin* (Kyoto: Ningen Bunka Kenkyū Kikō Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā, 2012), 99–105.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Li Chunyan, “Shehui he lishi de zhenshi xiezao: ping Gu Ding changjian xiaoshuo *Xinsheng*”; Okada Hideki, “Shinsei sairon: keimōshugisha toshite no saishuppatsu”; Tie Feng, “Gu Ding de zhengzhilichang yu wenxue gongji,” *Beifang Luncong* 121 (1993.5): 73–9; Feng Weiqun, “Guanyu Gu Ding jiushi lunshi da Tie Feng,” in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 580–91.

<sup>11</sup> Gu Ding, “‘Hua’ de hua,” *Manzhouguoyu* 3 (August 1940): 2–8.

linguistic experiments, thus exploring the possibility of studying national literature from a transnational perspective. I also consider the issue of a frontier subjectivity from a Manchurian perspective that applies to frontier literatures in other parts of the world.

## The Formation of Frontier Subjectivity

The struggle to compromise between belief and life, or ideal and reality, is common to people across cultures and times, but it is especially acute for colonial intellectuals caught between colonial modernization and nationalist resistance. In this section, I will examine Gu Ding's life and career trajectory specifically within the context of Manchuria, the frontier where he actually lived and wrote. For Gu Ding, the passions for life and for career converge, because his literary enterprise embodies his vital hopes and desires for his life. His dedication to literature, resignation to reality, and manipulation of multinationality can all be illuminated from the perspective of "frontier subjectivity."

Gu Ding, originally named Xu Changji, is a figure of mystery, masquerade, and maneuver. This is well manifested in the fact that neither his birth year nor his death time is clear. It is believed that he was born in 1914 or 1916. Although the year 1909 appears on his public résumé in Manchukuo, he may have deliberately changed his birth year in order to cover up his disgraceful personal history in Beijing.<sup>12</sup> He died in 1964 after years of imprisonment in Liaoning; it is unclear exactly when or how he died.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For more about the research on Gu Ding's birth year, see Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 19–27.

<sup>13</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō* (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 2000), 84; Mei Ding'e, *Ko Tei Kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni ikita bunkajin*, 63.

Gu Ding was born in Changchun. In the 1920s, he attended Japanese primary and middle schools in Manchuria.<sup>14</sup> He entered Northeastern University in Manchuria in 1931 and was relocated to Beijing together with the whole university after the Manchurian Incident. In 1932, he entered the Department of Chinese Literature at Peking University.<sup>15</sup>

In Beijing, Gu Ding was known as Xu Tuwei. During his two years of college life there, he was primarily a proletarian writer and cadre, but this identity ended unexpectedly when he betrayed the revolution and sold out his comrades. In 1932, he joined the Northern Left League (Beifang Zuolian), a CCP-led underground revolutionary organization based in Beijing. This group was initiated by members of the League of Left-Wing Writers, an influential organization established earlier in Shanghai under the guidance of the CCP and Lu Xun.<sup>16</sup> Before long, Gu Ding was promoted to be the head of the Department of Organization of the Northern Left League and was given the task of recruiting new members.<sup>17</sup> Duanmu Hongliang, another frontier writer who is discussed in detail in the previous chapter, was among the members he recruited. In 1933, Gu Ding, Duanmu, and other League members started a newsletter for the League titled *News of the Science*

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<sup>14</sup> Gu Ding attended Changchun Gongxuetang in Changchun for primary school and Nanman Gongxuetang in Shenyang for middle school; both schools were run by the Japanese. See Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 24; “Gu Ding xiaozhuan,” in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 657.

<sup>15</sup> Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 24–5.

<sup>16</sup> The League of Left-Wing Writers was one of the most important writers’ organizations in modern China and had extensive and profound influence in the 1930s. For more about the league, see Wang-chi Wong, *Politics and Literature in Shanghai: The Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers, 1930–1936* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991). The Northern Left League was established in 1930 in Beijing. There are different views on the relationship between the Northern Left League and the League of Left-Wing Writers in Shanghai. See Ma Junjiang, *Ershishiji sanshiniandai Beiping xiaobao yu gudu geming wenyi qingnian* (PhD diss., Peking University, 2009), 64–7. For more details about the activities of the Northern Left League, see Sun Xizhen, “Guanyu beifang zuolian de shiqing,” in *Zuolian huiyilu Book II*, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan and “Zuolian huiyilu” bianji zu (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1982), 495–521.

<sup>17</sup> See Duanmu’s private letter to Okada Hideki, included in *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 265. For Gu Ding’s activities as the head of the Department of Organization, see Xu Lun, “Guanyu bingliushe,” *Zuolian huiyilu Book II*, 633–4.

(*Kexue Xinwen* 科學新聞).<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Gu Ding translated several short stories and critical essays by Japanese proletarian writers, and wrote and published a couple of poems himself.<sup>19</sup>

Gu Ding's betrayal in 1933 remains an event with multiple interpretations.<sup>20</sup> Gu Ding himself never provided a clear account of it, and testimonies by others are not always consistent. Sometime before August 1933, he was arrested by the police of the KMT government. While in custody, he disclosed the location of a forthcoming assembly to be attended by representatives from different leftist groups in Beijing. He was then released as an informer. On August 2, the police, following Gu Ding, raided the assembly and arrested all attendees. This incident led directly to the closing down of the newsletter and an extended slump in the CCP's activities in Beijing.<sup>21</sup> Luckily, Duanmu had not attended the assembly; nevertheless, Gu Ding's betrayal shocked him so much that he fled to Tianjin as soon as he heard the news. *The Korchin Banner Plains*, Duanmu's first and most successful novel, which we have closely examined in Chapter One, was written in Tianjin during that period. As the author later confessed, writing the novel was his way of fighting off depression related to post-traumatic stress.<sup>22</sup>

In the published memorial article, Duanmu recalls that he did not see Gu Ding before he fled.<sup>23</sup> In a private letter, however, he tells a different story. According to the letter, Duanmu

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<sup>18</sup> Yao Xin, *Zuolian cidian* (Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1994), 204. Also see Fang Yin, “Ji yici bei chumai le de huiyi,” *Zuolian huiyilu, Book II*, 627–8; Xu Lun, “Guanyu bingliushe,” 633–4; Duanmu “Bianji Kexue xinwen de huiyi,” *Xinwen yanjiu ziliao* 1 (1979): 40–3.

<sup>19</sup> For a list of Gu Ding's publications in Beijing, see Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 71.

<sup>20</sup> Okada Hideki's account of the whole event remains the most authoritative version so far. See Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 264–9.

<sup>21</sup> Fang Yin, “Ji yici bei chumai le de huiyi,” 627–31; Xu Lun, “Guanyu bingliushe,” 632–4.

<sup>22</sup> Kong Haili, *Duanmu Hongliang zhuan* (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2011), 59–60.

<sup>23</sup> See Duanmu Hongliang, “Bianji Kexue xinwen de huiyi,” 41.

encountered Gu Ding by chance on a Beijing street. At the time, he had no idea that Gu Ding had been arrested and released. He wanted to greet Gu Ding, but Gu Ding gave him a meaningful glance. Looking around, he realized that Gu Ding was followed by police who were ready to arrest anyone who seemed to know him. He immediately left for Peking University to find out what had happened, and then fled to Tianjin.<sup>24</sup> If Duanmu's memory in the private letter is correct, it implies that, despite having disclosed information about the assembly to the police, Gu Ding did what he could to protect other comrades. This information does not rehabilitate Gu Ding, but it reveals a more nuanced view of the psychological turbulence that he may have undergone.

In any case, shortly after his conversion and without finishing his studies at the prestigious university, Gu Ding went back to his hometown of Changchun, which had been renamed Xinjing. In this newly constructed capital of Manchukuo, he found a decent job at the Bureau of Statistics in the Manchukuo State Council. At the same time, he took measures to hide his dark history in Beijing from the public: this included fabricating a much earlier birth year and claiming that he had spent four years in Beijing and had graduated from Peking University.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the incident's effect on him is discernible. Most directly, it led to the loss of his youthful dreams and to his complete isolation from literature for a couple of years.<sup>26</sup> More broadly, his frustrated leftist experience situates him firmly among a group of converted leftist writers, both Chinese and

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<sup>24</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 265–6.

<sup>25</sup> Gu Ding fabricated his resume, claiming that he graduated from Peking University in 1933, and in order to make his claim plausible, he also had to change his birth year to 1909. See Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 25–7. In another memorial article about how he started to run literary journals in Manchukuo, Gu Ding conspicuously asserted that he had never run any periodicals before, which is apparently a cover-up, conscious or unconscious, of his abundant publishing experience back in Beijing. See Gu Ding, “*Daochuan xiānshèng hé Mingming*” in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 57. As a result, most Manchukuo Chinese writers were completely ignorant of his disgraceful history in Beijing. See Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 268.

<sup>26</sup> Gu Ding, “*Fenfei Zixu*,” *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 153. In particular, he confesses, “The time when the last dream [in my youth] was blasted quickly and bitterly, was when I stepped out of that grey city with only several volumes of a dictionary and a set of literary history. ... After that, I was almost trapped in a mood of desperation ... looking for nothing but oblivion and destruction.”

Japanese, who chose to move to Manchuria at the time of or after their conversion. For example, among Gu Ding's fellow writers in Manchukuo, two were also former CCP members and leftist student activists who had fled to Manchuria due to the stringent and dangerous political environment in China Proper in the early 1930s.<sup>27</sup> In addition, from the late 1930s, many former Japanese proletarian writers moved to Manchuria after their conversion in domestic Japan. Among them, Yamada Seizaburō was perhaps the most prominent. A purged leader of the early 1930s' Proletarian Literature Movement in Japan, Yamada quickly rose to become the central figure in Manchukuo literary world after he crossed over in 1939.<sup>28</sup> The converted leftists, Chinese and Japanese alike, learned their limitations through their frustration. After moving to Manchuria, a political entity with heavy ideological construction, they unanimously chose to explore different possibilities for socially engaging literature within the officially permitted range.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, Gu Ding's conversion in Beijing may have made him feel more connected to this group of writers, especially Yamada Seizaburō.<sup>30</sup>

Retrospectively, Gu Ding's conversion marks the beginning of his long-term reflection on conflicts between survival and belief, while his novel *New Life* suggests a tentative conclusion. The time in between also covers the majority of his professional career as a creative writer.<sup>31</sup> In

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<sup>27</sup> They are Xinjia and Waiwen. See Liu Xiaoli, *Yitai shikong zhong de jingshen shijie* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 79.

<sup>28</sup> For more about Yamada Seizaburō and his activities in Manchukuo, see Annika Culver, "Literature in Service of the State: Yamada Seizaburō and Right-Wing Proletarianism, 1931–43," in *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 34–50. We will also come back to Yamada Seizaburō in later sections.

<sup>29</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 267–8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> After *New Life*, Gu Ding published one more short story, "An Unofficial Classic of Mountain and Sea" ("Shanghai waijing"), in a Shanghai magazine in 1945. During the postwar years, he devoted himself mostly to the translation of Japanese works and adaptation of traditional Chinese oral drama. He was put in jail in 1958, after which we find no record of his writing activities of any kind. Gu Ding, "Shanghai waijing," *Wenyou* 55 (July 15, 1945): 16–21. For more about Gu Ding's postwar life and works, see Mei Ding'e, *Ko Tei Kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni ikita bunkajin*, 61–2.

most of his works written during this period, we discern a painful but persistent interrogation of the meaning of life and belief. *New Life*, both the form and the story, can be seen as the best attempt the author could muster at the moment to mediate between the two.

After several years of silence immediately following his return to his hometown, Gu Ding resumed literary publication in the mid-1930s. In 1938, Gu Ding published his first book, a collection of short stories titled *Fight and Fly* (“Fenfei” 奮飛). It is a gloomy book, with almost all of the protagonists dying in the end. The only exception is in a story titled “Decadence: A Sketch of Several College Students” (“Tuibai: jige daxuesheng de jianying” 頽敗: 幾個大學生的剪影), first drafted in October 1933, right after his dishonorable activities in Beijing. It describes the decadent life of a group of college students who no longer cherish hope or passion for social activism, who indulge in alcohol, smoking, and unhealthy living, and who cannot find a way to escape. According to the narrator, “they are a group of romantics. They dream all the time and affirm nothing. When they cannot find an answer in their minds, they persecute their bodies.”<sup>32</sup> In Beijing, the storm of revolution had already died out in the early 1930s due to the stringent and conservative political environment. Gu Ding’s story vividly depicts the common state of doubt and depression among youth in early 1930s Beijing;<sup>33</sup> what we do not know is how the story is related to his own conversion.

In another story titled “Moli” (“Moli” 莫里) written in 1936, the stage is moved from the

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<sup>32</sup> Gu Ding, “Tuibai: jige daxuesheng de jianying,” *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 172.

<sup>33</sup> Feng Weiqun interprets the short story as a representation of college life in Manchuria after Japanese occupation. Although there is no explicit indication of the location in the story, I believe the author most likely sets the background in Beijing. In the story, students read *Literature Monthly*, a literary journal published in Beijing. After the establishment of Manchukuo, publications from China Proper were generally banned in Manchuria. Also, in the story, when the students get out of the university, they go through the Gate of Zhai (zhaimen). Peking University has two Gates of Zhai: the East Zhaimen and the West Zhaimen. There is no evidence that Northeastern University in Manchuria, the university that Gu Ding had also attended, had a gate named Zhai. Feng Weiqun, “Ping Gu Ding de wenzxue chengjiu,” *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 11.

hopeless Beijing to the even more hopeless Manchukuo, where intellectuals cannot find reconciliation between ideal and reality. The narrator recalls his reunion with an old friend he had made in Beijing. Moli, like the narrator, was enthusiastic about literature and revolution in Beijing, but after he returned to his hometown in Manchuria, he was shocked by the bleakness of life in the countryside. Economic bankruptcy, a dead culture, and a surfeit of alcohol and opium all had had a devastating effect there. He finds no hope in such a life and even considers suicide. Eventually, however, he chooses to live and embrace the filth of life. He deliberately corrupts himself, but with a “philosophy”:

Fandong, you are getting old too, but you cannot forget about your past. You are always in search of something. You construct your own Utopia in the realm of your spirit. And in the realm of your body, you are getting close to the darkness step by step.... I am different. I do not think about the past, and all I have is now. Neither do I think about future. I know I am stepping into the abyss, but I also know that I want to live! Even in a way that is not too different from suicide.<sup>34</sup>

He confesses that opium is encroaching on his health, but he is satisfied with the momentary pleasure it brings. When the narrator asks whether he is giving up his life, he answers:

Am I not living now? Can you deny that I am living now? I think you are asking whether I can start a *new life*. Actually, even if I do not drink, sleep around, or take opium, what better life could I have? It would be nothing more than your bootlicking, tail shaking, and sharing of some bones left to you by your owner like a dog. Do you think you are more respectable than me because you do not take opium? ... Your literature, your music, is there anything that doesn't intoxicate you? (My italics)<sup>35</sup>

Moli calls it his “opium philosophy.” It is a philosophy that sustains a will for life through self-hypnosis in a social environment that is both materially and spiritually oppressed. We are not sure whether “bootlicking” is meant to imply the general inferiority of Chinese people in Japanese

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<sup>34</sup> Gu Ding, “Moli,” *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 204–5. My translation.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 211. My translation.

Manchuria. In any case, Moli denies any possibility of living a new and whole life in colonial Manchuria. The narrator does not necessarily agree with him, as he asks himself at the end of the story, “Life? Life! … Is our life that cheap?” But the question remains unanswered in the story.

When the collection *Fight and Fly* was published in 1938, however, Gu Ding had gradually emerged from his depression, and an outline of his own “philosophy of life” was on the horizon. In the preface to the collection, the author seems to offer an answer to the question in “Moli”: “I own nothing and am still down and out, but I do want to use my life in a way that does not have to be completely wasted to do some un-harmful things for other people and for me.” A couple of poems written in 1939 declare a firm faith in life and express hope that arises from the darkness. In a poem titled “New Love” (“Xinhuan” 新歡), the narrator is determined to fight against despair with a resurgence of passion for a positive life: “I reject his [the despair] temptation again: --/ I love the shine of sun, I truly love the shine of the sun. .... / Look: --/ All creatures are growing, and I am growing too; Growing is my joy, my destiny, and my all in all..... / Humans can be happier, humans can truly be happier.....”<sup>36</sup> In another epistolary poem addressed to “the unknown life,” the narrator writes, “You go straight and walk straight with no fear, because you are the light, the fire, and the power. The light, the fire and the power are all bestowed on humans by heaven, and the light, the fire and the power will never be taken away. You go straight and walk straight with no fear.”<sup>37</sup> While the poems express a strong will to live a better life, they are extremely abstract regarding how to achieve this goal. The poet seems to rely on an irrational and religious faith in the power of a spontaneous life as a way to reconcile his ideals with reality.

Gu Ding’s positive but rather vague attitude towards life echoes his view of literature at the

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<sup>36</sup> Gu Ding, “Xinhuan,” in *Fuchen* (Xinjing: Manri wenhua xiehui shige congkan kanxinghui, 1939), 61–2. My translation.

<sup>37</sup> Gu Ding, “Moshu,” in *Fuchen*, 91–2. My translation.

time. In the preface to the poetry collection, Gu Ding explices the major proposal for Manchukuo Chinese writers that he had repeated many times elsewhere during the same period: “writing and printing” (*xie yu yin* 寫與印) in a “direction of no direction” (*meiyou fangxiang de fangxiang* 沒有方向的方向). At the time, he was painfully aware that in Manchuria, modern Chinese literature of the May Fourth tradition that embraces enlightenment values was constantly discouraged by both the Japanese government and less educated Chinese writers who preferred popular literature. Therefore, he concluded that the priority for Manchukuo Chinese writers should be to “fill up the blanks” (*tianbu kongbai* 填補空白) of modern Chinese literature in Manchuria by writing and printing as much as possible, without thinking too much about “directions.”<sup>38</sup> He collaborated extensively with Japanese individuals to gain financial and political support for the cause of “writing and printing.”<sup>39</sup> When several Manchukuo Chinese writers came up with a proposal for “local literature” that would depict the life of the rural Manchurian Chinese, he vigorously protested that it was not a good time to confine writers with ideologies or theories.<sup>40</sup>

Gu Ding’s celebration of a life “of no direction” acquires more concrete contours in his novel *The Plain of Sands* (*Pingsha* 平沙). Published in 1940, shortly before he was sent to the hospital for quarantine, the story features a young Chinese intellectual in Manchukuo. It starts with a depiction of the painful life he and people around him have been leading in the newly constructed Manchukuo capital. He believes that “humans live for happiness and progress,”<sup>41</sup> but the belief is constantly frustrated by all kinds of social and familial oppressions that he experiences and

<sup>38</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 72–3.

<sup>39</sup> For more about the slogan, see Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 48–58; *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 16–9.

<sup>40</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 53; 73.

<sup>41</sup> Gu Ding, *Pingsha*, *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 506.

witnesses. Nevertheless, he tries hard to come up with a “design for new life” (*xinsheng de sheji* 新生的設計).<sup>42</sup> He encourages hopeless people around him as well as himself by saying that “the river is always flowing, whether it is clean or muddy.... It means you are only moving forward. It is a teaching from nature, and is also an order from nature.”<sup>43</sup> The image of river as the symbol of life is repeatedly evoked in the latter part of the novel; it is even coupled with an illustration of a flowing river. At the end of the story, the pathetic people around the narrator escape one after another from their current environment. The narrator does not even bother to consider their whereabouts, as he naturally believes that their disappearance is a positive move towards a better life. The story ends in a quote from *Sanin*, a 1904 novel by the Russian writer Mikhail Artsybashev:

“Then, why do people live?” asked Yury, pushing his glass away in disgust.  
“And why die?”

“I know one thing,” replied Sanin. “Life to me should not be punishment. For that, first and foremost, it is necessary to satisfy one’s natural desire. Desire is everything: if desire dies in a person, life dies; and if he kills desire, he kills himself.”<sup>44</sup>

This confession reflects Sanin’s faith in a time of nihilism in pre-revolutionary Russia, and perhaps also Gu Ding’s faith in “the plain of sands” in Manchukuo.

In the novel, Gu Ding uses concrete stories of different characters to contextualize the abstract ideas he posits in his earlier works. Also, by evoking the metaphorical image of a river and the quotes from a nihilist novel, he finds more metaphysical expressions for his “philosophy of life.” Nevertheless, the philosophy is still built upon an ungrounded conviction rather than a dedicated engagement in palpable reality. A river that keeps flowing, whether clean or muddy, is a river that

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 446.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>44</sup> Gu Ding, *Pingsha, Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 524. For the English translation, see Mikhail M. Artsybashev, *Sanin: A Novel*, trans. Michael R. Katz (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2001), 83. Slightly modified to match the Chinese translation in Gu Ding’s novel.

moves forward regardless of—rather than in accordance with—its quality. And the title of the novel, *The Plain of Sands*, which alludes to the rapidly erected cities in Manchukuo, indicates an indifference to and even a satire of the Japanese colonial construction there. Again, the novel exhibits the author’s principle for literary practice at the time: to confine himself to describing the life of Chinese people in Manchukuo, which he believed was influenced by the external political environment but nevertheless had its own trajectory.

The novel *New Life*, however, marks a drastic change in the way Gu Ding deals with the motif of “life.” The title of the novel, which the author confesses has undergone several changes,<sup>45</sup> seems to announce his final arrival at a “new life” after a long quest. This story about plague and survival in many ways shows a full embrace of colonial reality in the name of life. This is most straightforwardly manifested in the happy ending, where the universal joy at “breaking through the line of death” mediates the ethnic relationship between the Chinese and the Japanese in the hospital:

“Indeed, in East Asia, the Yamato *minzu* and the Han *minzu* must share the common feeling of fate. Whether in the sense of race, of geography, or of history, we should keep and consolidate our faith in the common feeling of fate forever.” I took his cup and drank up the liquor.

“Absolutely. Take the plague as an example, it would attack all human beings regardless of *minzu*. In other words, our two *minzu* have a common enemy—the plague virus. Not only do we share a common fate, we also share life and death. We have broken through the line of death together! Congratulations! Congratulations!” Elderly Qiutian [a Japanese man] was also a bit excited.

“Congratulations! Congratulations! We both should remember this event, and move forward for the happiness of our two *minzu*!” I drank several more cups.

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“Anyway, we can say that we have already died once in this epidemic. From now on we should cherish our life more and live fearlessly.” Elderly Qiutian was filled with a spirit of youth.

“This is our new life.” I was moved by his words.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Gu Ding, “Xinsheng zishuo,” *Qingnian wenhua* 3, no. 1: 55. It is also said to be the preface to the novel in its separate edition. See Jiang Fan, “Hanjian wenyi de biaoben: chi Gu Ding de *Xinsheng*,” 45.

<sup>46</sup> Gu Ding, *Xinsheng*, 812. My translation.

The dialogue takes place between two individuals of different nationalities and is primarily about the plague, but the rhetoric reminds us of a similar one used in the Japanese imperial promotion of a Pan-East Asian ethnicity, which stresses that the consciousness of a “common fate” among “Japan, Manchuria, and China” “will remove the obstacles posed by a provincial ethnic nationalism.”<sup>47</sup> Moreover, elsewhere in the novel, the narrator constantly compares the Chinese people to the Japanese with respect to their daily habits and order, and repeatedly applauds the epidemic management led by the Japanese government outside the hospital. The praise naturally leads to the conclusion that ordinary Chinese people have much to learn from the enlightened Japanese in order to live a modern and better life. On an individual level, it seems that overcoming the threat of death also urges the narrator to say farewell to the despair and doubt that has cast a shadow over his life in the past. The narrator reflects, “before reaching the threshold of life and death, even pessimism is but a toy that one gets bored with. When philosophy is detached from life, it is no more than a pretentious decoration.”<sup>48</sup>

Outside the novel, the author’s quarantine experience proves to have intensified his own passion for life and to have propelled him to expand his transnational connections as a necessary way to survive and thrive in the Manchukuo society. The author has emphasized the life-changing significance of his quarantine experience in several essays.<sup>49</sup> In particular, in the book-length essay *The Talk* (*Tan*, 1941), he recalls that after being released from the hospital, he was immersed in a “huge grief,” which later turned into a “huge loneliness,” because none of his friends could

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<sup>47</sup> “Tōa minzokushugi no kōyō,” *Tooa* 13 (1940.9): 1–2, quoted in Kevin M. Doak, “Narrating China, Ordering East Asia: The Discourse on Nation and Ethnicity in Imperial Japan,” in *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, ed. Kai-wing Chow, Kevin M. Doak, and Poshek Fu (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 102.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 802.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see “Xinsheng zishuo.” Also see *Tan* (談) (Xinjing: Yiwen shufang, 1941), 2–4.

truly understand the feeling of “breaking through the line of death,” and some even objected to his words and deeds thereafter. He did a number of things to stay away from the plague, such as applying for field work outside the range of the plague, selling his old house, and so on. He also left his government job and was assigned a low position at the Concordia Association, a central political organ that aimed to promote ethnic harmony in Manchukuo, but he quit several months later to open his own publishing house, Yiwen Bookstore (*yiwen shufang* 藝文書房).<sup>50</sup> The publishing house, although sanctioned and sponsored by the Japanese, was committed primarily to the publication of modern Chinese literature and Chinese translation of world literature in Manchukuo.<sup>51</sup> In the essay, the author does not mention something that took place roughly at the same time: his participation in several official cultural organizations newly reformed under the heightened ideological control of the Manchukuo Japanese government. This is a topic that we will examine further in the following section.

The author’s deep fear of death due to the plague and the radical life and career re-planning resulting from his experience are evident in this essay. In short, after the plague, Gu Ding became active to an unprecedented degree in social and political activities relating to literature with an endlessly open attitude to various forms of official and unofficial collaboration with the Japanese. To be sure, the years before and after the plague happened to be the time when Manchukuo was completely integrated into the system of Japanese imperial war mobilization, a circumstance that effectively designated where Gu Ding could pursue his hopes for change.<sup>52</sup> However, in the essay,

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<sup>50</sup> Gu Ding, *Tan* (談), 2–3.

<sup>51</sup> For more about Yiwen Bookstore, see Mei Ding’e, *Ko Tei Kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni ikita bunkajin*, 42–45; 296–99.

<sup>52</sup> For the political change in cultural fields in Manchukuo since the 1940s, see Annika Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 147–67; Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 25–46.

Gu Ding chooses to characterize his downs and ups during the turbulent years as a sequence of “spiritual shocks” he experienced following the plague. This choice indicates that the trajectory of these life incidents is related to the aftermath of the plague, although they may not necessarily have had a straightforward cause-and-effect relationship.

All the life changes mentioned above took place between the plague in 1940 and the publication of *New Life* in 1944. In this sense, the novel not only recollects Gu Ding’s experience in the hospital, but also sums up the revelation it gave him in the years to follow. Gu Ding had high expectations for the novel, as he claimed it was “a work purchased with my life”<sup>53</sup> and “an epoch-making work both for the author’s own career and for the literary world of Manchukuo.”<sup>54</sup> As for the revelation, he describes it as a sense of “resignation” (*shuntian* 順天) in the preface to the novel: “Regarding my own ‘tales in the cage’ [referring to the author’s experience in the hospital], it is not so much profound, but all the more resigned, as is shown in this piece of work.”<sup>55</sup> In keeping with what we already know about his post-plague life, “resignation” here by no means refers to an indifferent or detached attitude towards living; rather, it suggests his thorough acceptance of reality as the condition and source of his existential fulfillment.

In this regard, a scene in the novel that describes the narrator’s dream of an ideal dwelling is highly suggestive: “I light a cigarette. In a swirl of smoke, I find my ‘cultural house.’” A “cultural house” (文化住宅 Chn. *wenhua zhuzhai*/ Jap. *bunka jutaku*) is a type of Japanese residential architecture that features an eclectic fusion of Western and Japanese style. It had been popular in

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<sup>53</sup> Gu Ding, “Xinsheng zishuo.”

<sup>54</sup> See the advertisement for the novel, which was likely drafted by Gu Ding as the chief editor of the journal, in *Yi Wenzhi* 3 (January 1944): 55.

<sup>55</sup> Gu Ding, “Xinsheng zishuo.”

Japan since the 1920s and was considered a symbol of modern culture.<sup>56</sup> In Xinjing, there was a street named Cultural House Street, which was a high-end residential district for the Japanese.<sup>57</sup>

“Hey!”

I call, and a hundred answer. Suddenly, a petite maid comes at my call. I ask her to heat the bathroom water. I prepare to take a bath. ....

I feel tired after the bath, and sit on the sofa in the living room. I take up an old book from the Song, but I only flip through gently. I then ask my wife to bring over a piece of China from the Song, but I only take a gentle look. I feel tired again, and so I ask the maid to pour a glass of wine, but I only have a gentle sip.

I am extremely happy. I am extremely happy.

The moonlight comes in through the purple gauze. I keep the umbrella lamp off intentionally, so that the moonlight will flow on the old book and China. I feel a little chilly, and someone has already thrown a velvet sleeping robe on me.<sup>58</sup>

The narrator’s ideal dwelling is structured precisely around the concept of a transnational eclecticism. “Heat the bath water,” in Manchukuo, was a detail typically associated with a Japanese style of living; having a sofa in the living room was associated with Westernized Japanese interior design of the time. Sitting on the sofa, the narrator “takes up an old book from the Song” and then asks the maid to “bring over a piece of China from the Song,” but in both objects he shows only a superficial interest. He then takes a glass of wine, a symbol of Western food culture, but again, he has only a sip. The “umbrella lamp” and the “velvet sleeping robe,” too, symbolize a Western or a Westernized Japanese living style. Situated in such a hybrid setting, the narrator feels “extremely happy.” It seems that his happiness comes not from a deep attachment to any one of the subjects or the culture it belongs to, but from the fact that elements from a variety of cultures converge at

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<sup>56</sup> Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture 1880–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 328–39.

<sup>57</sup> For a picture of the Cultural House Street in Xinjing, see *Manshū Teikoku gairan* (Shinkyō: Manshūkoku sōmuchō jōhōsho, 1936), 234. For other experiments of with cultural houses in Manchukuo, see Takabeya Fukuhei, *Manshūkoku ni okeru kenchiku no shoyōshiki to kokuto Shinkyō no toshi keikaku ni tsuite* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō teikoku daigaku manmōkenkyūkai, 1934), 6–10.

<sup>58</sup> Gu Ding, *Xinsheng*, 788–9. My translation.

one place and form a collage, which places them at the narrator's disposal for his own benefit.

I read the scene of the narrator's ideal dwelling as an apt allegory of the author's revelation about his own life. For Gu Ding, to be resigned is to come to terms with Manchukuo ideology and Japanese rule, and to seize all the opportunities that a Japanese Manchukuo may offer to expand his own literary enterprise with an attitude of "transnational eclecticism." Of course, it would be simplistic to project the novel wholly onto the author and to claim that the author, like the narrator, went so far as to believe that a universal passion for life can truly transcend ethnic disharmony in Manchukuo. However, the happy ending of the novel certainly suggests that the author is now determined to promote his own ideal by *evoking* the dominant ideologies rather than *evading* them. Now the "river" is no longer flowing forward regardless of whether it is clean or muddy, but embraces the mud and breeds fish and shellfish there so as to enrich itself.

In a sense, Gu Ding's revelation resonates with the thoughts and practices of many Manchurian officials and intellectuals. As scholars have observed in Manchurian politics, from the early twentieth century to the Manchukuo period, local Chinese officials in South Manchuria more often than not accepted and took advantage of their state of coexistence with foreign powers in order to make Manchuria a better living place for themselves and for the people. The collaborative systems established under the Russo-Japanese occupation in the 1910s and the 1920s in both Northern and Southern Manchuria gave rise to a series of successful political reformations that aimed to enhance local security and the economy.<sup>59</sup> In 1926, when Zhang Zuolin announced the independence of Manchuria in Fengtian, today's Shenyang, from the Beiyang government in

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<sup>59</sup> For the reformation in Southern Manchuria and responses from China Proper, see Hua Rui, "The Unruly Founding Fathers: Bifurcating Memories, National Hagiographies and the Compression of 'the Kingly Way' in Early Manchukuo, 1900-1932," unpublished paper, 12–3. On Northern Manchuria, see Blaine Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer: Manchuria's Russians under Chinese Rule, 1918–29* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

Beijing, his slogan was “Secure the Territory and Pacify the People” (baojing anmin 保境安民). One of the most salient features of his reign was an extensive collaboration with the Japanese.<sup>60</sup> Whether Zhang really managed to “secure the territory and pacify the people” of Manchuria is a question for historians. What matters here is that for him, a rhetoric of survival and thrift and an open collaboration with the foreign power were two sides of one coin. In the 1930s, when Manchukuo was about to be established, more or less the same group of intellectuals in Southern Manchuria who had collaborated with the Russians and then the Japanese supported the Manchukuo regime with a vision similar to what they had before.<sup>61</sup> For them, the predominant concern was always the real living conditions of the people, including themselves, and as long as this concern was fully addressed, collaboration with foreign powers was not a drawback but an opportunity.

As an intellectual from the Southern Manchuria, Gu Ding was brought up in this historical context. Its impact on him is discernable in his words and deeds. In the early 1940s, in a casual chat with one of his Japanese colleagues, he commented, “ever since I can remember, the country has changed three times, the money, five. ... There is a saying in ancient China, ‘one should go up to the city during times of small chaos, and go down to the countryside when there is great disorder.’ There will probably be great disorder [in Manchuria], and so I am planning to go to the countryside soon.”<sup>62</sup> In this statement, a cynical comment on the fickle nature of state politics in a frontier setting is followed by worldly wisdom about survival. On a separate occasion, a Japanese

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<sup>60</sup> For more about Zhang’s policy proposal, see Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–1928: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 189–91.

<sup>61</sup> Hua Rui, “The Unruly Founding Fathers: Bifurcating Memories, National Hagiographies and the Compression of ‘the Kingly Way’ in Early Manchukuo, 1900–1932,” 20–2.

<sup>62</sup> Uchiumi Koichirō, “Shuyū Kotei Tsuisō,” in Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 388–9.

colleague asked Gu Ding his thoughts on the Japanese urban construction in Xinjing. Appearing half drunk, he answered, “I don’t worry about them. We will accept them all as they are.”<sup>63</sup> The implication is that the Japanese would eventually leave Manchuria, and the Chinese people would be the final beneficiaries of the Japanese construction. Clearly, Gu Ding’s understanding of life and politics was closely related to his wisdom about survival, which in turn was a response to the incessant and drastic political changes characteristic of a transnational frontier/borderland.

We can therefore reexamine Gu Ding’s social, literary, and spiritual practice in light of the long tradition of a Manchurian frontier vision. In this light, Gu Ding’s conversion in Beijing after being arrested shows that he was unwilling to sacrifice the wholeness of his life for revolution, despite his enthusiasm for social change and enlightenment. In Manchukuo, too, he was constantly looking for ways to live a meaningful and powerful life as a writer without risking personal survival, but doing so was not easy within a colonial society in which Chinese people were generally oppressed. However, he seems to have reached some sort of solution during his quarantine at the hospital. For him, the hospital was at once a purgatory that revealed the pricelessness of life through the threat of death and a paradise that promised a life-oriented existence in an ethnically stratified Manchukuo. This led directly to his more collaborative career in the following years and to a novel that manifested his new ambition.

However, both Gu Ding’s pathetic end during the postwar years and the cruel truth of the plague itself suggest that his vision of a whole new life was nothing but a fruitless illusion. When caught in a heated confrontation in the name of the nation, his transnational frontier subjectivity marked by actively choosing resignation and compromise led only to his death and the unconscious beautification of a crime against humanity that caused the death of thousands. This end reminds

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<sup>63</sup> Kenjirō Kitamura, *Hokuhen bojōki: chōhen zuihitsu* (Tokyo: Daigaku Shobō, 1960), 134.

us of Sanin's motto quoted in *The Plain of Sands*: "life to me should not be a punishment." It is a fair demand, but one that may not have been possible to realize in the contested frontier space of Manchukuo. In the last section of this chapter, we will revisit the polemics of Gu Ding's frontier subjectivity in full detail.

### Linguistic Hybridity and Literary Territorialization

This section considers the linguistic aspects of *New Life* to see how Gu Ding seeks to promote modern Chinese language and literature in Manchukuo by evoking a hybrid Chinese language that incorporates languages used by people from a variety of social strata across nationalities and classes in Manchukuo society. Throughout Gu Ding's life, he was always eager to magnify the influence of a modern Chinese literature that carried on a May Fourth tradition of modernization and enlightenment in Manchukuo. *New Life*, too, attests to his consistent aspiration. In the novel, through his experimental hybrid language, the author attempts to enrich the Chinese vernacular language with local precision and specificity on the one hand, while trying to address a variety of social groups in Manchukuo and to negotiate for more cultural territory for modern Chinese literature on the other.

Because national language and literature are all too frequently associated with national identity and allegiance, I want to make it clear at the outset that Gu Ding's promotion of Chinese literature and even his performance of Chineseness in Japanese Manchukuo are not to be straightforwardly understood as a testament to Chinese nationalism or patriotism. In fact, it is precisely the conventional interlocking of national literature and nationalism that I aim to challenge and complicate in this chapter. In the following two sections, we will first examine how, in the colonial frontier setting, a transnational heteroglossia is employed to promote a national literature;

next, we will investigate how a national language and literature reveal multinational allegiances. Taken together, the two sections delineate the dynamics between the national and the transnational surrounding Gu Ding’s work. These dynamics are at the core of his frontier subjectivity.

In analyzing Gu Ding’s language, Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of *heteroglossia* provides a theoretical framework that allows us to consider national language, social speech, and literary style on one platform from a social-ideological perspective. For Bakhtin, the notion of *glossia* incorporates the broadest meaning of the word *language*. According to Bakhtin, it includes “linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word, …languages of social groups, ‘professional’ and ‘generic’ languages, languages of generations and so forth. … Literary language itself is only one of these heteroglot languages — and in its turn is also stratified into languages (generic, period-bound and others).”<sup>64</sup> To Bakhtin’s definition of heteroglossia, I would like to add “languages of different nations.” In the context of a transnational frontier, “languages of different nations” are, by nature, the languages of social groups.<sup>65</sup> Bakhtin believes that heteroglossia brings to the novel a multiplicity of viewpoints from different social groups and opens the possibility of dialogue among them.<sup>66</sup> In other words, he charges different tracks of heteroglot languages with clear socio-political meaning. Technically, this is very close to what Gu Ding aims to do in *New Life*. However, Gu Ding uses all-inclusive hybrid language not only to bring in utterances by and dialogue among different social groups; more importantly, in doing so, he aims to capture the voices of a variety of

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<sup>64</sup> Pam Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov* (New York: E. Arnold, 1994), 75.

<sup>65</sup> Jing Tsu points out that, although Bakhtin believes that language is a social category in general, he fails to apply its social-ideological critique to native language. Rather, he takes native language as a given, as the site where people reach their first awareness that is necessary for sociality. By contrast, Jing Tsu argues that both native language in general and one’s relation to a particular native language are socially and ideologically determined. This renders Bakhtin’s theory applicable to the categories of both native and national language. See Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 9–10.

<sup>66</sup> Pam Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov*, 73.

social beings and place them within the representational realm of modern Chinese literature.

To give a sense of the hybrid language used in the text, I have rendered a representative paragraph of the narrator's narrative into English:

I had lived in that **maison** for decades. My father died there, and in his last days he **testamented** that it should never be sold and should be left, **to feed you porridge**. But how can I continue to love the **maison** which almost carried off my life and the life of my family? It is said that the plague would occur every other year. **Were that so**, then is my continuing to live here, not in effect, the same as **that of** burying my life in the evil disease?<sup>67</sup>

我在那住宅裏已經住過了十數年，父親曾經老死在那裏，並且臨終的時候，也曾經遺囑著千萬不要賣掉，留著你們喝粥。然而，這幾乎奪掉了我的生命以及一家人的生命的住宅，怎能還有愛戀呢？據說，百死毒要隔年發生，倘然，如果仍舊住在那裏，豈不是等於葬身惡疾的嗎？

The linguistic ground of this paragraph is obviously modern vernacular Chinese. In the original text, *Jutaku* 住宅, or *zhu zhai* in Chinese, is originally a Japanese word for house. To reflect this foreignness, I used the French word “*maison*” to render it in my English translation. Because the term is written with two Chinese characters meaning “to live” and “the house,” Chinese readers would have no problem making sense of it. *Yizhu zhe* 遺囑著, “testamenting” in English, makes the noun *yizhu* (testament) into a verb through a derivation typical of Japanese that is not proper usage in Chinese. “Feed you porridge,” *liuzhe nimen hezhou* 留著你們喝粥, is an expression in colloquial Chinese dialect meaning “sustain one’s life.” *Tangran* 倘然, “were that so” in English, is a Chinese word primarily used in pre-modern texts. Finally, *de* 的 in the last sentence, rendered in English as “that of,” is a grammatical marker of the noun clause following “the same as.” A noun clause in this context would not need any marker in Chinese, but would necessarily need one

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<sup>67</sup> Gu Ding, *Xinsheng*, 788.

in Japanese. In other words, the last sentence incorporates Japanese syntax. These instances of nonstandard “Chinese” are by no means accidental, as all of these types appear repeatedly throughout the text.

The issue of language in its strict sense is not all that is involved here; social speech and style are also implicated. For example, by the time Gu Ding wrote the novel, the word *zhuzhai* (house) had already been incorporated into modern Chinese language, but it most often appeared in formal or academic speech. Modern Chinese language, after all, has drawn heavily upon Japanese kanji vocabularies.<sup>68</sup> By reactivating the word in a more colloquial context, Gu Ding goes one step further to Sinicize the Japanese word. Or, to put it differently, he attempts a fuller restoration of the original context in which the word is used in Japanese. In short, it is a stylistic re-contextualization of a Chinese word with a Japanese origin—not an insertion of a foreign word into Chinese.

Moreover, language choices are coordinated with appropriate stylistic adaptations. In the same paragraph, when the colloquial dialect of “feed you porridge” (*liuzhe nimen hezhou* 留著你們喝粥) is evoked, the phrase itself is constructed in a casual and simple style. In Chinese, a grammatically more correct and rigorous way to say the same thing would be “feed porridge *to* you” (*liuzhe gei nimen hezhou* 留著給你們喝粥). In the phrase, the second person pronoun “you” (*nimen* 你們) evokes the flavor of free, direct speech; at the same time, the clause as a whole is marked by the reporting word “testamented,” which is typical of indirect speech. In other words, along with the incorporation of the colloquial dialect phrase, the structure of the entire sentence also becomes fluid and flexible. In contrast, sentences that use Japanese vocabulary and syntax are

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<sup>68</sup> For the influence of Japanese on modern Chinese, see Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 259–352.

constructed in a way that is not necessarily more correct—even if in a more rigorous way. In short, the choice of certain language elements implies certain stylistic choices that the author deems compatible with the chosen language.

Moving on from this condensed paragraph, more languages and styles are to be found in the text. When expressing his own point of view, the narrator adopts a literary style typical of critical essays. When he discusses something aesthetic, he shifts to a highly decorative style; in response, a sensitive reader would sense the tradition of *belles-lettres*, or *meiwen* 美文, that had been popular in Beijing in the 1920s.<sup>69</sup> Beyond the narrator's voice, the direct speech of different characters brings more traces of heteroglossia to the text: dialogue by Japanese and Chinese people is rendered in characteristic ways that correspond to their nationalities and social status. Finally, as if the author is still unsatisfied with the linguistic diversity of the text, he quite deliberately inserts several pieces of quoted speech. Doing so allows him to embrace an even larger range of genres of Chinese language used in Manchukuo. Several pieces of correspondence between him and his friends, which he quotes in their entirety, exhibit the somewhat formulaic epistolary Chinese typical of literati. He also quotes a newspaper report about the plague written in a slightly

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<sup>69</sup> For more about *meiwen*, see Zhou Zuoren, “*meiwen*” (1921), in *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji II*, ed. Zhong Shuhe (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2009), 356–7. Here is an example of Gu Ding’s *belles-lettres* writing: “月光已經從紫色的窗紗裏透進來，我故意不打開花傘電燈，讓月光流在我那古書和古瓷上，我感到有些涼意，不知有誰已經將天鵝絨的寢衣披在我的肩上。鄰室裏，輕妙的音樂，奏出了世界上最悅耳的音律” (The moonbeams filtered through the purple window screen. I did not turn on the shade lamp intentionally, so that the moonbeams can flow on my old books and old porcelains. ... Next door, the light music plays out the most beautiful melody in the world.) Gu Ding, *Xinsheng*, 789. We may compare this to an excerpt from Zhu Ziqing’s “*Hetang yuese*” (The Lotus Pond by Moonlight), a masterpiece of *meiwen* written in 1927: “月光如流水一般，靜靜地瀉在這一片葉子和花上。薄薄的青霧浮起在荷塘裏。葉子和花彷彿在牛乳中洗過一樣；又像籠著輕紗的夢……塘中的月色並不均勻；但光與影有著和諧的旋律，如梵阿玲上奏著的名曲 (The moonbeams spilled placidly onto this expanse of leaves and flowers like flowing water. A thin mist floated up from the lotus pond. The leaves and flowers seemed to be washed in milk, and at the same time trapped in a dream of flimsy gauze. ... The light and the shade had a harmonious melody, like a musical masterpiece played on a violin). Zhu Ziqing, “*Hetang yuese*,” in *Zhu Ziqing quanji I*, ed. in Zhu Qiaosen (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988), 71. For an English translation, see Zhu Ziqing, “The Lotus Pond by Moonlight,” in *The Chinese Essay*, trans. and ed. David Pollard (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 223, slightly modified.

Japanized Chinese journalist language that was commonly found in Manchukuo newspapers of the day. With a hodgepodge of words, grammar, and styles confounding our normal understanding of what modern written Chinese entails, the novel becomes an ambitious laboratory where all available and desirable strains of Chinese language in Manchukuo are at work.

To be sure, due to the complicated sociolinguistic environment of Manchukuo, it was quite common for Manchukuo Chinese writers to incorporate elements of foreign languages—especially Japanese—and bits of local dialects into their writing. Doing so gave them a way to represent their complex linguistic reality and to express local color in literature.<sup>70</sup> Gu Ding’s somewhat unusual life trajectory might have pushed him even further in this respect. As we know, as a Chinese, Gu Ding studied and worked mostly in a Japanese environment, and Chinese for him was primarily for daily conversation, leisure, and artistic pursuits. His linguistic situation was similar to that of colonial bilingual intellectuals, except for that Manchuria was not a Japanese colony before 1931, and whether it was one after 1931 was under question at the time. Based on his linguistic background, it is not hard to imagine that Gu Ding’s formal Chinese would have been naturally Japanized, his daily Chinese localized, and his literary Chinese aestheticized—a linguistic constitution that is well reflected in his novel.

On the other hand, compared to other Manchukuo Chinese writers, Gu Ding’s experimentation in the novel shows a much stronger formal consciousness than is found in most Manchukuo Chinese fiction. In other words, it took him a great deal more formal accommodation to incorporate as many examples of diverse languages as possible into a single work. In the preface, he confesses that the novel was based on his personal notes jotted down in the hospital. He adds

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<sup>70</sup> Ōkubo Akio, “Manshūkoku Chūgokugo sakka no gengo kankyō to bungaku tekusuto ni okeru gengo shiyō,” *Teikoku shugi to bungaku*, ed. Tokui Ō et. al. (Tōkyō: Kenbun shuppan, 2010), 202–38.

that at first he wanted to reorganize these personal notes into a “vivid piece of literature,” but when he reread them, he “could do nothing but merely transcribe them in a messy way.” He calls the novel “a work without a style” and merely an “accumulation of scribbles by pencil and pen on pieces of broken paper.”<sup>71</sup> These are likely modest words that the author is using to disguise his ambition, as he also admits in the preface that the novel is his only major work in three years and that it embodies many of his assiduous contemplations.<sup>72</sup> Of course, there is no way to know to what degree the novel is really based on the author’s hospital notes. The most important aspect of his confession is the fact that, to accommodate linguistic diversity, he has decided to sacrifice the consistency and integrity of a conventional novel and to give priority instead to setting up the structure of the notes.

Below is but one example that shows the author’s painstaking effort. Towards the end of the novel, the author quotes a newspaper report about the plague. Instead of using a block quote, I try to simulate the indentation in a way that reflects the original form in vertical text—indentation counts too in this particular excerpt. Again, I use French words in English to indicate the Japanese kanji words in Chinese.

My original notes stop here and do not continue on. Maybe they continued but I lost them. In any case, in the notebook with my original notes that Waiwen [the narrator’s friend] kept for me, they stop at October 28<sup>th</sup>. After that, on another page, Waiwen cuts off a *reportage* from Datong Newspaper, which I transcribe there. The title is:

Executing scientific disinfection

Renchuan Street *complété* yesterday

Junyong Street and other places shall be disinfected as well

The *reportage* is:

[Reported by Xinjing General Ministry of Epidemic Prevention on the 28th, 4pm]

1. The scientific disinfection on Ruchuan Street *complété* today

我的手記底稿，一直到這裡，便沒有往下繼續，也許是繼續了，我把它遺失

<sup>71</sup> Gu Ding, “Xinsheng zishuo.”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

了，總之，在外文保存的我的手冊之中，在十月二十八日就終結了。以後，外文在另一頁上，從《大同報》上剪裁下來了一段記事，照樣抄錄在下面，題目是：

實行科學消毒

入船町昨日完了

軍用路等處亦將消毒

記事是：

【新京防疫總本部二十八日午後四時致事】

一、入船町科學的消毒至本日完了<sup>73</sup>

Apparently, the primary function of the news report that follows the series of notes is not to provide new information to push the story forward; rather, it provides a review of the whole event in a different language and from a different perspective. To justify the appearance of the news report in the novel, the author makes the narrator repeatedly assert that the narrative is based on the notes in his notebook and that the news report serves as a conclusion to the notes. Details like “cut off from *Datong Newspaper*” and “transcribe,” as well as the indentation and punctuation that simulate the form of a real newspaper report, further imply the author’s will to preserve the authenticity of the language in the quoted report. This excerpt vividly demonstrates how the author uses various narratological devices to carry out his linguistic experiment.

Furthermore, an essay titled “Words about ‘Words’” that Gu Ding wrote merely four months before he was sent to the hospital is even more revealing about what he is up to in the novel.<sup>74</sup> In fact, this important essay summarizes all his major ideas regarding a frontier Chinese language, the full implications of which will be discussed separately in the following section. In the essay, he calls for Manchukuo Chinese writers to engage in what he calls “the adventure of language,” the idea of which demonstrates a dialectic between the national and the local/transnational. Gu

<sup>73</sup> Gu Ding, *Xinsheng, Yiwenzhi* 4 (February 1944), 218.

<sup>74</sup> Gu Ding, “‘Hua’ de hua,” *Manzhouguoyu* 3 (August 1940): 2–8. It was translated in Japanese and published in *Manshūkokugo* 5 (September 1940): 20–7. The Chinese version was later included in Gu Ding’s essay collection under the title “Tongxiao: yanyu,” in Xu Guding, *Tan* (譚) (*Xinjing: Yiwen shudian*, 1942), 67–78.

Ding starts the essay by affirming his strong love for “Han language” (*han hua* 漢話). He claims that reading and speaking Japanese too much makes him feel “a frustrated nostalgia” for the “Han language.” At such moments, he often has to grab a random Chinese book and read until “the withered heart revives as if being moistened by a benevolent rain.” At the same time, he stresses that his love for the “Han language” is by no means meant to keep the language “isolated from the world.” Rather, “in order to make our beloved Han language richer, more delicate and more beautiful, we would like to open the door and ...welcome other languages;” not only “their vocabularies, but also their grammars and syntaxes.”<sup>75</sup> He lists several cases of Sinicized Russian and Japanese words that Manchurian Chinese people commonly used on a quotidian basis and that only later moved to the realm of literature.

In his opinion, “vernacular language is still very young.” To borrow his statement from a different essay, “our language is so lacking that when we speak ....we cannot express what we want to say for quite a long time.”<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, he proposes that “for our vernacular language to acquire a fixed shape, we must be forever a linguistic adventurer.” He then mentions several models of “linguistic adventures” that he identifies in works by his colleagues and classical Chinese writers, who either enrich the grammatical structure and sensibility of vernacular language under the inspiration of foreign languages, or experiment with colloquial dialects, especially onomatopoeia or mimetic expressions. Finally, he envisions that “in the future, though perhaps not the very near future, if people can put together the results from each other’s adventures in a supplementary way, it may be possible to invent a fixed shape [of vernacular Chinese language].” This is exactly what the author himself did soon after he wrote the essay: first in the personal notes

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<sup>75</sup> Gu Ding, “‘Hua’ de hua,” 2.

<sup>76</sup> Gu Ding, “Guanyu yanyu,” *Yizhi banjie ji*, in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 42.

he jotted down in the hospital, if the notes ever existed, and then in the published novel itself.<sup>77</sup>

And yet for Gu Ding, linguistic experimentation is by no means only for the sake of the language. More importantly, this is also his way of reclaiming more cultural territory for Chinese language and literature in Japanese Manchukuo. In accordance with his ambition, the richer and the more updated the internal elements of the Chinese language are, the broader the external social reality it is capable of capturing, the more powerful and promising Chinese language and literature would be in Manchukuo. In this context, the word *capture* recovers its connotation of contestation, that is, to catch and get hold of something—the social reality in this case—in competition with others.

Gu Ding's linguistic and literary expansion has different targets and rivals at different stages. In the 1930s, for example, his major concern was how the New Literature of the May Fourth tradition could appeal to less educated readers who were too used to reading popular literature with little enlightenment value.<sup>78</sup> To make *The Sands on the Plain* more approachable to readers of popular literature, he employs a love-story framework and also experiments with a language that “deliberately mixes in vocabularies and syntax of popular language.”<sup>79</sup>

In *New Life*, through his experimental language, the author hopes to capture an even broader range of social groups—including the educated Chinese in different professions, the uneducated Chinese from an even lower class than the love-story readers, and the Japanese. In the novel, the first-person narrator is deeply concerned about the enlightenment of the poor Chinese people, typically those he meets at the hospital, who can barely read and write. He once asks seriously,

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<sup>77</sup> For more about Gu Ding's linguistic innovations in literature, translation, and creative writing, see Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 59–78; Mei Ding'e, *Ko Tei kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni ikita bunkajin*, 99–105.

<sup>78</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 72–4.

<sup>79</sup> Gu Ding, “Preface,” *Ping Sha, Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 392.

“The masses cannot read, while we can. We call it literature and hope to bring comfort and enlightenment to them. What on earth is the point of it?... I feel as if I am standing on a cliff.... I feel some sort of danger and fear. How can I get beyond this cliff?” As if to address the narrator’s concern, the novel uses language that approximates what is actually used in records to capture the words and deeds of these illiterate persons. Of course, imitating their language does not solve the problem of their illiteracy, but it is an effort to represent their life in their language through literature. Clearly, the hope is that literature may eventually become accessible and useful to this marginalized group and have the potential to transform them into readers of modern literature and students of enlightened values. Similar projects have been carried out by generations of modern Chinese writers, especially leftist writers, ever since the May Fourth Movement, and Gu Ding apparently stands in their extended line.

Perhaps more importantly, the Japanese are another target the author means to represent and capture through his linguistic experimentation in *New Life*. Or, in the author’s own words, it is the social realities of “a country of compound ethnicities” that he wants to represent. As he states in the preface to the novel:

Our country is a country of compound *minzu*, and my attempt to write down the state of harmony of the compound *minzu* starts with this *New Life*. ... Actually, it is in no way an easy thing to write about other *minzu*. On the other hand, it is a strange thing that no other *minzu* appear in our literature. Therefore, in the future, I hope to continue my experiment.<sup>80</sup>

This is a very rich paragraph, each sentence echoing and subtly challenging an emerging trend in the Manchukuo social and literary milieu. “Compound ethnicities” (複合民族; Chn. *fuhe minzu*; Jap. *Fukugō minzoku*) is a term that suddenly emerged around 1939 and is found extensively in

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<sup>80</sup> Gu Ding, “Xinsheng zishuo.”

political and literary essays in Manchukuo;<sup>81</sup> its origin has yet to be confirmed. It is possible that its meaning was vague, as different people used it in very different ways.<sup>82</sup> In general, it provides a more crystallized definition of the ethnic constitution of Manchukuo, compared to the somewhat more descriptive notion of “five ethnicities in harmony” (五族協和; Chn. *wuzu xiehe*; Jap. *gozoku kyōwa*) that was coined soon after Manchukuo was founded. The emergence of the new term “compound ethnicities” in Manchukuo coincides with the establishment of the so-called “New Order in East Asia” (Daitōa shin chitsujo) by Japan in East Asia. The New Order was the precursor of the “Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (Daitōa kyōeiken) and its aim was to integrate the Japanese Empire (Japan, Korea and Taiwan), Manchukuo (as an independent nation outside the Japanese Empire), and China (the collaborative governments) into the Japanese imperial order and mobilize them all for the needs of imperial warfare.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, when compared to the notion of “five ethnicities in harmony,” the notion of a “country of compound ethnicities” already assumes harmonious relations between different ethnicities and requires all ethnicities to become further

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<sup>81</sup> No instance of “fukugō minzoku” has been found in articles earlier than 1939. The earliest I can find is in Sawai Tetsuma, “Kōa Kyōshinkai sōritsu shidō keikaku an,” October 6, 1939.

<sup>82</sup> For example, Morita Takashi, a well-known scholar of national language in Japan during the colonial period, opposed Manchukuo, the “country of compound *minzu*,” to China, the “country of unitary *minzu*,” and his logic was that in China, Japanese people would always be regarded as foreigners and would never be able to enter the core administrative system of the country. See Morita Takashi, “Manshūkoku no kokugo seisaku to nihongo no chii,” *Nihongo* 2, no. 5 (1942): 79. Based on Takashi’s elaboration, Shi Gang argues that the so-called “country of compound ethnicities” in fact only means the country where Japanese people can have a say. See Shi Gang, *Shokuminchi shihai to Nihongo: Taiwan, Manshūkoku, tairiku senryōchi ni okeru gengo seisaku* (Tōkyō: Sangensha, 2003), 49–50. On the other hand, it is true that in the late 1930s, discourse supporting China as a unitary *minzu* was well accepted and stressed by Chinese intellectuals, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. To me, the difference between China as a country of unitary *minzu* and Manchukuo as a country comprised of compound *minzu* is more rhetorical than factual. Both are constituted by multiple ethnicities, and yet they define themselves as different types of political entities. China identifies itself as a modern nation-state and uses this status to justify its constitution and territory. In contrast, Manchukuo was integrated into the Japanese imperial system; this integration highlights its self-identification as an imperial multicultural state marked by a hierarchical multiculturalism.

<sup>83</sup> The “New Order in East Asia” was published by the Konoe Cabinet led by Konoe Fumimaro in November and December in 1938. Two years later, Konoe Fumimaro upgraded it to the “Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” For more about the “New Order in East Asia” and the “Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” see W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 203–9; 233–50.

integrated into the totalitarian political ideology of Manchukuo and into the Japanese Empire.

Following the political changes, Manchukuo launched a series of reformations in the cultural realm. In 1940, a new Department of Propaganda (弘報處; Jap. *kōhōsho*/ Chn. *hongbaochu*) was put together as a centralized administrative institution of cultural production in Manchukuo. In 1941, it published the “Outlines of Guidance of Literature and Art” (藝文指導要綱; Jap. *geibun shidō yōkō*/ Chn. *yiwen zhidaoyaogang*). Arguably the most important cultural policy in Manchukuo, it states that Manchukuo literature and arts must embody the nation-building spirit of Manchukuo and the basic values of the Japanese Empire; moreover, the policy also defines Japanese literature and arts as the “leader” (*shidōsha* 指導者) of all other ethnicities. In order to implement the policy effectively, the Department of Propaganda tightened control over the publishing industry in Manchukuo and placed the publication and importation of periodicals and books completely under its supervision.<sup>84</sup> It also established an Association of Writers and Artists and registered cultural workers in all fields and of all ethnicities as its members regardless of their personal will. Gu Ding was appointed the leader of the Chinese members.<sup>85</sup>

During this process, Yamada Seizaburō emerged as the leading designer and organizer of a body of new Manchukuo literature directed at meeting political expectations. In particular, he published a series of critical essays in Manchukuo and in Japan to discuss the types of writers and literature desirable for a “country of compound ethnicities.” In the articles, he calls for more exchanges and communications among cultural workers across ethnicities and argues for more cultural productions that represent the reality of the ethnic fusion in Manchukuo.<sup>86</sup> He asserts that

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<sup>84</sup> Keiji Okamura, *Manshū shuppanshi* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012), 119–21; 140–3.

<sup>85</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 58–9.

<sup>86</sup> Yamada Seizaburō, “Manshū bungaku tsūshin,” *Hitotsubu no kome o aisuru kokoro* (Tōkyō: Oosaka yagō shoten, 1941), 173.

many Manchukuo Japanese writers have already started to incorporate the culture and stories of other ethnicities in Manchukuo,<sup>87</sup> and strongly and repeatedly criticizes Chinese writers for failing to deal with ethnicities other than their own in their work.<sup>88</sup> The gist of his guidelines is that Manchukuo writers should step out of the communities of their respective ethnicities, enter the common public sphere, mingle with each other, and write about the harmonious relations they share. On top of this, he always emphasizes the leadership of Japanese literature and culture and the necessity of the “unification of the spirit” (*seishin tōitsu* 精神統一) of the “compound ethnicities” under Japanese leadership.<sup>89</sup> Apparently, the guidelines were effective in tightening colonial supervision over cultural producers and productions in Manchukuo.

Of all the Manchukuo Japanese writers, Gu Ding was closest to Yamada. In fact, an essay collection in which Yamada illustrates the above ideas was published by Gu Ding’s publishing house,<sup>90</sup> and Gu Ding must have had a good understanding of Yamada’s points of view. Before then, Gu Ding, like all other Manchukuo Chinese writers, had never highlighted Japanese characters in his works. However, the preface to the novel *New Life* overtly emphasizes a shift in his choice of themes and an expansion of the range of literary representation—changes that respond directly to Yamada’s proposals and to the “Outlines of Guidance of Literature and Arts” in general. When Gu Ding published *New Life* in 1944, the political environment in Manchukuo had deteriorated to the extent that Chinese literature could not survive without official sanction by

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<sup>87</sup> Yamada Seizaburō, “Manshū bungaku no genzai to shōrai,” *Manshūkoku Bunka Kensetsuron* (Xinjing: Yiwen shufang, 1943), 197; “Manshū bungaku no gensei,” *Hitotsubu no kome o aisuru kokoro*, 202–5.

<sup>88</sup> For example, see “Manshū bungaku tsūshin,” “Manshū bungaku ni motomeru mono,” *Hitotsubu no kome o aisuru kokoro* 172; 212–3; “Manshū bungaku no yoake,” “Manshū bungaku no genzai to shōrai,” in *Manshūkoku Bunka Kensetsuron* (Xinjing: Yiwen shufang, 1943), 183, 198.

<sup>89</sup> Yamada Seizaburō, “Fukugō minzoku to bunka no mondai,” *Hitotsubu no kome o aisuru kokoro*, 185, 189.

<sup>90</sup> Yamada Seizaburō, *Manshūkoku Bunka Kensetsuron*. See the preface to the book for more details about its publication.

the Japanese. Most Chinese writers had either fled Manchuria or stopped writing realistic novels about Manchukuo society due to the weighty surveillance imposed on cultural workers and their works.<sup>91</sup> In this context, Gu Ding's shift should not be simply dismissed as unreflective obedience. Rather, it involved careful consideration and calculation regarding the survival of Chinese literature in Manchukuo.

Gu Ding's ambition in *New Life* can be further illuminated by his other efforts to promote modern Chinese literature in Manchukuo. We have seen that in the late 1930s, he proposed the slogan of “writing and printing” and demonstrated a strong desire to fill up the blank space of modern Chinese literature in Manchuria. In addition, he also launched a competition of “a hundred pages of fiction” (*baimei xiaoshuo* 百枚小說) with one of his fellow writers: to participate, one had to complete at least a hundred manuscript pages of a work of fiction. When he failed at this task, he translated Natsume Soseki's *The Heart* (心 Jap. *Kokoro* / Chn. *Xin*, 1939), which filled three hundred pages.<sup>92</sup> In this translation, he preserves the original linguistic features in Japanese as far as possible in Chinese, while at the same time taking pains to incorporate local dialects whenever possible. This effort boosted and expanded the range of expression of the written Chinese language.<sup>93</sup> In 1941, he opened his own publishing house dedicated primarily to the publication of works of modern Chinese literature and world literature.

Gu Ding was also persistently enthusiastic about introducing writers from China Proper and

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<sup>91</sup> Shan Ding, another leading Manchukuo Chinese writer, fled from Manchukuo to Beijing in 1943 after being interrogated by the Japanese. Mei Niang, the best-known Manchukuo woman writer of the time, went directly to Beijing in 1942 after finishing school in Japan. In the ten issues of *Yiwenzhi* (November 1943–October 1944), the last Chinese literary journal produced in Manchukuo, Gu Ding's *New Life* was one of merely two novels that dealt with Manchukuo society. The other was Shi Jun's *Xin Buluo* (New Tribe), published in *Yiwenzhi* 6 (April 1944).

<sup>92</sup> Gu Ding, *Tan* (譚), 56. For more about the competition of “a hundred pages fiction,” see Mei Ding'e, *Ko Tei Kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni ikita bunkajin*, 98–9.

<sup>93</sup> Mei Ding'e, *Ko Tei Kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni ikita bunkajin*, 97–105.

their works to audiences in Manchukuo. He was particularly fascinated by Lu Xun, whom he deemed the founder of modern Chinese literature.<sup>94</sup> In 1938, Lu Xun's works were not allowed to circulate in Manchukuo. However, Gu Ding published a special issue of *Mingming*, the magazine he was managing, that included introductory articles to Lu Xun's major collections as well as Lu Xun's biography—all translated from Japanese.<sup>95</sup> In 1943, Gu Ding also published at least two editions of the *Collection of Lu Xun* through his own publishing house. The collection combines three short story collections by Lu Xun into one book with no mutilation of the original.<sup>96</sup> The second edition even includes legal information on the copyright page—statements that certify that the book, unlike many published by Manchukuo Chinese publishers at the time, has been officially sanctioned. Considering that the cultural environment in Manchukuo was even more stringent in the 1940s than it was in the 1930s, it must have taken Gu Ding quite some effort to get permission to publish Lu Xun's work.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, on the inside back cover of the second edition, we see the following advertisement:

In order to collect canonical works of New Literature [modern Chinese literature of the May Fourth tradition], our publishing house plans to publish a series of “Complete Collections of Masterpieces of the Generation” regardless of possible financial loss. The series includes a fiction series, essay series, poetry series and play series. The fiction series has six books:

Collection of Lu Xun; Collection of Mao Dun; Collection of Yu Dafu; Collection of Ye Shaojun; Collection of Fei Ming; Collection of Lao She.

All of these authors have already been published in the tenth year of Kangde [1943]. Please follow with interest.

<sup>94</sup> Li Wenqing, “Lu Xun zhihou: zhanzheng qi (1937-1945) de Manxi wentan yu wenyi,” *Nanfang wentan* (June 2014): 43–7.

<sup>95</sup> Gu Ding, ed., *Lu Xun zhushu jieti*, in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 525–63.

<sup>96</sup> Lu Xun, *Yidai mingzuo quanji: Lu Xun ji* (Xinjing: Yiwen shufang, 1943), first edition published in February, second edition in December.

<sup>97</sup> For more about the publishing environment in Manchukuo in the 1940s, especially after 1942, see Keiji Okamura, *Manshū shuppanshi*, 119–43. We are not sure how Gu Ding obtained permission, but other Manchukuo Chinese publishers used to bribe Japanese officials to get permissions. See Keiji Okamura, *Manshū shuppanshi*, 145–6.

A series of literature from China Proper like this was perhaps nothing surprising in China Proper, but it was unprecedented in Manchukuo. Among all the books advertised, only the *Collection of Lu Xun* actually appeared; nevertheless, the advertisement bespeaks the author's extraordinary ambition to spread modern Chinese literature in Manchukuo.

To conclude, if I were to condense Gu Ding's literary ambition into a single formulation, it would be: write and publish as much as possible, use a Chinese language that is as rich as possible, do this to capture Manchukuo society as broadly as possible and to appeal to readers from a variety of social strata. The formula presents an extreme case of a strong desire to survive and thrive in the name of national literature, a desire that stands against a long history of heated cultural contestation for space, resources, and power among different nations on the frontier. In such a context, Gu Ding's formula inevitably involves language and literature beyond the scope of a singular nation. As a result, the overflow beyond the national boundary of national literature becomes the very source of a force that empowers the national literature to territorialize the transnational frontier.

### **The Transnational “National Language”**

If a national literature is marked by transnationality, what national identity does it embody and with which nationhood is it aligned? What do nation and literature mean to its author, and how does he/she exploit and perform the meaning? More fundamentally, on the frontier where discourses of the Chinese national/imperial, the Japanese national/imperial and the Manchukuo national are all at play, how do we make sense of nation, national language, and national literature? In the following pages, I will address these questions through a reexamination of Gu Ding's essay

“Words about ‘Words’” within the context of the intellectual discussion surrounding a “Manchukuo national language.”

As Gu Ding clarifies at the end of “Words about ‘Words,’” the essay was written for the Manchukuo Study Group of National Languages (滿洲國語研究會 Jap. *manshū kokugo kenkyūkai*/ Chn. *manzhou guoyu yanjiuhui*). It was first published in the official journal of the study group, *Manchukuo National Languages* (滿洲國語 Jap. *Manshūkokugo*/ Chn. *Manzhouguoyu*). Entering the modern period, the notion of national language emerged as a central issue in the construction of modern language, literature, and nation; this took place first in Japan starting in the late nineteenth century, then in China starting in the early twentieth century, and then in Manchukuo in the 1940s.<sup>98</sup> Because the discussions of national language in both China Proper and Manchukuo were informed by what had transpired in Japan, terms like “national language(s)” (國語 Jap. *kokugo*/ Chn. *guoyu*), “Study Group of National Language(s)” (國語研究會 Jap. *kokugo kenkyūkai*/ Chn. *guoyu yanjiuhui*) and “national language(s) movement” (國語運動 Jap. *kokugo undō*/ Chn. *guoyu yundong*) existed in all three political entities in exactly the same written characters. Consequently, the issue of national language in Manchukuo became a symbolic field of national connection and contestation for both Manchukuo Japanese and Chinese intellectuals.

First, we need to clarify some common notions in the specific context of Manchukuo. The first one is “nation,” or 國 (Jap. *koku*/Chn. *guo*). In Manchukuo, especially among Manchukuo Chinese writers, “nation” has at least three different references, which coexist but not always in a

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<sup>98</sup> For a good summary of the Chinese national language movement, see Li Jinxi, *Guoyu yundong shigang* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1934). On the Japanese national language movement, see Yasuda Toshiaki, *Teikoku Nihon no gengo hensei* (Tokyo: Seori shōbō, 1997).

peaceful manner. They are the Chinese nation in the sense of the Chinese people and culture, the Manchukuo nation as a multiethnic state, and the Japanese nation in the sense of the Japanese people and culture, which stands for modernity and colonial leadership in Manchukuo. In other words, the notion of nation in Manchukuo became the convergence point of negotiation between Chinese imperial legacies, the Manchukuo state, and Japanese imperial power. When treated with care, the three types of nation assume a supplementary relationship; but as is easily seen, over-asserting the subjectivity of one inevitably impairs that of the others.

Similar complexity also applies to the naming of Chinese language in Manchukuo. In Manchukuo, one did not call Chinese language “Chinese language” (*zhongwen* 中文 / *zhongguohua* 中國話), which literally means “the language of China.” The Japanese usually referred to it as “Man language” (滿語 Jap. *mango* / Chn. *manyu*) or “Manchurian language” (滿洲語 Jap. *manshūgo* / Chn. *manzhouyu*).<sup>99</sup> Gu Ding, in his essay “Words about ‘Words,’” uses terms like “Han language” (*hanhua* 漢話) and “vernacular language” (*baihua* 白話), both of which find currency among other Manchukuo Chinese writers. Finally, Chinese language was also referred to as “national language” (國語 Jap. *kokugo* / Chn. *guoyu*), because although the definition of national languages had changed several times in Manchukuo, Chinese was always included.<sup>100</sup> Accordingly, Gu Ding and his colleagues also called Chinese a “national language” when the discussion was related to the issue of Manchukuo’s national language.<sup>101</sup>

Naming is almost always a symbolic speech-act that embodies power struggles. The names

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<sup>99</sup> Yasuda Toshiaki, *Teikoku Nihon no gengo hensei*, 248–50.

<sup>100</sup> For the changing linguistic policies in Manchukuo, see Shi Gang, *Shokuminchi shihai to Nihongo: Taiwan, Manshūkoku, tairiku senryōchi ni okeru gengo seisaku*, 48–83.

<sup>101</sup> Hashimoto Yūichi, “Nigengo no aida ni motarasareta kenryoku,” *Yasō* 64 (1999): 17–33.

Gu Ding and his colleagues used for Chinese language in Manchukuo signify how they located Chinese language on the transnational frontier. In China Proper after the May Fourth Movement, the names “vernacular language,” “Han language,” “Chinese language” and “national language” were often used interchangeably. Although different names emphasize different developmental stages or aspects of the modern Chinese language, people seldom had difficulty with the Chineseness that they deemed the common denominator of all of the names.<sup>102</sup> However, for the frontier writer Gu Ding, “Chinese language,” “Han language,” “vernacular language” and “national language” have disparate political implications, behind which Chineseness is not assumed as a common denominator. The name “Chinese language” has a clear nationalist color and, therefore, was forbidden in Manchukuo, unless one was truly referring to the language used in China Proper. As later discussion will show, names like “Han language” and “vernacular language,” which are not nationalistic in the strict semantic sense, were evoked as *neutral* names that could connect to both China Proper and Manchukuo. “National language” and “national literature,” on the other hand, were used as *ironic* names with double meanings, with the word “national” on the surface referring to the nation of Manchukuo but secretly alluding to that of China.

The Manchukuo terminology I have delineated so far is essential to a full comprehension of the transnational “national language” conceptualized in Gu Ding’s essay. The first thing to notice in the essay is the continuity between the essay and the national language movement in China Proper. The author does not make it clear whether the “vernacular language” and “Han language”

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<sup>102</sup> For the discursive history of vernacular language and national language, as well as their convergence and divergence at different times, see Li Jinxi, *Guoyu yundong shigang* (1934). Zhou Zuoren has made it clear that for him, as for most modern Chinese intellectuals, “vernacular language,” or “national language,” means “Han language”; “Chinese language” (zhongguohua/zhongwen) was used more flexibly in contrast to the use of foreign languages. Zhou Zuoren, “Guoyu Wenxue tan” (1926), in *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji* IV, 483.

under discussion refer to that used in China Proper, in Manchuria, or both; however, he explicitly positions his argument in line with ongoing discussions about national language and literature in China Proper. In his conception, frontier Chinese language and literature have the potential to enrich Chinese language and literature at their core by marching into, contacting, and borrowing from the realm of non-Chinese. In the essay, he twice quotes the modern Chinese linguist Li Jinxi's *Outlined History of the National Language Movement* (*Guoyu yundong shigang* 國語運動史綱, 1934), a book that summarizes the history of the development of national language and literature in modern China.<sup>103</sup> The entire essay covers many theoretical topics discussed in Li's book, with the implication that Manchukuo Chinese writers might be able to contribute to them by experimenting with approximately the same thing under different conditions.

For instance, Gu Ding agrees, like most mainstream intellectuals in China Proper at the time, that a move from ideographic to phonographic representation will be imposed on the Chinese language sooner or later. He then points out that all the linguistic innovations he and his colleagues are practicing have “a common engagement, that is, the effort to overcome Chinese characters (*hanzi* 漢字),... [and] to use Chinese characters as phonographic signs.” The examples he cites include transcribing onomatopoetic and other mimetic words in local dialect with Chinese characters, which he believes is but an early step in the process of pushing Chinese language from ideographic to phonographic. Also, he complains that there are no good dictionaries of vernacular Chinese.<sup>104</sup> In China Proper, the necessity of compiling a dictionary for modern Chinese language had been brought up by scholars ranging from Zhou Zuoren in the 1920s to Li Jinxi in the 1930s;

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<sup>103</sup> For more about Li's book, see John DeFrancis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 55–84.

<sup>104</sup> Gu Ding, “‘Hua’ de hua,” 5–6. My translation.

indeed, it is one of the central topics in Li's book.<sup>105</sup> Gu Ding briefly mentions the discussion in China Proper in his essay, and regrets that although scholars in China Proper have long been committed to the project, only one volume has been published. He then entertains the possibility that his Chinese colleague in the Study Group of National Languages in Manchukuo might be able to embark on the project and take a Japanese dictionary as the model.<sup>106</sup>

In addition, wherever Gu Ding evokes the word “national language,” he neglects to specify which nation he is referring to. He mentions the “Study Group of National Languages” (*guoyu yanjiuhui* 國語研究會) and the “National Language Movement” (*guoyu yundong* 國語運動), which, according to the semantic context, of course mean the “Manchukuo Study Group of National Language” and the “Manchukuo National Language Movement.” It suggests that he is dealing with Chinese language from the perspective of Manchukuo national language. On the other hand, the phrases exist in exactly the same written characters in China Proper as well. Because the essay draws heavily on the concept of the Chinese national language in China Proper, the two phrases, when not clearly modified, easily remind educated readers of the national language of China. We can almost suspect that the author has intentionally dropped the modifier “Manchukuo” in both phrases.

A better demonstration of a similar intention is found in an article by Xiao Song, Gu Ding’s

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<sup>105</sup> For Zhou Zuoren’s discussion about Chinese dictionary in China Proper, see Zhou Zuoren, “Geyao yu fangyan diaocha” (1923), *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji III*, 240. For Li Jinxi’s discussion, see *Guoyu yundong shigang* (1934), 200.

<sup>106</sup> Gu Ding, “‘Hua’ de hua,” 5–6. “There are as many as three or four dictionaries for our ‘dead language’ [referring to classical Chinese], but there is not even one dictionary for the living language. Not only will linguists find this inconvenient, even ordinary people cannot see the true face of the living language... [How about] compiling a *Grand Chinese Dictionary*, like the Japanese *Guangecilin* [Jap. Kōjirin, one of the most comprehensive and authoritative dictionary for Japanese language], that incorporates both the dead and the living language, and, if I may wish, the local dialects? I delineated a dream like this in my mind. Will Xin Jia, the executive at the Study Group of National Language(s), devote his whole life to this seemingly small but, in fact, extremely significant project?”

colleague and one of the “linguistic adventurers” Gu Ding quotes and praises in his essay. In 1942, in the middle of a heated discussion about Manchukuo national languages, Xiao Song published a short article titled “The Current Problems of Manchukuo Chinese Fiction Writers” (“Manxi xiaoshuoren de dangqian wenti” 滿系小說人的當前問題) with one section titled “A Literature in the National Language” (*guoyu de wenzue* 國語的文學).<sup>107</sup> The title is doubtlessly drawn from Hu Shi’s proposal of “a literature in the national language, a national language of literature” (*guoyu de wenzue, wenzue de guoyu* 國語的文學, 文學的國語) in China Proper in the 1920s, as the phrase is not found in either Manchukuo or Japan. The article begins as follows: “‘A literature in the national language’ is a sentence that we became very familiar with back in our student days, but because it was a time so remote from now, many may have already forgotten about it. Even when I mention it here, many would still feel strange.” The author then complains that he has recently received an article that incorporates many new words but, as a whole, it reads like “a poor translation.” He clarifies that he is all for “transplanting and inventing new vocabularies,” but is all against “fabricating and abusing new vocabularies.” To footnote his argument, the article itself is written in a Japanized Chinese. Finally, he ends the section by echoing the beginning:

“A literature in the national language,” in works by very few fiction writers, still preserves its innate posture; “A literature in the national language,” in works by some other fictional writers, has already *faded the traces* of its innate posture.... If [a fiction writer] adopts a significant theme but is not superb at using the language, the tool of representation, then he can hardly pass the first lesson of the textbook on fiction; the technique of fiction writing is but the second lesson in the textbook on fiction.<sup>108</sup> (My bolds and italics to indicate the incorporation of a Japanese expression.)

Hu Shi’s idea of vernacular literature was brought to Manchuria as early as 1920. It gained

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<sup>107</sup> Xiao Song, “Manxi xiaoshuoren de dangqian wenti,” *Shengjing shibao*, October 7, 1942.

<sup>108</sup> My translation.

increasing popularity there in the 1920s. At the time, most Manchukuo Chinese writers were in school, and many had actively promoted the new modern literature in Manchuria.<sup>109</sup> Xiao Song's article, by bringing his readers back to the concept of "a literature in the national language" that has been popular in their student days, reminds them of the time when modern Chinese literature was tied to the national language of China and not to Manchukuo. Moreover, in the article the author repeatedly emphasizes the importance of keeping the "innate posture" of the "literature in the national language" through a cautious and skillful treatment of language. It is clear that for Xiao Song, Manchukuo Chinese language and literature must carry on the "innate" nature of the national language as is used in China Proper.

Above all, the conclusion seems to be that Gu Ding's essay bears a secret but strong sense of identification with the national language and literature in China Proper and with the nation-state of China. Consequently, what the essay conveys could be understood as the nationalist and patriotic sentiments held by a Chinese intellectual living on a Chinese land that was unjustly taken by foreign occupiers. Indeed, many revisionary readers in China and Japan, who refuse to see Gu Ding as a collaborationist writer, choose to read Gu Ding in this light.<sup>110</sup>

Unfortunately, this conclusion is not entirely accurate. Along with the claim of continuity with the national language in China Proper, Gu Ding's essay also addresses a Manchukuo linguistic identity independent of and in opposition to that of China. This is best revealed in a single phrase in the essay: "to create a fixed shape [of vernacular language]" (*dingxing* 定型). Because this phrase is buried in extensive references to national language in China Proper, one can easily read

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<sup>109</sup> "Dongbei xiandai wexueshi" bianxiezu, *Dongbei xiandai wexueshi* (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1989), 15–20.

<sup>110</sup> For example, see Huang Xuan, "Gu Ding lun: wenxue wutuobang mengzhe de beiju"; Feng Weiqun, "Guanyu Gu Ding jiushi lunshi da Tie Feng"; Huang Wanhua, "Gu Ding wenxue chuangzuo lun," in *Gu Ding zuopinxuan*, 578; 583; 625.

past it without giving due attention to the Manchukuo ideology it captures. In fact, “a fixed shape” of Chinese language in Manchukuo was the focus of debates within the Manchukuo Study Group of National Languages and in the journal *Manchukuo National Languages*, where Gu Ding first published the essay.

The Manchukuo Study Group of National Languages was founded in 1939 by the Manchukuo government. Both the Japanese and Chinese languages were listed as its study subjects. Its primary goals included the investigation of the usage of national languages among people in Manchukuo and their standardization and popularization.<sup>111</sup> In 1940, it started to publish its official journal, titled *Manchukuo National Languages*. The journal had a Chinese and a Japanese version, each with a different focus. Many authors for the Chinese version were Manchukuo Chinese writers who had already been involved in different forms of collaboration with the Japanese, including Gu Ding and his friends. A reoccurring topic in the Chinese version of the journal is the standardization of Chinese language in Manchukuo based on the local usage of the language, in opposition to the standardized Chinese language in China Proper based on the Beijing dialect.<sup>112</sup>

Although almost all of the articles by Chinese authors emphasize that the Manchukuo Chinese language cannot be considered separately from that of China Proper, this stance does not necessarily contradict the argument for establishing a new standardized Chinese language in Manchukuo. For instance, in one article titled “Idioms of the Manchurian *minzu* [referring to Manchukuo Chinese people] and Beijing Dialect” (“Manzhou minzu xiguanyu yu Beijing de fangyan” 滿洲民族習慣語與北京的方言, 1940) written by Li Songwu, a Chinese professor of language and literature, the author proposes the following: “The language in common use in

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<sup>111</sup> Yasuda Toshiaki, *Teikoku Nihon no Gengo Hensei*, 217–9.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 250–1.

Manchuria is distinct from the language used in China Proper. I believe that what we call the Manchurian language today should be based on this kind of language, that is, the language that common Man people [Manchukuo Chinese people] are using today.”<sup>113</sup> Another article written by Ma Xiangtu, dean of the Xinjing Broadcasting Bureau, argues that the Manchukuo Chinese language requires a different set of standards from that in China Proper because it has been heavily influenced by the Japanese language with respect to vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation.<sup>114</sup> When we reexamine Gu Ding’s proposal for giving vernacular language a *fixed shape* by enriching it with Japanese and local dialects within the context of these articles, we can no longer be sure about the national allegiance of the “fixed shape” of vernacular Chinese language. Is it for Chinese vernacular language in general, or for Manchukuo Chinese in particular? In the latter case, it embodies a Manchukuo subjectivity and national identity that is separate from and in opposition to China.

Moreover, Gu Ding’s proposal to mix Japanese vocabulary and syntax into Chinese, when read against other articles in the journal, may also be connected to Japanese imperial discourse in a more direct manner than through the mediation of Manchukuo. In Gu Ding’s essay, his reasoning for incorporating Japanese in Chinese is nothing more than a linguistic concern: that is, it will enrich his “beloved Han language.” However, another article published in the journal by Xin Jia, the colleague Gu Ding hopes to entrust with the project of compiling a Chinese-language dictionary in Manchukuo, footnotes the political implication of the proposal. In the article titled “Japanese Language and Us” (“Riyu he women” 日語和我們, 1940),<sup>115</sup> Xin Jia argues for the

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<sup>113</sup> Li Songwu, “Manzhou minzu xiguanyu yu beijing de fangyan,” *Manzhouguoyu* 5 (Oct. 1940): 72.

<sup>114</sup> Ma Xiangtu, “Fangsong yu guoyu,” *Manzhou guoyu* 1 (May 1940): 5–18; “Manshūkokugo o ronjite hōsō yōgo ni oyobu,” *Manshūkokugo* 1 (May 1940): 11–7; *Manshūkokugo* 2 (June 1940): 45–54.

<sup>115</sup> Xin Jia, “Riyu he women,” *Manzhouguoyu* 4 (September 1940): 4–5.

popularization of Japanese language in the following way: “When a culturally backward nation is in contact with a culturally advanced one, it goes without saying that the former will learn the language of the latter. It is one natural step in the process of evolution.” The author raises the instance of the Japanese language borrowing from European languages during the Meiji period, and then suggests that Chinese people in Manchukuo, too, should “go beyond their daily language” and “go deeply into the Japanese language.” The article is primarily meant to encourage Manchukuo Chinese people to learn Japanese, but towards the end, the author adds, “many vocabularies we are using now, are also imported from Japanese.” This statement places the issue of linguistic hybridity under the same rationale of acculturation that he had mentioned previously, according to which the backward take on the linguistic habits of the advanced.

Although this rationale did have extensive appeal to the so-called backward countries like Japan in the Meiji period and China in the early twentieth century, in the 1940s, it was predominantly used by the Japanese to justify its oppressive and hierarchical policies within its empire and across Asia. In Manchukuo, too, the Japanese evoked the same rhetoric to sustain their colonial leadership. According to this logic, then, the Japanized Chinese language used in Manchukuo becomes a natural result of and an evident justification for Japanese dominance there. Of course, the article does not speak for Gu Ding’s intention in his own essay and novel; nevertheless, it indicates that Gu Ding’s linguistic project fits well within Japanese imperial discourse.

In short, in the discussion of national languages in Manchukuo, Gu Ding and other Manchukuo Chinese intellectuals were able to configure a localized and enriched vernacular language that they could claim was an upgraded version of the Chinese national language from China Proper, the standardized Manchukuo national language, and a language that endorsed the

Japanese imperial discourse. The relationship between each set of national affiliations was at the same time supplementary and mutually exclusive. Manchukuo Chinese intellectuals insisted that the Manchukuo Chinese language had to be considered a continuation of the Chinese language in China Proper; Manchukuo Japanese intellectuals emphasized that Manchukuo national languages must follow the Japanese imperial spirit; and as for an independent Manchukuo linguistic and cultural identity, it was too often in tension with either a Chinese or a Japanese identity. And yet, all these discourses found expression in the same singular patois: the Manchukuo Chinese language.

Nevertheless, for Manchukuo Chinese writers and intellectuals, multinational connectivity was not like the migration of a nomad without a fixed home. Whatever their positions were in the discussion, they had a common bottom line: the Chinese language had to be safeguarded against assimilation by the Japanese language in Manchukuo. Again, their defense of the Chinese language in Manchukuo should not be seen as a straightforward testimony of nationalism or patriotism. Rather, looking into the nuanced considerations behind the defense, we will discover more about what a national language meant to frontier writers.

In Manchukuo, the Japanese language was increasingly privileged over Chinese and other languages, as can be seen in the changing linguistic policies of the state. When Manchukuo was first established, Chinese, or “Man language,” was designated as its national language.<sup>116</sup> Sometime around 1935–1936, Japanese was also added to the list of Manchukuo national languages and was defined as the sole official language of Manchukuo. In 1938, in the reformed educational system, Japanese, Chinese and Mongol were all referred to as national languages,<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Shi Gang, *Shokuminchi shihai to Nihongo: Taiwan, Manshūkoku, tairiku senryōchi ni okeru gengo seisaku*, 50.

<sup>117</sup> Li Wenqing, *Gongrong de xiangxiang: diguo, zhimindi yu Dadongya wenxuequan 1937–1945* (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 2010), 336–7.

and Japanese was assigned to half to two-thirds of the total hours of classes on national languages in the curriculum.<sup>118</sup> In 1939, the Manchukuo government founded the “Manchukuo Study Group of National Languages.” Although both Japanese and Chinese were listed as its study subjects, a major focus was the regulation and popularization of Japanese in Manchukuo.<sup>119</sup> In 1940, “Chinese kana” (滿語カナ Jap. *mango kana*/ Chn. *manyu kana*), a new Chinese phonetic system that uses the Japanese kana to annotate Chinese characters, was drafted and put in use. By then, “phonetic symbols” (*zhuyin fuhao* 注音符號), a phonetic system for vernacular Chinese that had been standardized in China Proper, was in common use in Manchukuo.<sup>120</sup> In 1941, “phonetic symbols” were abolished.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, Manchukuo and domestic Japanese writers and scholars started to promote the idea of a unitary national language, that is, the Japanese.<sup>122</sup> In 1943, the Chinese kana system was formally promulgated.<sup>123</sup>

Among all the moves towards the prioritization of Japanese over Chinese, the change of phonetic system deserves a closer look. At the time, the standardized phonetic system in Japan was the kana system; in China Proper, it comprised the “phonetic symbols.” When Chinese kana was first drafted in Manchukuo, it was claimed to be a system for phonetic annotation of Chinese characters. The official explanation was that because students were already familiar with the Japanese language through school education, it would be easier for them to remember kana

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<sup>118</sup> Shi Gang, *Shokuminchi shihai to Nihongo: Taiwan, Manshūkoku, tairiku senryōchi ni okeru gengo seisaku*, 53–5.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 62–68.

<sup>120</sup> For more about “phonetic symbols,” see Li Jinxi, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, 49–94.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 69–70. For more about the Kana phonetic system, see Yasuda Toshiaki, *Teikoku Nihon no gengo hensei*, 253–66.

<sup>122</sup> Yamada Seizaburō, “Fukugō minzoku to bunka no mondai,” *Hitotsu no kome o aisuru kokoro*, 186–7; Kurokawa Kaoru, “Manshūkoku ni Okeru Kokugo Kokujii Mondai,” *Kokugo undō* 2: 2, 25.

<sup>123</sup> Yasuda Toshiaki, *Teikoku Nihon no gengo hensei*, 253–66.

phonetic symbols than the Chinese “phonetic symbols.”<sup>124</sup> However, its hidden purpose was to gradually replace Chinese characters in the Chinese language with Japanese kana letters.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, some Japanese scholars even hoped that it would speed up the consolidation of the Manchukuo national language into Japanese.<sup>126</sup>

To be sure, the problem was not the elimination of Chinese characters, because as is mentioned in Gu Ding’s essay, many linguists in China Proper were also fighting for the same goal. In fact, for both the kana phonetic system in Japan and the phonetic symbols system in China Proper, the primary purpose was not to serve as phonetic annotations to facilitate language education; rather, it was to replace kanji/Chinese characters in the Japanese and Chinese languages, respectively, with phonetic letters. This was because scholars in both countries believed that phonographic language met the needs of a modern nation and society better than ideographic language.<sup>127</sup> What was truly problematic about the Chinese kana system in Manchukuo, then, was that it used Japanese letters, rather than anything else, to replace Chinese characters. The political intention behind it is evident.

Because most linguistic policies and proposals mentioned above were made open to the public, Manchukuo Chinese writers were aware of them. In the journal *Manchukuo National Languages*, Chinese authors unanimously identify the Chinese language as the Manchukuo national language.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, in Gu Ding’s “Words about ‘Words,’” the author explicitly opposes the idea of Chinese kana and advocates the Chinese phonetic symbols. He implies that the Japanese

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<sup>124</sup> Shi Gang, *Shokuminchi shihai to Nihongo: Taiwan, Manshūkoku, tairiku senryōchi ni okeru gengo seisaku*, 72.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 68–73.

<sup>126</sup> Kurokawa Kaoru, “Manshūkoku ni okeru kokugo kokuji mondai,” *Kokugo undō* 2: 2, 23; 25.

<sup>127</sup> Li Jinxi, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, 48–9.

<sup>128</sup> Hashimoto Yūichi, “Nigengo no aida ni motarasareta kenryōku,” 27.

kana system was itself borrowed from the Chinese phonetic system of the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), a theory that, understandably, has many imperfections. He also quotes Li Jinxi's *Outlined History of National Language* to show that the phonetic symbols system has already absorbed its fair share of the merits of Japanese kana.<sup>129</sup> In other words, although the author, following scholars from China Proper, supports the elimination of Chinese characters, he is strongly against the idea of substituting them with Japanese kana letters.

Witnessing Gu Ding and other Manchukuo Chinese intellectuals' compromises and defense of the Manchukuo Chinese language, a reader today may wonder about the boundary between enrichment and encroachment. One may ask, is not the Japanized language in Gu Ding's novel and in works by other Manchukuo Chinese writers already a manifestation of the contamination of the Chinese language by the Japanese colonial cultural power? Indeed, in the PRC, the Japanized Chinese language in Manchukuo Chinese literature, especially in Gu Ding's works, has been harshly criticized as representative of the servility and humiliation of the Chinese people in Manchukuo.<sup>130</sup> However, we also remember that in Xiao Song's article about “a literature in the national language,” he is obsessed with preserving the “innate posture of the national literature” from China Proper on the one hand, while differentiating between “inventing” and “abusing” new vocabularies, mostly taken from Japanese, on the other. The article shows that Manchukuo Chinese writers did maintain a boundary between enrichment and encroachment in their minds, although this boundary might have been different from that conceived by cultural workers in the early PRC, or by today's readers.<sup>131</sup> Boundaries, after all, are always socially and politically determined.

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<sup>129</sup> Gu Ding, “‘Hua’ de hua,” 6–7.

<sup>130</sup> Cai Tianxin, “Chedi suqing fandong de hanjian wenyi sixiang,” 21–23; Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 181–2.

<sup>131</sup> Another instance that may suggest the boundary in Manchukuo Chinese writers' literary practice is that it was extremely rare for Manchukuo Chinese writers to mix Japanese Kana letters into their Chinese writings, although

What, then, propelled Manchukuo Chinese writers to defend the Chinese language in Manchukuo? Scholars have noticed that in the Manchukuo Study Group of National Languages, as well as in the journal *Manchukuo National Languages*, there is a repeated emphasis on the role of the Chinese language both as one of the national languages of Manchukuo and as the language native to the Chinese people. It is clear that this emphasis is crucial for Chinese authors wishing to secure their power in Manchukuo's cultural realm.<sup>132</sup> In sum, if Chinese authors want to have a say in the power dynamics regarding the issue of a national language in Manchukuo, the preconditions are to make sure that the Chinese language persists, that it is listed as one national language, and that only those who are native to the language can properly approach it. In this way, an insistence on the Chinese language and on its inherent relationship to Chinese people became a “strategic essentialism” for Chinese intellectuals who participated in the discussion on national language in Manchukuo.

As an ambitious writer, Gu Ding had even more reasons to support the Chinese language. In “Words about ‘Words,’” he begins with an acknowledgement of his strong love for the Han language. However, for a professional writer, linguistic choice involves more than an emotional attachment. Following this declaration of love, Gu Ding states: “I am a man of literature who owns nothing if I leave the Han language.” This statement touches upon his obsession with mother-tongue writing, which reveals the significance of the Chinese language with respect to his professional achievements. Shortly afterward, he recalls that he was asked to write in Japanese when he visited Japan, but he refused. He explains that he considers writers to be the technicians of language, and “if he cannot create in his mother tongue, what else can he create?” He then draws

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this method was extensively employed in Manchukuo Chinese textbooks. Ōkubo Akio, “Manshūkoku Chūgokugo sakka no gengo kankyō to bungaku tekusuto ni okeru gengo shiyō,” 221.

<sup>132</sup> Hashimoto Yūichi, “Nigengo no aida ni motarasareta kenryoku,” 27–33.

upon Japanese literary history to argue that literary works written in the native Japanese language, that is, in kana letters, not only survive in Japanese literature, but also shine in world literature, while those written in Chinese characters add little to Japanese literary history. The implication is that only by writing in one's mother tongue can a writer produce world-ranked achievements.

Apparently, Gu Ding's advocacy of a “mother-tongue literature,” or a literature in the language of one's own nation, was practicable only because the political institution of Manchukuo allowed and sometimes encouraged writers to write in Chinese, which happened to be his mother tongue. In other Japanese colonies like Korea and Taiwan, when writers were encouraged or even forced to write in Japanese, they had to give up or loosen their obsession with their local or native languages—if the obsession ever existed—and seriously explore the possibility and opportunity of writing in Japanese.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, the proximity between the standardized vernacular Chinese

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<sup>133</sup> For example, in 1939, when publication in Korean language was already banned in colonial Korea, Im Hwa, a leading Korean critique, published an article titled “The Awareness of Language” as a closing remark to the preceding debates on linguistic issues among colonial Korean writers. In the article, he argues that language is nothing more than a tool of representation for literature and is not to be considered the marker of any spiritual essence, such as a national identity. He therefore advocates a “natural language,” by which he means the language that people naturally use and is naturally beautiful. According to him, as long as the language is “natural,” it can be any language, as the commonly used language itself may change with time. His view of a “natural language,” in many ways, addresses the anxiety of the loss of native language among colonial Korean writers.

A Taiwanese reference would be Zhang Wenhuan, the Taiwanese writer who wrote primarily in Japanese during the colonial period. Zhang Wenhuan, like Gu Ding, had been aware of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of representing the life and emotion of Taiwanese people in the language of Japanese in his pre-1945 literary career. However, he lived primarily in Japan during the 1930s; when he returned to Taiwan, Japanese imperialism was compelling many Taiwanese writers to write in Japanese. Surrounded constantly by an environment where Japanese writing was encouraged, Zhang Wenhuan viewed his engagement with the difficulty of writing Taiwan in Japanese as an important step to internalizing the advanced culture and for achieving Taiwanese modernization.

In contrast to the Korean and Taiwanese cases, Gu Ding's argument for a “mother-tongue literature” is, first and foremost, a result of and a response to Japanese cultural policy in Manchukuo specifically. As the chapter has shown, inasmuch as the Japanese claimed Manchukuo was an independent multiethnic nation, Chinese writing in Manchukuo was officially permitted and from time to time encouraged.

For the Korean case, see Im Hwa, “Kotoba o ishiki suru,” *Keijō Nippō* August 16–18 and 20, 1939. For more about Im Hwa's article, see Kim Yun-sik, *Ilche malgi Han'guk chakka ūi ilbonō kūl ssūgiron* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2003), 78–81. However, while Kim argues that Im Hwa's “natural language” refers to the Korean language, because he believes that a natural language for Korean people can only be Korean, I do not think Im Hwa makes this clear in his article. Rather, it is the ambiguity embedded in his argument for a “natural language” that addresses the Korean writers' anxiety concerning the issue of language.

For the Taiwanese case, see Zeng Qiugui, “Shitu yu riben jindai wenxue jiegui: Fansi guozu lunshu xia de Zhang Wenhuan wenxue huodong,” *Taiwan wenxue xuebao* 12 (2008): 1–26.

based on the Beijing dialect and the Northeastern dialect that Gu Ding was born into further makes it comfortable enough for him to claim vernacular Chinese as his mother tongue. In this respect, he benefited from a long history of two-way migration: the Han Chinese moved from Northern China to Manchuria and the Manchu went in the opposite direction, a circumstance that evened out the linguistic topography of the entire region.<sup>134</sup> Writers from other Chinese frontiers, such as remote Southern China and Taiwan, did not have this experience. As a result, they underwent significant struggle due to the disparity between the Chinese national language and their mother tongues.<sup>135</sup> Here Jing Tsu's observation that one's access to native language is always historically and politically governed comes to mind.<sup>136</sup>

In short, if we take all of Gu Ding's accounts seriously, then for him, Chinese language and literature furnished the cultural capital with which to gain power in the Manchukuo multilingual cultural space, to win a place in the broader Chinese linguistic and literary community that included China Proper, and to pursue his dream of becoming a world-class writer. In other words, in his view, it functioned as the necessary condition for his regional, national, and cosmopolitan ambition as a writer.

But what about nation and nationalism? Is there, after all, a nation and a nationalism behind

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<sup>134</sup> In Sun Chaofen's *Chinese: A Linguistic Introduction*, the author accounts for the contrast between the abundant linguistic diversity of Chinese languages in the south and one unified Mandarin in the north by the relatively flat terrain in Northern China that promotes travel and easy contact among the people there. In particular, he mentions the mass migration of Han Chinese from Northern China to Manchuria since the eighteenth century. What he does not mention is the reverse migration of Manchu people from Manchuria to Beijing, which brought Altaic influences that pervaded Chinese dialect in Manchuria to the Beijing dialect. Sun Chaofen, *Chinese: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29–30; Stephen A. Wadley, “Altaic influences on Beijing Dialect: The Manchu Case,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116, no. 1 (January 1996): 99–104.

<sup>135</sup> The best instance would be the Nativist Literature Debate in the 1930s in Taiwan. See Faye Yuan Kleeman, *Under an Imperial Sun: Japanese Colonial Literature of Taiwan and the South* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 153–7. Another example is the Cantonese Literature Movement in Guangdong Province in the 1930s. See Li Linlin, *Ouyang Shan xiaoshuo yanjiu* (MA thesis, Guangdong Technology Normal College, 2013), 34–45.

<sup>136</sup> Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*, 8–12.

Gu Ding's "national language"? Surely there is. First of all, for the frontier writer, nation is specifically the thing that guarantees that national language is "national" even when it involves transnational elements. According to Gu Ding, "as long as we live within the life of certain *minzu*, even language from other *minzu* will be able to live within the language of this *minzu*."<sup>137</sup> In other words, even if Chinese language "opens the door" to foreign languages, it will always be the language of the Chinese people as long as those who use the language stay within the community of the Chinese *minzu*. In this case, nation acts as a certificate that confirms a certain language as the "national" language.

More broadly, the emphasis on a Chinese national identity, for Chinese people in the self-proclaimed multiethnic Manchukuo, was an important precondition for obtaining social power and influence in almost all social arenas, including that of literature and the arts. It was analogous to the emphasis on Chinese language by Chinese intellectuals in the "Manchukuo national languages" discussion. Gu Ding, as an ambitious Chinese intellectual who had worked in the Japanese government and who had extensively collaborated with the Japanese in the cultural sphere, must have known this all too well.

Consequently, almost all of Gu Ding's nationalist moments have a performative element. This is not performativity in Judith Butler's sense, in which all identities are produced through the performance of naturalized bodily acts;<sup>138</sup> rather, it is in the literal sense that Gu Ding's nationalist moments all look as if they were staged for their specific audience. In fact, Gu Ding appears to be a die-hard nationalist (in the sense of the nation and not the state) and even an anti-imperial fighter in many memorial articles written about him by Japanese authors, and only by Japanese authors.

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<sup>137</sup> Gu Ding, "Words about 'Words,'" 3.

<sup>138</sup> Judith Butler, "Preface (1999)," *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), vii–xxvi.

In addition, almost all the nationalist moments took place on or right after drinking occasions. We have mentioned that Gu Ding used to imply, when half drunk, that the Chinese people would take over all Japanese construction in Manchuria. In a different article, Gu Ding was seen singing “The Internationale” in front of a Japanese police station in Manchukuo as a protest against their overbearing governance of the Chinese people, again half drunk.<sup>139</sup>

One episode is particularly intriguing. Asami Fukashi, a journalist from Japan, wanted to meet some Manchukuo Chinese writers when he visited Manchukuo, and so he arranged to meet and talk to Gu Ding and another Manchukuo Chinese writer in an office at the Association of Chinese and Japanese Culture in Xinjing. However, he soon realized that in the office setting, the Chinese writers “would only talk formulaic talks.” He therefore planned a drinking occasion the next evening and invited the Chinese writers. He explained to Gu Ding that he hoped to hear more of their true thoughts “when they talk randomly after a few drinks.”<sup>140</sup> Gu Ding agreed to attend with his friends. After several rounds of drinking, the journalist asked the Chinese writers each to improvise some lines for him. While the other writers merely jotted down their general thoughts about life, Gu Ding wrote the following lines on one side of the paper:

Tomorrow after tomorrow/ Is our ancestors' excuse/ We have no tomorrow/ But only today/ Today is our sacrifice

明日複明日 是我們的祖先的遁辭 我們沒有明日 只有今日 今日是我們的祭祀

He then wrote another poem on the other side:

What is the night tonight?/ I am the son of Emperor Huang,/ and you are the descendant of the Yamato Race./ You love sons of Yamato,/ And I love descendants of Emperor Huang.

今夕複何夕？我乃黃帝子，君乃大和裔，君愛大和子，我愛黃帝裔。

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<sup>139</sup> Uchiumi Koichirō, “Yopparai no ichiya: shuyū kotei tsuisō II,” in Okada Hideki, *Zoku bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 392.

<sup>140</sup> Asami Fukashi, “Manjin sakka kaikenki,” *Manshū Bunkaki*, 172–5.

In China, Emperor Huang has long been acknowledged as one of the forefathers of the Chinese people. Since the late Qing, Emperor Huang, sometimes with Emperor Yan, has been reinvented as the ancestral symbol of either the Han people or of the Chinese people as a whole. From then on, Chinese people, especially overseas Chinese, have referred to themselves as the “sons and grandsons of Emperor Yan and Huang” (*yanhuang zisun* 炎黃子孫).<sup>141</sup> In other words, Emperor Huang stands for a Chinese national identity beyond the limits of the state in the name of ancestral blood. In the specific context of Manchukuo, where the expression of love for the state of China was not a possibility, the metaphor of Emperor Huang, or ancestral blood, lends Gu Ding a voice to articulate a Chinese national identity without specifically referring to the state of China.

When read against each other, the two poems produce an uncanny effect. The first prose-poem states that the plural narrators have no tomorrow, and today—which is the only thing they do have—is a sacrifice. It denies any hope or meaning here and now. The second poem, written in a classical form, through an alternation of the first person’s and the second person’s points of view, straightforwardly opposes a Chinese identity to a Japanese one. At the same time, this poem passionately announces a national love, which the author hopes will have resonance for both the Chinese and the Japanese. Read together, the second poem sounds like a eulogy for the sacrifice mentioned in the first. A eulogy cannot bring the dead back to life; its true meaning is meant for the living, especially when it is written for and directly addresses the living. In other words, the second poem was intended not so much as self-expression; rather, it is a well-thought out message addressed to a specific audience from a living-dead voice, in an attempt to subtly maneuver the audience—the Japanese host. The message emphasizes Chinese identity and subjectivity and calls

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<sup>141</sup> For more about the reinvention of Emperor Huang since late Qing, see Shen Songqiao, “Woyi woxue jian xuanyuan: Huangdi shenhua yu wanqing de guozu jiangou,” *Taiwan Shehui Yanjiu Jikan* 28 (1997), 1–77.

for equal respect from the Japanese. Both of these points, as I have argued, were crucial to the self-fulfillment of Chinese intellectuals in Manchukuo.

Nationalist performances were of course dangerous in Manchukuo, but Gu Ding cleverly took the edge off by almost always staging them on drinking occasions; otherwise they may have failed. A Japanese author recalls that in 1944, Gu Ding's novel *New Life* was translated into Japanese in Manchukuo and was about to be published. However, Gu Ding started the preface to the translated work with a sentence that states, "we are the sons and grandsons of Emperor Huang...." Because of this sentence, the book did not get permission for publication.<sup>142</sup> Clearly, expressing Chinese nationalist sentiments—even without a specific reference to the Chinese state—was sensitive in Manchukuo. As a result, nationalist performance required minute calculations and deliberate stage-setting.

A survey of discussions from the Manchukuo period and articles from as late as the 1990s reveals that no Chinese author has ever mentioned Gu Ding's nationalist moments. Rather, many describe him as a collaborator and an opportunist, and one even calls him a trader who "treats literature as a trade."<sup>143</sup> This perspective suggests that Gu Ding's nationalist moments were only for the Japanese. Indeed, national language, national literature, and nationalism—all may have been a trade for this frontier writer. This does not necessarily mean that he said or wrote anything that was not sincere; it is more that he was attentive to the possible consequences resulting from

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<sup>142</sup> Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru Manshūkoku no isō*, 262–3.

<sup>143</sup> For example, in a private letter to Okada Hideki dated June 30, 1992, Shan Ding writes, "I want to tell you my true thoughts from the perspective of a Chinese writer: Gu Ding is a speculator. ...His motivation for collaborating with the Japanese was to gain profit (political benefit and economic benefit). ...He wanted to make a trade through literature. He invested much and lost much too." In an interview record by Mo Jia dated February 9, 1990, Yi Chi, the interviewee and Gu Ding's fellow writer back in Manchukuo, remarks that "in the late [Manchukuo] period, he was involved in some activities that benefited the enemy, which should be seen as a stigma in his personal history." In my interview with Li Zhengzhong, a former Manchukuo Chinese writer, on May 26, 2014, Li commented that the reason Gu Ding opened Yiwen Bookstore was "to expand his individual influence."

the way he dealt with anything national, and was willing to make an effort to adjust to those consequences. In the process, sincerity became something unfathomable, national language and literature were strategically essentialized, and nationalism had to be staged.

The above analysis of Gu Ding’s “Words about ‘Words’” will bring us to a more nuanced reading of *New Life*. The linguistic experiments the author undertook in the novel, just like the Chinese language in Manchukuo in general, empower Chinese language and literature in Manchukuo by localizing, enriching, and corrupting the Chinese language as a national language with multinational connectivity.

The language in *New Life* has the potential to contribute to national language and literature in China Proper in several ways. Most straightforwardly, the author notes down many expressions in local dialect, which, seen from the Chinese national perspective, is the Chinese Northeastern dialect. He also attempts to enrich vernacular Chinese with many Japanese kanji words and with Japanese syntax that the standard Chinese language has not yet assimilated.<sup>144</sup> In particular, he adds new contexts to already assimilated Japanese kanji words, as in the case of zhuzhai/jiutaku/住宅. This is particularly significant. In China Proper, Japanese kanji words were Sinicized mostly in formal writing at first and filtered into daily dialogue only gradually. It was a long process, and many efforts were made to accelerate the popularization of the so-called “new words,” mostly from Japanese kanji vocabulary, among common people.<sup>145</sup> When Gu Ding translated quotidian Japanese into Japanized Chinese in the form of narrative or direct/indirect speech, Sinicized

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<sup>144</sup> In China Proper, Japanese syntax assimilated into Chinese, like the syntax of other Western languages assimilated into Chinese, is categorized as the “Europeanization” of Chinese. This is because most Japanese syntactical constructions adopted by Chinese were in fact those that the Japanese had earlier adopted from Western languages. In Gu Ding’s work, however, both Japanized Western syntax and original Japanese syntax are adopted in Chinese.

<sup>145</sup> Li Jinxi, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, 413–26, and 420 in particular.

Japanese kanji words were directly tested out in the context of colloquial Chinese language. This, in theory, had the potential to speed up the popularization of the imported vocabulary. Finally, Gu Ding also invented novel literary expressions inspired by Japanese vocabulary and syntax, such as this sentence: “I *showered* my face in the winter sunshine that passes in through the glass window, and heartily *dissolved* the happiness *into* my whole body” (我將臉龐沐浴在透過了玻璃窗的初冬的陽光裡，盡性地將歡喜溶解了全身). This is the same logic that Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren used to enrich the range of expression of vernacular Chinese through the practice of a “direct translation” (*zhiyi* 直譯), or a “hard translation” (*yingyi* 硬譯), of foreign literature. In fact, Gu Ding intentionally followed Lu Xun’s ideas of translation in his own translation practice.<sup>146</sup>

However, if we read the novel in the broader context of the “Manchukuo national languages” discussion, it is easy to view the novel as a collection of raw data of the Manchukuo Chinese language, waiting to be distilled into a new standardized Chinese language exclusive to Manchukuo. In addition, the transnationally hybrid language enables the author to write about the Japanese in the Chinese literature and so to participate in the construction of a multiethnic Manchukuo literature. Both aspects of the novel endorse a Manchukuo subjectivity in opposition to that of China.

Furthermore, if we recall Xin Jia’s article that rationalizes the Japanized Chinese language as the result of a “backward culture” learning from “the advanced culture,” then Gu Ding’s incorporation of Japanese vocabulary and syntax, especially when accompanied by his undisguised praise of Japanese modernity in the novel, is straightforwardly implicated in the justification of the Japanese imperial discourse.

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<sup>146</sup> Mei Ding’e, *Ko Tei Kenkyū: Manshūkoku ni Ikita Bunkajin*, 99–105. For more about Lu Xun’s translation thoughts, see Wang Pu, “The Promethean Translator and Cannibalistic Pains: Lu Xun’s ‘Hard Translation’ as a Political Allegory,” *Translation Studies* 6, no. 3 (2013): 324–38.

Gu Ding may be arguing that in a frontier setting like Manchukuo, one can only preserve and expand the Chinese national language and literature through transnational connectivity. Indeed, this is probably the case. This argument speaks to the fundamental dilemma that writers from oppressed social groups across the world have to face—the paradoxical choice between speech and silence. Many scholars have come up with theoretical frameworks to read the oppressed writers' strategic utterances as a form of resistance, at least potentially. Deleuze and Guattari's "minor literature" and Gayatri Spivak's "literature of the subaltern" come to mind.<sup>147</sup> In the case of Gu Ding the frontier writer, however, I would argue that the desire to utter with power overwhelms everything else; compared to this, the question of whether to resist or to collaborate becomes a secondary issue. In this case, if notions like linguistic nativity and national literature were treated as a trade, they were traded for more power in utterance. And when they were essentialized, the insistence on their being essential functions in a way similar to the insistence on money as the inherent reification of some abstract value: for both, the purpose is not to essentialize the value but to valorize the currency. As Jing Tsu rightly points out, there are "possibilities for analyzing identity itself—along with all its attendant concepts of nativism, nostalgia, nationalism, and 'Chineseness'—as a situational proxy for manipulating linguistic capital." In such a light, linguistic nativity, or one's access to what one believes to be a national language, is treated "as a currency instead of a stamp of authenticity."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). See the whole book and Chapter 3, "What is a Minor Literature," in particular. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg (University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313

<sup>148</sup> Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*, 13.

## **The Frontier and the Sinophone**

This last section situates Gu Ding in the broader landscape of modern Chinese language and literature in and beyond the nation-state of China, and explores what his frontier perspective may offer to our general view of the landscape. In this section, through a comparative reading of Zhou Zuoren and Gu Ding in the framework of Sinophone studies, I argue that fundamental concerns in the field of Sinophone studies, a field that has thus far focused primarily on literature outside mainland China, will also inform our understanding of mainland Chinese literature—both from the margins and in the center. Or, to put it differently, I argue that studies of Chinese national literature and Sinophone literature in many ways depart from the same set of fundamental questions and naturally inform each other. When making a comparative study of the work of Zhou Zuoren and Gu Ding, both mainland Chinese writers, I ask to what extent might their experiments with linguistic hybridity share similar concerns, initiatives, and principles, and what very different agendas and ideologies might lie behind them. These are questions that, I believe, will help us better understand other cases of linguistic hybridity in Chinese national and Sinophone literature. Finally, through a reflection on the gains and losses in Gu Ding’s frontier subjectivity, I will highlight the political pitfalls embedded in the transnational hybridity of language and literature. Hybridity is often encouraged and celebrated in today’s scholarly discourse, but I hope to point out, from a frontier perspective, the danger of an indiscriminate idealization of hybridity and the necessity of engaging with it with a critical mind.

If we extend our view to the entirety of modern Chinese and East Asian literatures, Gu Ding is not alone in his linguistic experimentation. Rather, his experiments find resonance in many historically and geographically formed communities that have engaged with various types of heteroglot writing. One such community is the large group of Chinese writers and intellectuals

who have explored the intra-national linguistic plurality within the domain of modern Chinese national literature. In China Proper, at the inception of the modern Chinese national language, the issues of “Europeanization” (*ouhua* 歐化) and “returning to the ancient” (*fugu* 復古), the influence of Japanese, and the involvement of local dialects were all thoroughly debated.<sup>149</sup> Zhou Zuoren, as early as the 1920s, repeatedly elucidated his idea of an “ideal national language” (*lixiang de guoyu* 理想的國語), which he envisioned as a modern vernacular language that incorporates elements from the ancient, the foreign, and the local languages.<sup>150</sup> Later, in the long-lasting Mass Language Discussion (*dazhonggyu* 大眾語) that took place in the 1930s and the 1940s, debates over classical and vernacular Chinese, along with theories and practices of dialect writing, again emerged in different locales in China.<sup>151</sup> It is fair to say that a dialectic between monolingualism and multilingualism has been an important and constant driving force for the development of modern Chinese national language and literature.

Another writing community that Gu Ding resonates with is colonial writers across East Asia

<sup>149</sup> For Europeanization and classicization in modern Chinese language and literature in general, see Luo Zhitian, *Inheritance within Rupture: Cultural and Scholarship in Early Twentieth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 293–314. For discussions of Europeanization, see Deng Wei, “Shilun Wusi wenxue yuyan de ouhua baihua xianxiang,” *Guangdong Shehui kexue* (February 2011): 182–87. For classicization in the 1920s, see Li Jinxi, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, 128–52. For the influence of Japanese on Chinese, see Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900–1937*, 259–352. For the involvement of dialects in May Fourth period, see Liu Jin, *Signifying the Local: Media Productions Rendered in Local Languages in Mainland China in the New Millennium* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 31–9.

<sup>150</sup> Many of Zhou’s articles in the 1920s deal with the issue of an “ideal national language.” For example, see “Guoyu gaizao de yijian” (1922), in *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji II*, ed. Zhong Shuhe, 752–60; “Lixiang de 178uana” (1925) *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji IV*, 288–9; “Yanzhicao ba” (1928), *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji V*, 517–9.

<sup>151</sup> For the Mass Language Discussion, see Li Jinxi, “Guoyu yundong shigang xu,” *Guoyu yundong shigang*, 1–117. For the debate over classical and vernacular Chinese in the 1930s, see Chen Aili, “Ershi shiji sanshi niandai dazhonggyu jianshe lunzheng jiqi yingxiang” (PhD diss., Beijing shifan daxue, 2012), 8–12. For the involvement of dialects in the Mass Language Discussion, see Liu Jin, *Signifying the Local: Media Productions Rendered in Local Languages in Mainland China in the New Millennium*, 40–47. For the Cantonese Literature Movement (yueyu wenxue yundong) in early 1930s, see Li Linn, *Ouyang Shan xiaoshuo yanjiu*, 34–45; for the Dialect Literature Movement in Southern China (huanan fangyan wenxue yundong) that took place in Hong Kong in the late 1940s, see Wang Dan and Wang Que, “Lun ershi shiji sishi niandai Huanan fangyan wenxue yundong de youxian helixing,” *Xueshu yanjiu* (September 2012): 140–5.

who have pursued a transnational linguistic hybridity under the common influence of the Japanese imperial language. Extensive studies have documented the infiltration of the Japanese language into colonial national language and literature in colonial mainland China, Taiwan, and Korea. For example, scholars have investigated the incorporation of Japanese vocabulary and syntax into the work of the colonial Shanghai Neo-Sensationalism writer Liu Na'ou.<sup>152</sup> In the cases of Taiwan and Korea, due to the relatively long colonial period, modern language itself was configured under oppressive and lasting linguistic influence from imperial Japan. Consequently, the question at stake is what it means for local writers to write in a language that has been marked by colonial transnationality since its inception.<sup>153</sup> In what ways, moreover, does the influence of the former imperial language continue as a presence in postcolonial Korean and Taiwanese literatures?<sup>154</sup> If we extend our scope to an even broader range of time and space, we will find more cases comparable to Gu Ding's experiment in global Chinese writing and colonial/ postcolonial writing.

In the sense that Gu Ding and his resonant others fundamentally destabilize the idea of a homogenized national language or standard language, they address theoretical concerns that have been brought up in the field of Sinophone studies, to which my study of Gu Ding and frontier literature is greatly indebted. Thus far, however, Sinophone studies has mainly dealt with literature outside mainland China, and has excluded most mainland Chinese literature from its sight.

In Shu-mei's Shih pioneering works on Sinophone studies, including *Visuality and Identity*:

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<sup>152</sup> See Ying Xiong, "Between the National and Cosmopolitan: Liu Na'ou's Modernist Writings Travelling across East Asia," *Literature and Aesthetics* 20, no. 1 (2010): 131–8.

<sup>153</sup> For the influence of Japanese on Chinese language in Taiwan during the colonial period, see Chen Peifeng, *Nihon tōchi to shokuminchi kanbun: Taiwan ni okeru kanbun no kyōkai to sōzō* (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2012). For the influence of Japanese on Korean during the colonial period, see Kim Sun-hee, "Contact between Languages: The Influence of Japanese on Korean," *Inmun nonch'ong* 11 (2003): 391–408.

<sup>154</sup> Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 378–9.

*Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* and other edited volumes, she questions the common assumption that Sinophone literature evinces a centrifugal nostalgia for China. She calls for resistance against the power of cultural or political homogenization disseminated from the China center, which attempts to impose a Chinese identity over global Chinese-speaking communities.<sup>155</sup> Accordingly, her first and foremost focus is on literature from outside mainland China. Shih celebrates the multilingualism she discerns in Sinophone literature, while criticizing the monolingualism she associates with national and standard Chinese language and literature within the mainland.<sup>156</sup> Second, she also considers frontier non-Han minority literatures, including those from “Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang,” as Sinophone literature. There she identifies a case of internal colonial “minor literature” that constantly embodies a painful negotiation with a political and cultural “Han-centrism.”<sup>157</sup> The heavily Sinicized Manchurian frontier does not fit Shih’s definition of Sinophone literature, and neither does the writing of other writers from China Proper.

Following Shih, Jing Tsu’s book *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* further challenges the more fundamental association between native language and cultural identity in general. Arguing that one’s claim to, access to, and speech/script in the so-called native language are hardly ever truly *native* and are always socially determined, she proposes to treat Chinese language in the global Chinese-speaking/writing community not as a stamp of authentic identity, but as a form of linguistic capital that “governs” the literary cooperation within the community. In the community, “linguistic alliances and literary production organize themselves around incentives of recognition

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<sup>155</sup> For example, see Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 23–9; “What is Sinophone Studies?” in *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*, ed. Shu-mei Shih et. al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 1–16.

<sup>156</sup> Shu-mei Shih et al., ed., *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*, 7–11.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 11–2.

and power,” and identity itself is analyzed as merely “a situational proxy for manipulating linguistic capital.”<sup>158</sup> For Tsu, again, the focus is on Chinese diaspora writing, as it presents a lively site where Chinese language, as linguistic capital, is claimed and traded in various forms as the authors thoughtfully cross back and forth over linguistic and national boundaries.<sup>159</sup>

In the following, through a comparative study of Zhou Zuoren and Gu Ding, I argue that literary practices by Han writers from both the frontier and the center of mainland China have Sinophone significance, can be properly approached with the general theory of the study of Sinophone literature, and may add new layers to its key arguments. The cases of Zhou and Gu, when read against each other, will show that national or standard language in mainland China is not the homogenizing and homogenized enterprise that Shih argues it is; rather, an internal multilingualism has always been at its core. Furthermore, their cases will also show that the transaction of linguistic capital organized around incentives of recognition and power is almost always subject to the geopolitical power surrounding it. Therefore, political criticism, implicit or explicit, is constantly required before a literary cooperation within the global Sinophone community can be imagined and formed.

Speaking of modern Chinese literature, many would identify Hu Shi’s proposal for vernacular language literature (*baihua wenxue* 白話文學) as the beginning out of which he later developed the longer slogan “a literature in the national language, a national language of literature” (*guoyu*

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<sup>158</sup> Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*, 12–3.

<sup>159</sup> Jing Tsu deals extensively with the issue of bilingualism, or linguistic crossing, in the case study of Sinophone writers such as Lin Yutang, Eileen Chang, Ha Jin, and Chen Jitong. See Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*, Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

de wenzhe, wenzhe de guoyu 國語的文學，文學的國語).<sup>160</sup> Many would also agree that what truly fleshed out Hu's somewhat abstract idea was Zhou Zuoren's proposal for an "ideal national language." This idea first arose in 1922:

In order to build up the modern national language, we must reform it on the basis of the commonly used normal language .... First, to adopt ancient language.... Second, to adopt dialects.... Third, to adopt new vocabularies and to make the grammar rigorous.... Our ideal is, within the range of the capacity of the national language, to use modern language as the main body while adopting elements from the ancient time and from foreign countries, so as to make it rich and delicate, and capable of expressing emotions and thoughts approximately.<sup>161</sup>

From then on, Zhou's idea has had extensive influence on writers and linguists.<sup>162</sup> When Gu Ding claims that "our vernacular language is still young" and "lacking" and that we need to "open the door and welcome other languages" in order to make it "richer, more delicate and more beautiful" in the 1940s, the echo of Zhou Zuoren is undeniable.

For Zhou, the primary criterion in taking advantage of a linguistic hybridity is, as is shown above, "the capacity of national language." In his later articles, he elaborates on the criterion in two dimensions: linguistic affordability and aesthetic capacity. Linguistically, he proposes to

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<sup>160</sup> Hu Shi, "Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature," in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945*, ed. Kirk A. Denton (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 123–39. For more discussion of the slogan, see Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in China Diaspora*, 32.

<sup>161</sup> Zhou Zuoren, "Guoyu gaizao de yijian," 756–8.

<sup>162</sup> For example, the "Declaration of the National Congress of National Language Movement" (*Quanguo guoyu yundong dahui xuanyan*, 1926) states that "It also requires a rich content. We can incorporate the essence of dialects and foreign vocabulary from all directions, mix in idioms and ancient words; so that it can have a consummate form, a logically rigorous structure, and an artistically beautiful color." Quoted in Li Jinxi, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, 25. The proposal comes directly from Zhou's "The Ideal National Language" (*Lixiang de guoyu*, 1925): "The national language we want, is one that uses vernacular language (i.e., spoken language) as its base, mixes in ancient language (words and idioms but not paragraphs), dialects, and foreign vocabulary, and is properly structured to have logic rigor and artistic beauty." Zhou Zuoren, "Lixiang de guoyu," 288–9. Even in Mao Zedong's article "Against Party Formalism" (*fandui dangbagu*, 1942), the prescription the chairman gave to the formulaic language of party propaganda articles were very similar to Zhou's idea: "First, we should learn language from the masses....Second, we should adopt necessary elements from foreign language. ... Third, we should take the living elements from the language of the ancient people." See Mao Zedong, "Fandui dangbagu," in *Zhengfeng wenxian* (Shanghai: Jiefang she, 1949), 34. For the English translation, see Boyd Compton, *Mao's China: Party Reform Documents 1942–1944* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1952), 42–4.

accommodate heterogeneous elements “to the furthest limit that the nature of single Chinese character allows, to enhance its range of expression, but not to force it to do what it is incapable of”; one should not, for example, try to inflect Chinese words and say something like “three reds peonies” (三株們的紅們的牡丹花們).<sup>163</sup> Aesthetically, he pursues an exquisite and delicate vernacular language through mingling, mediating, and arranging a variety of linguistic elements “properly or tightly,” as illustrated in Zhou’s own literary works and in those he appreciates.<sup>164</sup> Unlike many other Chinese intellectuals who worried that tendencies towards Europeanization or classicization of the young national language might harm the subjectivity of the modern nation, Zhou refused to take individual linguistic features politically.<sup>165</sup>

This was possible because Zhou Zuoren believed that the written Chinese language as a whole was a natural and essential medium of the Chinese national character, or national essence, which he describes as “an inheritance” that “flows in our veins”<sup>166</sup> and “seeps in the nerves of our brains.”<sup>167</sup> In this regard, Susan Daruvala is right in pointing out that “Chinese identity in Zhou’s thinking was based on shared access to the fullest resources of the [Chinese] language.”<sup>168</sup> Moreover, Zhou insists that Chinese language that functions in this way has to be in Chinese characters—and not, as others have proposed, Romanized. According to him, it is the ideographic

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<sup>163</sup> Zhou Zuoren, “Guocui yu ouhua” (1922), *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji II*, 517. For an English translation, see Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 238, slightly modified.

<sup>164</sup> Zhou Zuoren, “Yanzhicao ba,” 518. Also see Zhou Zuoren, “Meiwen,” for a summary of his aesthetic pursuit in literature.

<sup>165</sup> Here I agree with Daruvala that “Zhou refuses to assign political nature to linguistic features themselves” and “believes that the use of language after the Qing dynasty depended on the individual.” Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*, 235.

<sup>166</sup> Zhou Zuoren, “Difang yu wenyi” (1923), *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji III*, 103.

<sup>167</sup> Zhou Zuoren, “Guocui yu ouhua,” 516.

<sup>168</sup> Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*, 13; also see 235.

script that unifies different sounds in local dialects and therefore holds together the nation.<sup>169</sup> Here, the influence from his mentor Zhang Taiyan is salient.<sup>170</sup> In short, he deems the written language in Chinese characters to be a safe zone that embodies and guarantees the Chineseness of the language, within which internal variations are kept free from political implications.

Zhou's view of the Chinese language in Chinese characters as an essential national bond was further elucidated and consolidated when the danger of Japanese total invasion approached in the mid-1930s. In 1936, in an open letter to Hu Shi, Zhou emphasizes the significance of national language and literature in a time of national crisis in a long and rich paragraph that also touches upon the Japanese occupation of Manchuria:

To use a fashionable expression, it is necessary to enhance the Chinese national awareness now. Simply put, I hope that the Chinese *minzu* (*zhongguo minzu*) can keep connected in the sense of thoughts and emotions. I would not say Han *minzu*, because we need to include people of Hui, Manchu and Mongol descent, who also use the Chinese language; neither would I say the people of China (*zhongguoren*), because we need to include people from the four Eastern provinces [i.e., Manchuria], Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao. Although some do not belong to the same nation (*zu*) by blood, and some are no longer in the same state (*guo*) by politics, they have all been nurtured by the Chinese culture, which is an important connection, and so I include them all under the name of the Chinese *minzu*. Let us again raise the example of the four Eastern provinces. Now they are separated from this country, but we know that it is not by the self-determination of the people, and is solely due to the military power of the enemy, which is nothing different from the loss of Taiwan. What is lost by military power can only be retaken by military power, and therefore the recovery of the lost land is not a difficult thing as long as we have military power; but this is also the only solution. This is one thing. For those that are politically separated, they are not necessarily separated in culture or in thoughts and emotions, unless we use man-force to separate them. This is another thing. We need to wait and see for the first thing, but for the second, we do not need to wait, and everyone can make their own contribution. ... In any case, this is something worth considering now. We who hold pens do not need to take too much energy, neither

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<sup>169</sup> Qian Liqun, "Zhou Zuoren yu wusi wenxue yuyan de biangge," *Zhou Zuoren lun* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1991), 143–5.

<sup>170</sup> In *New Dialect* (*Xin fangyan*), Zhang Taiyan argues that the unification of written Chinese since the Qin is what kept China unified. Zhang had been a firm advocate for Chinese characters throughout his life. See Peng Chunling, "Yi 'yifangfangyan' dikang 'hanzi tongyi' yu 'wanguo xinyu': Zhang Taiyan guanyu yuyan wenzi wenti de lunzheng (1906–1911)," *Jindaishi yanjiu* (February 2008): 65–82.

do we need to change our beliefs. We only need to try our best and write down our honest thoughts in common Chinese language, and make it spread from Southwest to Northeast, and then from Northeast to Southwest, so that people in the system of Chinese language can read, and the thoughts and emotions of the Chinese *minzu* can get connected, and this will not be a bad thing. This kind of connection or unification alone will not necessarily have the effect of recovering the lost land instead of the military power, but there must be some benefit. Personally, I do not believe in the power of letters too much, but since people are all advocating propaganda nowadays, there must be something good about it.<sup>171</sup>

This paragraph powerfully shows that in 1936, five years after the Manchurian Incident and one year before the Sino-Japanese war broke out, Zhou was clearly aware that the Chinese *minzu*, or nation, is made up of different ethnicities that can be separated into states other than the nation-state of China. The urgent situation pushes him to rely even more on language and literature, hoping that the Chinese *minzu* can nevertheless be unified in thought and emotion as long as Chinese people keep writing and reading in a common language. Furthermore, in Zhou's view, this linguistically bound nation is supposed to facilitate the political recovery of lost territories, including Taiwan, Manchuria and Hong Kong, in the name of a Chinese nation-state. In other words, it is by no means a precursor of Tu Weiming's concept of "cultural China" that envisions a global community defined by a shared sense of Chinese culture and that therefore disregards the limits of the Chinese nation-state.<sup>172</sup> In Zhou's letter, Chinese language is idealized as the necessary and sufficient condition for the preservation and dissemination of a sense of nation-statehood among Chinese people. Consequently, Zhou understood national propaganda as nothing more than a linguistic practice, while many other writers of the same time called for an anti-Japanese literature with an explicit message of patriotism and resistance.

This is where Gu Ding provides a counterexample. His case shows all too clearly that, in a

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<sup>171</sup> Zhou Zuoren, "Guoyu yu hanzi" (1936), *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji VII*, 276–7.

<sup>172</sup> Tu Wei-ming, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 1–32.

transnationally contested context, “national language” is itself at stake and cannot guarantee a neatly defined nationhood. While Zhou’s view of Chinese national language considers its “Chineseness” a given, for Gu Ding on the frontier, Chinese language and literature can exist only as something with a “Chineseness” that is already modified, localized, and corrupted. In addition, in the novel *New Life*, every trace of each linguistic element in its hybrid language is politically charged. In other words, the “range of the capacity of national language” that Zhou Zuoren envisions as merely linguistic and aesthetic turns out to be something that is intrinsically transnational and inevitably political when the setting is the real edge of the nation.

In this sense, Zhou’s illusion of national language was doomed to encounter serious problems during wartime, when the frontier scenario was forced into the center. It is well known that Zhou started to work for the collaborative government in Beijing on the first day of 1941. From then on, his literary practices—which continued to uphold a cultural and linguistic China—and his political choice to collaborate with the Japanese became two sides of one coin.<sup>173</sup> This suggests an intrinsic vulnerability embedded in Zhou’s scheme; that is, under extreme conditions, the idealization of an unquestioned linkage among national language/literature, nation, and state may paradoxically harm them all.

This dilemma echoes debates at the heart of Sinophone studies. First, Zhou’s idea of a rich but unified national language indicates that monolingualism/multilingualism and homogenization/heterogenization are not clear-cut oppositions but rather fluid continuities. Monolingualism may well start with and constantly embody an internal multilingualism; similarly,

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<sup>173</sup> Satoru Hashimoto, “Afterlives of the Culture: Engaging with the Trans-East Asian Cultural Tradition in Modern Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese Literatures, 1880s–1940s” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2014), 267–71. During wartime, Zhou Zuoren continued to write to emphasize the significance of Chinese characters and to suggest a linguistically bonded China. See Zhou Zuoren, “Hanwenxue de qiantu” (1943) and “Hanzi” (1944), in *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji VIII*, ed. Zhong Shuhe, 778–85; *IX*, 387–9.

homogenization rhymes with heterogenization. More importantly, what traps Zhou into the choice between cultural nationalism and political collaboration is precisely what has been repeatedly criticized in Sinophone studies: an overemphasis on or excessive trust in the identification between national language and nationhood. As an early, mainstream, and canonical modern Chinese writer from mainland China, Zhou's case suggests that Sinophone language/literature and national language/literature may have started out from a similar set of questions; however, what still remains problematic in the former may have long been naturalized, oppressed, or deferred in the latter.<sup>174</sup> In this sense, the insights we have harvested in Sinophone studies may help us reveal the hidden unnaturalness of national language and literature and open up its full range of possibilities for expression. This, in turn, will broaden and deepen the scope of Sinophone studies.

On the other hand, what Gu Ding's case, and perhaps the cases of many other frontier Han writers, offer to Sinophone studies is a frontier perspective from the border between the Chinese and the Sinophone. Most obviously, Gu Ding's work adds a new form of articulation of Chineseness to the existing mainstream/colonial/diaspora articulations. The dominant population of Han immigrants in Manchuria has made it one of the most linguistically Sinicized of the imperial frontiers ever since the mid-Qing. Manchuria is geographically and linguistically proximate to China Proper on the one hand, and has a complicated history of political and cultural contestation with foreign powers on the other. The frontier therefore provides a space where we can examine how mainstream national ideas and ideals are practiced, developed, and transformed in the context of a transnational periphery, through which the hidden naturalness of the prototypes in the center is further questioned and undermined.

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<sup>174</sup> In this respect, Jing Tsu has a similar observation: "Chinese national writings, in essence, was an experiment that defered, rather than resolved, the problems with which it began." See Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*, 15.

More specifically, a closer look into Gu Ding's frontier subjectivity will bring a nuanced critique to studies of transnationality in general, including Sinophone studies. As we have discussed, the plague that Gu Ding experienced and described in his novel was in fact part of a Japanese military conspiracy. Not only that, but even the consequent work of epidemic control and prevention involved researchers affiliated with the 731 Unit. While the Manchukuo government launched an investigation to study the routes and scope of the infection as well as the nature of the virus in the hope of controlling the disease, 731 researchers joined the investigation to estimate the possible military effects of the epidemic and to obtain new strains of the virus.<sup>175</sup> This belatedly revealed truth ironically renders Gu Ding's life-oriented frontier subjectivity in vain: what he experienced as an awakening to the universal value of life along with the ability to transcend, or at least mitigate, national and ethnic division turns out to be based on a crime against humanity committed precisely for the purpose of national/imperial rivalry. It bespeaks a tragic relationship between Gu Ding's self-indulgent linguistic experiments and the Japanese biochemical trials.

When transnational connectivity loses its critical stance towards narrow nationalism/imperialism and instead presupposes and reproduces them, it is doomed to be fruitless and cannot be redeemed by an idealized universal value. Fundamentally, Manchuria in the 1940s, when the Sino-Japanese war was at its peak, was torn apart by mutually exclusive Chinese nationalism and Japanese imperialism. The reason a multinational connectivity could be envisioned in Japanese Manchuria was primarily that both rivals encountered the limits of their power there. As a result, Japan chose to establish a multiethnic self-governing nation rather than a formal colony,<sup>176</sup> while China situated itself in an ambiguous grey zone between recession and

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<sup>175</sup> Matsumura Takao, "Kyu nihongun ni yoru saikin heiki kogeki no jijitsu: Shin hakken shiryo *Kaneko Junichi ronbun* wa 731 butai ni yoru saikinsen no nani o akiraka ni shita no ka," 13–4.

<sup>176</sup> Prasenjit Duara believes that the reason Japan established Manchukuo rather than a formal colony in Manchuria was because the international environment in the 1930s no longer allowed Japan to openly colonize other countries

reclamation. In such a context, an official tolerance of multinational connectivity is always subject to national/imperial rivalry. In responding to tendencies in the 1990s to overemphasize the significance of accommodation between the European colonizers and the native Indians in early American history, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron stress that it was the “[European imperial] conflicts over borderlands” that shaped the character of the relations of accommodation.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, they argue that accommodation was a transitory phenomenon, and fluid frontier relations were quickly rigidified “as colonial borderlands gave way to national borders.”<sup>178</sup> Though in a different context, the tolerance of multinational connectivity in Manchukuo, too, ended up being little more than a transitory accommodation between the national/imperial rivals that eventually moved towards border fixing in the name of the modern nation-state.

Gu Ding’s multinational connectivity, therefore, is problematic and should not be idealized, or even justified. By the time Gu Ding wrote the novel *New Life*, he was already in a state of resignation and compromise, ready to acknowledge the discourse of a multiethnic Manchukuo. He connected his work to multiple national discourses for his own benefit and had been trying hard to find a philosophical vantage point to use as a means to transcend national antagonism. However, all his efforts were eventually subject to national/imperial rivalry in the region that after all demanded an exclusive national allegiance. If Gu Ding had ever obtained power through his multinational maneuvering, the power would have been recuperated by the powerful party to facilitate its own cause. This speculation is supported by the fact that the more Gu Ding became professionally successful in Manchukuo, the more he became involved in collaborative activities

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at will. Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 19-20.

<sup>177</sup> Jeremy Adelman, Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the People in between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review*, 104 (1999): 816.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

with the Japanese. Worse, *New Life*, the novel that he held most dear, turned out to have sung the praises of the darkest part of Japanese Manchukuo and the Japanese Empire in general.

In studying literature from the US/Mexico borderland, Carl Gutiérrez-Jones criticizes the tendency to idealize a “border-crossing consciousness” that he identifies in many creative and critical works, including Gloria Anzaldúa’s famous book *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. According to him, border-crossing consciousness for these authors becomes an all-inclusive way of thinking that embraces differences across borders, not only the geographical border, but also the racial, the biological, and so on. It is seen as an awakening arising from the “originary wound” of demarcation. Gutiérrez-Jones worries that the emphasis on a “radically inclusive synthesis of different social and cultural investments” that results from an originary wound may paradoxically reinforce the borders through the endless repetition of the same general conceptual paradigm offered. Moreover, by casting the demarcation as the originary wound and the border-crossing consciousness as the psychological cure, these works define change as largely an act of *consciousness* rather than the political and institutional *actions* it means to call for. To solve the predicament, Gutiérrez-Jones, quoting Kavita Panjabi, argues that “for a political subject of border cultures, the destination is one where the binaries such as colonial/post-colonial and center/periphery are deconstructed and mediated, not internalized and endlessly reproduced.”<sup>179</sup>

This, I believe, points to the fatal problem of Gu Ding’s literary practice, and perhaps that of similar others who write in a nationally demarcated transnational environment. To be sure, the context of literature about the US-Mexico borderland is distinctly different from that of Gu Ding’s writing about Manchuria. For Gu Ding, what mattered was less the geographical border that arbitrarily divides people of one nation than the political, cultural and linguistic borders between

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<sup>179</sup> Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, “Desiring B/orders,” *Diacritics* 25, no. 1 (1995), 99–112, and 99–103, in particular.

nations within the Manchukuo territory. Nevertheless, Gu Ding, too, tended to cross borders without taking action to undermine them. Whether directed by merely cynical calculation or transcendental value, Gu Ding’s multinational connectivity was more often than not intended to make use of, or come to terms with, national division, rather than to challenge and cancel it. It therefore threatens to reproduce and reinforce the division endlessly. In Manchukuo, there were Chinese writers who wrote in a way that fundamentally doubted or dismissed the mindset of dividing people by the category of nation,<sup>180</sup> but Gu Ding was never consciously one of them. Of course, we may say that it was this kind of multinational connectivity that enabled Gu Ding to utter a loud and lasting Chinese voice, but this fact paradoxically propels us to rethink the real meaning of the insistence on a Chineseness of this kind in a frontier setting. Ideally, frontier subjects should be more than merely opportunistic or cynical border-crossers—their real “frontier subjectivity” lies in their ability to question our demarcated understanding of time and space through their critical and creative experience of the borders.

Sinophone studies, by definition, challenges conventional national approaches to literature and culture and calls for collaboration across different occasions of Chinese-language writing.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, for most residents in the Sinophone world, nation still defines the meaning of most aspects of their social life. If we envision the entire Sinophone world outside mainland China as a huge space of contested frontiers and borderlands, there is always the possibility that the practice of transnational literature will be subject to, or is even used by, national rivalries. In this sense, the true critical potential of Sinophone literature goes beyond a mere “crossing” of national boundaries

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<sup>180</sup> Xie Qiong, “Piaobo, aiqing he zhengyi: lun Dandi zuopin zhong de piaobozhe xingxiang,” in *Sanru lianyu: Weimanzhouguo zuojia Dan Di zuopinyanjiu*, ed. Norman Smith (Shanghai: Jiaotong daxue chubanshe, forthcoming).

<sup>181</sup> Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*, 12.

or resistance to the hegemony of a specific nation. More fundamentally, its critical power is to be unleashed as a radical reflection on our demarcated perception of the world—demarcated not only by nation, but also by race, gender, and other differentiating and discriminating categories.

## Conclusion

In Gu Ding’s novel *New Life*, and especially via its experimental language, we witness the author maneuver between the national and the multinational in the context of a colonial frontier. Rather than evoking a binary colonial point of view, I account for this maneuvering with what I have termed the “frontier subjectivity” of the author. In this case, a cultural nationalism and a multinational connectivity enlist and undermine each other at the same time, and yet, whatever dynamics they present, its rhythm is always subject to the political and military power controlling the territory. This complicated case of frontier literature has manifold theoretical possibilities. Among these, I have engaged with a critique of Sinophone studies and frontier subjectivity. I argue for recognizing a continuity, rather than insisting on an opposition, between Sinophone studies and studies of Chinese national literature. Meanwhile, departing from a frontier perspective, I call for a more discriminating approach to the phenomenon of literary and linguistic transnationality in Sinophone studies and beyond.

The continuity between multilingualism and monolingualism—and between heterogenization and homogenization—already extensively argued in the chapter finds a further manifestation in a criticism of Gu Ding’s linguistic experiments in the 1950s in the People’s Republic of China. In 1957, when Gu Ding and his works were harshly denounced as collaborative in the campaign of “Anti-Rightist Struggle in the Sector of Literature of Liaoning Province” (Liaoning sheng wenxuejie fanyoupai douzheng dahui), the linguistic issues in his works, especially the principles

he elaborated in his essay “Words about ‘Words,’” was brought up. The main accusation is as follows:

We ... must object and refuse whatever has been imposed by the invaders. To change the nationwide unified common language that we have already had into awkward Japanized Chinese, even only one word, is something that anyone with a national pride cannot bear and cannot allow to continue to exist, because what the language leaves us is nothing but stigma of humiliation. We will never allow the pure/innocent (*chunjie*) language of our motherland to be adulterated with awkward Japanized Chinese.<sup>182</sup>

Among other things, what intrigues me most in this paragraph is its subtle anachronism. First, the target of criticism is Gu Ding, but the purpose was not only to scold collaborative writers and their literature during the Manchukuo period, but also to prevent Japanized Chinese from “[continuing] to exist” in 1957. In other words, the problem was not only about colonial history, but also about its persistent legacy in postcolonial time. Gu Ding’s essay had appeared seventeen years earlier. In order to eliminate the residue of the previous regime and to establish and consolidate the new, this old essay was brought up for reassessment.

Second, Gu Ding’s localized language was denounced as sabotaging the “nationwide unified common language” that the author claims to “have already had.” It is not clear by what time the critical author believes that this language already existed—whether it was by 1940, when Gu Ding wrote the essay, or by 1957, when the author wrote the criticism. As has been previously demonstrated, numerous literary movements and activities experimented with localized language in mainland China throughout the 1940s. If a “nationwide unified common language” had not existed by the time Gu Ding wrote the essay, then Gu Ding could not possibly have sabotaged it. Even in the year 1957, the “nationwide unified common language” could at best be described as in the process of taking form; in this same year, Zhou Zuoren was still struggling with the question

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<sup>182</sup> Cai Tianxin, “Chedi suqing fandong de hanjian wenyi sixiang,” 22.

of how far he could use dialect vocabulary in his literature.<sup>183</sup> In this sense, we might well say that the author assumes an idealized and futuristic common language to oppose Gu Ding's experimental language.

As the criticism shows, the desire for linguistic homogenization, by definition, always intervenes belatedly after the truly commonly used language is believed to have been improperly hybridized. Moreover, when it intervenes, it has to appeal to an idealized standardized language with a futuristic perspective, which suggests that the process of homogenization can seldom be thorough. In this way, multilingualism and monolingualism form a seamless continuity both temporally and spatially, placing a vast variety of linguistic and literary practices in between.

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<sup>183</sup> See Zhou Zuoren, "Renmin yufa," *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji XII*, 728–9.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Translating (on) the Frontier: The Korean Literature of Manchuria through the Lens of Translation**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter studies how literary territorialization works through translation in the case of Korean literature written in or about Manchuria from the early 1930s up to 1945. It specifically investigates how Korean literature about the Korean settlements in Manchuria was translated, or failed to be translated, into Japanese or Chinese. My dissertation, in general, discusses how frontier writers of different languages share the same drive to claim the highly contested frontier for their own nations through literary writing. At the same time, precisely because the land they claim is inhabited by nationals of multiple countries, their reclamation of the frontier almost always involves defining the relations between their own people and other peoples in the same region, whether consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly, in the text or in context. The very act of translating and anthologizing, as a process of linguistic transposition across cultural and national constituencies, reshuffles and redefines the inter-national relations reflected in the original text. I therefore argue that translation is an integral part of frontier literary territorialization and is indicative of the possibility, limits, and complexity of the latter.

This observation about translation applies to the literature of all parties involved in the frontier contestation in modern Manchuria, but is particularly manifest in the case of Manchurian Korean

literature, a marginal but highly relational constituent of the multinational frontier literature. During the historical period of this study, the Korean people were a politically weak presence on the Manchurian frontier. They were situated between multiple stronger powers, including China, Japan, and colonial Korea, and were propelled to constantly and carefully negotiate relations with all parties. Therefore, their literary activities and works concerning Manchuria typically exhibit an intricate web of multilateral national relations. When translating into Chinese and Japanese, translators would subtly reframe the pieces to speak for their own and often conflicting territorial perspectives. In this case, translation lends voice to the fluidity and ambiguity of Manchurian Korean literature and of frontier literature in general. Furthermore, because the Koreans were considered an insignificant group in Manchuria by the Japanese and the Chinese, when Manchurian Korean writers sought to have their works translated into other languages, the process itself involved difficult multilateral negotiations. This heightened their obsession with translation and makes their struggle for translation even more revealing.

Moreover, a study of literary translation illuminates the specific strategy the Korean writers used in their frontier writing: they claimed an alternative cultural territory on the frontier outside the nation at a time when the nation itself was colonized and in danger of being assimilated into an imperial culture. Because the Koreans had lost the right to claim sovereignty over their settlements in Manchuria long before the formation of modern Korean literature and never regained it, Manchuria always stands for an element of transnationality in Korean national literature. However, modern Korean literature conventionally associated Manchuria with the Korean people's nationalist claim over the territory of the Korea Peninsula. In other words, they infused this transnational land with national and nationalist significance. The idea and practice of making a frontier space into an extra-territorial source of nationalism through literature are

promising, but not without limits. Territory, by definition, entails recognition from alien others. Translation, as a gesture for reception and recognition but also a battlefield for meaning and interpretation, best reveals to what extent the Korean writers' frontier strategy worked and where problems occurred.

Translation as competition is a common idea among scholars of transnational studies. In her studies of colonial and postcolonial translations of Japanese literature, Karen Thornber has observed that “Whether veering sharply from nominal sources to create the loosest of adaptation, or translating texts as faithfully as possible, (former) metropolitan and (post)colonial adaptations and translations become new versions of literary texts from elsewhere in the (former) empire, competing with their sources for physical and figurative shelf space.”<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I will further crystallize the sense of competition embedded in literary translation by relating it to the complicated web of multinational frontier territorial relations. In the case of translation of frontier literature, the sharpened topology of the contacts, connections, and conflicts that marked a contested geographic space was written into the regime of translation, thus reminding us that translation can be a contesting and calculative project as much as it may establish alliances and amity. This understanding of translation will in turn propel us to reflect on East Asian literary relations in general as a site of communication in spite of contestation.

The literature to be discussed in this chapter includes Korean literature written in the Korean Peninsula about Manchuria in the early 1930s, which I refer to as “Korean literature about Manchuria,” and Korean literature written and translated in Manchuria during the late Manchukuo period, which I refer to as “Manchukuo Korean literature.” I call both of them “Korean literature

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 127.

of Manchuria.” The need to clarify the terminology suggests that the range of literature covered in this chapter does not fit neatly into categories of national or regional literature. For example, Manchukuo Korean literature has been claimed both by Korean literary historians as “diaspora Korean literature” and by Chinese literary historians as “ethnic Korean literature of China,” or at least its precursor.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, for the purpose of my study of frontier literature, I treat Korean literature of Manchuria that may belong to multiple national and imperial literatures as an organic and inclusive site of investigation. Frontier, in this sense, is not necessarily the geographic space that contains all the threads of Korean literature under discussion, but rather a common point of literary engagement and a conceptual ground for critical reflection.

The chapter opens with a brief overview of the national significance of Manchuria in general for Koreans in modern times. Next it studies a Korean short story titled “The Red Hills: A Doctor’s Diary” (“Pulgün san: ὄnū ūisa ūi sugi” 붉은 산: 어느 의사의 수기 1932; 1939) and its Japanese and Chinese translations. Written by the renowned Korean writer Kim Tong-in (김동인 1900–1951), this story features the Korean agrarian community in Manchuria and is conventionally considered a masterpiece of Korean national literature. Curiously enough, when it was translated into Japanese and Chinese and was anthologized in these languages, the three texts of the same story in three languages conveyed different and contradictory national/imperial claims

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<sup>2</sup> The controversies can be largely divided into two questions. The first is how to name and define Korean literature produced in Manchuria before 1945. South Korean, North Korean, and Chinese scholars have all made attempts to claim it as their national/ethnic literature, or at least its precursor. Accordingly, it has been called “literature by Manchurian Koreans” (*Manju Chosöñin munhak* 만주 조선인문학), “Korean literature in Manchuria” (*chaeman Han'guk munhak* 재만 한국문학), “Chinese ethnic Korean literature” (*Chungguk Chosöñjok munhak* 중국 조선족문학), and “Immigration literature of the Koreans in China” (*Chungguk ūi Hanin iju munhak* 중국의 한인 이주 문학), to name just a few, and it has been discussed in all the respective national/ethnic frameworks to which these names apply. The second question is how to define works about Manchuria written by Korean writers who only visited Manchuria briefly and then wrote their works in the Peninsula. This category is sometimes called “Manchurian experience literature” (*Manju ch'ehōm munhak* 만주 체험 문학). For a summary of both discussions, see Chang Ch'un-sik, *Ilche kangjōmgi Chungguk ūi Hanin iju munhak* (Seoul: San Kwa Kūl, 2011), 9–25.

over Manchuria. In Kim's case, we witness the ambivalence and precariousness of the translation of frontier literature in a time of heated political competition.

The chapter will then shift its focus from works produced in the Peninsula to those produced in Manchuria under the Manchukuo reign. During the late years of the Japanese empire, Manchukuo became the only imperial corner where Korean writers could legally write and publish in Korean. Korean writers writing in Manchuria, such as Yǒm Sang-sōp (염상섭 1897–1963) and An Su-kil (안수길 1911–1977), eagerly sought opportunities to have their Korean works translated into Japanese or Chinese. When seeking Japanese translation, their high expectations were almost always frustrated, as the Japanese refused to translate their works while the Manchurian Korean writers did not want to translate their own works. As for Chinese translation, Manchukuo Korean writers narrowly managed to have one short story translated and published in Chinese in Manchukuo. I will discuss how the obsession with translation on the part of Manchukuo Korean writers demonstrates the significance and viability of the alternative cultural territory they attempted to build up in the frontier.

## **Manchuria: A Land of Significance**

To speak of the nationalist associations in Korean literature of Manchuria in the 1930s and the 1940s, we need to trace the historical representation of Manchuria as a land of national significance in the Korean social and literary milieu. As historian Andre Schmid has stated, “a long history of looking towards the north [referring to Manchuria] has existed in Korea.” The land of Manchuria, located east of the Korean Peninsula, has long embodied a collective desire for a strong and expansive nation for the Korean people. In modern times, Schmid continues, “as

national discourse began to provide new expectations for the relationship between state, territory, and citizenry, this northward gaze was renewed.”<sup>3</sup> From the late nineteenth century up to the 1920s, Manchuria was seen by the Korean public as the major destination of migration for impoverished Korean peasants, the origin of the Korean people that was now a lost territory, and an important overseas base for Korean nationalist resistance and proletarian revolution. These seemingly distinct narratives about the frontier supplement each other and form the initial basis of a Korean understanding of Manchuria as the symbol of loss, suffering, and struggle.<sup>4</sup>

The modern round of Korean immigration to Manchuria started roughly in the 1870s, when natural disaster and social crisis in northern Korea drove local peasants to flee to the other side of the border.<sup>5</sup> From the very beginning, the Manchurian Korean settlement stood for crisis and struggle concerning the Korean people’s national identity. At the time, on the Chinese side, the Qing had newly reopened the Manchurian frontiers to Han agrarian immigration after long-term closure. When the Chinese officers found that a number of Korean peasants had already populated

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<sup>3</sup> Andre Schmid, “Looking North toward Manchuria,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (2000): 237.

<sup>4</sup> In “Looking North toward Manchuria,” Andre Schmid discusses the modern nationalist gaze towards Manchuria from the Korean Peninsula in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. He identifies two major discourses: the first concerns territorial disputes over the Kando area in Manchuria between China and Korea, and the second involves the Korean historian Sin Ch’ae-ho’s theory that Manchuria is the origin of the Korean nation. Based on a close reading of representations of Manchuria in contemporary Korean newspapers, he argues that the first discourse focuses more on the territory of the modern nation-state; in contrast, the second is more concerned with the Korean nation in history. He describes the two different modes as “complementary aspects of a northward gaze that has long characterized Korean geographical and historical writing. Both of these modes reinforced and gave new expression to a long-standing sense of territorial loss.” *Ibid.*, 238. I share Schmid’s view of the public discourse about Manchuria in the Korean Peninsula. In addition to his two modes, I am adding a third dimension based on my investigation of the issue well into the 1920s. This third dimension concerns the desire to recover territory and the consciousness of resistance associated with the Manchurian Korean community.

<sup>5</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, a stringent border control had been enforced on both sides of the border for centuries to minimize illegal border-crossing activities. In addition, in 1712, the Qing and the Chosŏn courts erected a boundary stone to clarify the borders after a collaborative investigation. In the 1870s, however, natural disaster and social crisis in northern Korea drove many local peasants at risk of losing their lives to flee to Manchuria. The harsh circumstances convinced the Korean border inspector to suspend the severe border law and allow the Koreans to settle across the border. Yi Hun-gu, *Manju wa Chosŏnin* (Seoul: Hansōng Tosō Chusik Hoesa, 1932), 94.

the Manchurian-Korean borderland, they granted the newcomers the right to live and farm in Manchuria under the condition of cultural naturalization. Specifically, the Korean immigrants were asked to pay Qing taxes, register with the local authorities, and adopt Manchu hairstyles and dress. Being forced to submit to foreign rule was of course uncomfortable, and even insulting, for the Koreans, but many compromised for economic reasons.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, shortly after their immigration, the Koreans were able to raise a sovereignty claim against the Qing over a large part of their Manchurian settlement, called Kando, due to some historical confusion regarding the location of the border.<sup>7</sup> However, in the process, Japan's consecutive victories in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 and the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 transformed Korea from a Qing dependent into a Japanese protectorate.<sup>8</sup> Having acquired full responsibility for Korea's foreign affairs, Japan signed the Kando Treaty with the Qing in 1909, recognizing Chinese sovereignty over Kando in exchange for other rights in the region. The Kando Treaty marked the decisive failure of the Korean people's legal territorialization of Manchuria and gave a modern form to the historical meaning of Manchuria as a lost territory.

Overall, the treaty was part of Japan's strategy to use Kando and other frontier Korean settlements as gateways to expand its influence in Manchuria.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the colonial period,

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<sup>6</sup> Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 28–9.

<sup>7</sup> The Koreans found that the boundary stone erected in 1712 did not define the area known as Kando clearly enough, so they launched a formal territorial dispute over Kando with the Qing. For a good summary of the history of Kando in English, see Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of The North Korean Revolution*, 241–3.

<sup>8</sup> In 1895, Qing's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese war led to its recognition of Korea as an independent country. In 1905, Japan continued to defeat Russia in the Russo-Japanese war and signed the Protectorate Treaty with Korea. The Agreement granted Imperial Japan complete responsibility for the diplomatic sovereignty of Korea.

<sup>9</sup> In exchange for the treaty, the Qing agreed to allow Korean immigrants to settle in the border area, the Qing also conceded regional railway and mining rights to Japan. For the details of the treaty and a full list of accompanying concessions the Qing made to Japan, see Yu Kwang-nyōl, *Kando sosa* (Seoul: Chosōn Kidokkyo Ch'angmunsa, 1933), 56–60.

and especially in the 1930s and the 1940s, this politics of proxy penetration boosted Korean immigration to Manchuria significantly but also filled the immigrants' lives with political and economic uncertainty.<sup>10</sup> They had to navigate carefully through continuous national confrontation between China and Japan on the one hand, while fulfilling overlapping responsibilities to the local authority and the General Colonel of Korea in the Peninsula on the other.<sup>11</sup> As a result, long after losing the claim to sovereignty over its land, the Manchurian-Korean community nevertheless expanded, painfully, in the narrow interstices among multiple powers in the frontier. It is estimated that the Korean population in Manchuria increased from around 200 thousand in 1910, to close to 600 thousand in 1932, and then to more than 1.5 million in 1942.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, the Kando Treaty and the consequent deterioration of living conditions on the frontier triggered a chain of resistance among Manchurian Koreans, including both discontented members of the local community and drifting revolutionaries from the Peninsula. Although different and sometimes contradictory in means and goals, these political struggles shared a deep concern with the political and cultural subjectivity of the Korean people on the frontier as well as in the Peninsula.<sup>13</sup> After early attempts to restore Korean sovereignty over Kando failed, most activists in the 1910s focused on the goal of local Korean self-rule.<sup>14</sup> In

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<sup>10</sup> In *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution*, Hyun Ok Park defines the Japanese sponsor of Korean migration to Manchuria as a “politics of osmosis.” See 24–63.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., chapter 4 and p. 137 in particular.

<sup>12</sup> Yi Hyǒng-ch'an, “1920–30 yǒndae Han'gugin ū Manju imin yǒn'gu,” (master's thesis, Seoul National University, 1988), 6.

<sup>13</sup> For a concise overview of the different ideological tendencies of major political organizations in the Manchurian Korean community, see Jin Chenggao, *Tongman hang Il hyǒngmyǒng t'ujaeng t'üksusōng yǒn'gu: 1930-yǒndae 'Minsaengdan sakōn' ūl chungsim ūro* (Mudanjiang: Heilongjiang Chaoxian minzu chubanshe, 2006), 28–31.

<sup>14</sup> There were two rounds of Kando autonomy movements (*Kando chac "i undong*) that took place in 1911 and 1923. In the chaos of the Chinese Revolution in 1911, Manchurian Koreans were able to establish an autonomous government in the Kando area. Unfortunately, the government was quickly dismissed under the Yuan Shikai regime. In 1923, there were several incidents in which Manchurian Koreans were maltreated to death by Japanese or Chinese officials. In response, Korean people in Kando launched a second round of the autonomy movement. Not

addition, during the heyday of the Korean Independence Movement, and especially after its frustration in the Peninsula in 1919, Manchuria became home to independence fighters as well.<sup>15</sup>

From the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, the idea and practice of communism quickly spread across the region, adding yet another layer to the political involvements generally associated with Manchurian Koreans. Resistance activities like these sustained Kando and adjacent Korean settlements as an iconic overseas base for Korean political struggles through the mid-1930s. By the mid-1930s, however, local resistance forces had largely been eliminated by the Manchukuo government. Reformation activities, if there were any, had to be carried out in accordance with Japanese imperial rule in Manchukuo.

Representation of Manchuria from a nationalist gaze can be found in Korean newspapers from as early as the turn of the century. With controversy still haunting the sovereignty over Kando, writings concerning Manchuria became a primary site for examining and challenging the Korean national space.<sup>16</sup> Journalists called public attention to the Qing's encroachment on their northern frontier, while historians like Sin Ch'ae-ho, in part aroused by the Kando crisis, rediscovered

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surprisingly, their proposal for autonomy was rejected by both the Japanese and the Chinese authorities and thus ended fruitlessly. Although the formal autonomy movement ceased at the second attempt, proposals for different forms of Korean self-rule persisted in most subsequent political activities in the Manchurian Korean community. For early restoration movements and the following two autonomy movements, see Yu Kwang-nyǒl, *Kando sosa* 66–89. For later political organizations that advocated self-rule, see Jin Chenghao, *Tongman hang Il hyǒngmyǒng t'ujaeng t'ǔksusǒng yǒn'gu: 1930-yǒndae 'Minsaengdan sakǒn' ūl chungsim ūro* (Mudanjiang: Hǔngnyonggang Chosǒn Minjǒk Ch'ul'ansa, 2006), 30–1; also see Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution*, 201–2.

<sup>15</sup> In February 1, 1918, overseas Korean nationalists drafted “The Declaration of Independence of Korea” (*Taehan tongnip sōnǒnsō*). The declaration calls for the annulment of the annexation of Korea to Japan and for a violent struggle for national independence. In the same month, the declaration was announced consecutively in overseas Korean communities including Manchuria and Japan. On March 1, 1919, it was finally read aloud in a park in Seoul. This event, historically referred to as the March First Movement, was quickly suppressed by the Japanese colonial government. The suppression had driven some nationalist forces from the Peninsula to Manchuria, thus painting political struggles in the Manchurian Korean community with a more nationalist color. See Pak Yǒng-sǒk, *Han minjok tongnip undongsa yǒn'gu: manju chiyǒk ūl chungsim ūro* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1982).

<sup>16</sup> Schmid, “Looking North Towards Manchuria,” 219.

Manchuria as the historical origin of the Korean people and culture that the Koreans could not afford to lose.<sup>17</sup> In the 1910s and the 1920s, after the Kando Treaty had been signed, news articles turned to bemoaning the pathetic, rootless life of the Korean peasants under the conflicting foreign rule of the Chinese and the Japanese. In particular, entering the mid-1920s, as the Chinese authority in Manchuria became increasingly antagonistic to Korean immigration, mass media in the Peninsula cast Chinese officers, landlords, and peasants as the major perpetrators of abuses directed at Korean immigrants.<sup>18</sup> As this chapter's discussions will show, variations of this type of Manchurian representation continued throughout the colonial years; indeed, this ongoing media coverage helped justify Japanese expansion in Manchuria as necessary to protect the Korean immigrants against Chinese persecution. In contrast, historians' nationalistic rediscovery of Manchuria was passed down across generations and cemented an intellectual base of Manchurian pathos for the Korean public that has continued to the present day.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 220–2; Also, see Hong Sun-ae, “Manju kihengmun e chaehyōndo Manju p'yosang kwa chegukchuūi ideollogi ūi kan'gük: 1920-yōndae wa Manju Sabyōn chōnhu rūl chungsim ūro,” *Kukche ūmun* 57, no. 4 (2013): 409.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid; Yu Su-jöng, “Singminji Chosōn i chaehyōn hanūn Manju: Kim Tong-in ūi ‘Purgün san’ kwa 1920-yōndae Simmun kisa ūl Manju tamnon,” *Kǔndae Tong Asia tamnon ūi yōksōl kwa kulchōl*, ed. Chōn Sōng-gon (Seoul: Somyōng Ch'ulp'an, 2011), 262–9. Note that the author argues that Kim's story about the Chinese landlords' maltreatment of the Korean peasants in Manchuria may have been influenced by contemporary newspaper reports. She explains that newspaper reports about Manchurian Koreans in the second half of the 1920s were focused on the Chinese landlords' oppression of their Korean tenants. This is based on a search for the keywords “China” and “landlord” in the *East Asia Daily* (*Tonga ilbo*) archive. However, my search for the keyword “Manchuria” in the archives of *East Asia Daily* and *Korea Daily* (*Chosōn ilbo*), the two major Korean newspapers of the time, shows that topics about Manchurian Koreans were far broader than merely the Chinese landlords' oppression of the Korean tenants. In articles that do highlight Chinese oppression of the Koreans, oppressors range from policymakers, officials, landlords, and farmers to the general public. Therefore, as I argue in this chapter, Kim's choice to make the Chinese landlord his antagonist was primarily influenced by previous literary writing about the Manchurian Koreans. These stories present a much narrower focus on the Chinese landlord vs. Korean tenant relationship than what is found in contemporary newspaper articles.

<sup>19</sup> The Korean scholar Hong Sun-ae argues that the nationalistic rediscovery of Manchuria by historians like Sin Ch'ae-ho and Pak Ūn-sik finds expressions in various forms in the Koreans' conscious or unconscious throughout the colonial years. Andre Schmid further discusses how the Korean sentiment concerning their northern territory in Manchuria inspires institutional historical research and political negotiation in the present day. Hong Sun-ae, “Manju kihengmun e chaehyōndo Manju p'yosang kwa chegukchuūi ideollogi ūi kan'gük: 1920-yōndae wa Manju Sabyōn chōnhu rūl chungsim ūro,” 410. Andre Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'ae-ho and the

In the 1920s, modern Korean literature began to contribute to the force of Manchurian representation. Although sharing general themes with the mass media coverage of the frontier, Korean literary writers painted a much complicated and comprehensive picture of the land than journalists could. Among the early writers of Korean literature of Manchuria, Ch'oe Sō-hae (1901–1932) was undoubtedly the most influential. Having studied, farmed, wandered, and fought in Manchuria, he presents a chaotic but powerful world where economic poverty, proletarian awakening, and nationalist longing coexist and stimulate each other. For Ch'oe, however, Manchuria was meaningful only in a negative way: its barren conditions generated the will for resistance. To highlight the barren conditions, his stories often include lengthy descriptions of the exploitation and persecution that Korean peasants experienced at the hand of either Chinese landlords or Japanese officers. As for the will for resistance, the author's eventual hope is that such resistance can spread from Manchuria to the Peninsula and rejuvenate the nation. Ch'oe Sō-hae's literature of Manchuria therefore takes on a Peninsula-centered view of the frontier. It negates any hope for Koreans' attainment of a productive life in Manchuria and highlights their desperate struggle for the sake of the Korean nation in the Peninsula. Ch'oe's Manchurian writing won him acclaim in the Peninsula as not only a leading writer of the Korea Artista Proletaria Federatio, the Korean organization of proletarian literature, but also a conscientious writer with a strong nationalist passion. Inasmuch as his writing collects and refines different themes in the representation of Manchuria of the time, it had a profound influence on all branches of the Korean literature of Manchuria in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>20</sup>

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Politics of Territorial History in Korea," 38–43.

<sup>20</sup> For more about Ch'oe Sō-hae's literature and other Korean literature about Manchuria in the 1920s and the early 1930s, see Cho Nam-hyōn, "192, 30-yōndae sosōl kwa Manju iju mot'ip'ū," *Han'guk sosōl kwa kaltüng* (Seoul: Munhak kwa Pip'yōngsa, 1990), 220–69.

I have provided above a brief overview of the Korean social and literary engagement with Manchuria up to the end of the 1920s. In subsequent years, the Manchurian Korean settlement and the entire frontier experienced radical social and political changes. Nevertheless, as the following discussions will show, the old meanings of the frontier have never been completely overwritten by the new; rather, they have been recontextualized and rearticulated.

### **One Text, Multiple Claims: “The Red Hills” and Its Translations**

In 1932, at almost the same time when the Japanese announced the establishment of Manchukuo in Manchuria, the renowned Korean writer Kim Tong-in published his representative work “The Red Hill: A Doctor’s Diary,” a short story about the pathetic life of the Korean immigrants in Manchuria. After a minor revision in 1939, the story was translated into Japanese and Chinese in 1940. In modern Korean literary history, it has been conventionally celebrated as a masterpiece of Korean nationalist literature. But my contextualized reading of the two translations of the two translations calls this celebration into question. While Chinese landlords and Japanese imperialists were cast as the dual oppressors of the Manchurian Koreans in the original text, its Japanese and Chinese translations in effect justified the Japanese and Chinese territorial claims over the frontier, respectively. I argue that two factors contributed to the complication of this translation. First, in dealing with the intricate reality surrounding Korean immigrants in Manchuria within the similarly intricate literary tradition of a Korean writing of Manchuria, the original text solicits multiple interpretations. Second, around 1940 when the text was translated, the cultural context of the empire transformed literary production and translation, especially those relating to Manchuria, into a highly political—and therefore contested—practice. This peculiar instance of translation therefore epitomizes the interpretative fluidity of the Korean literature of Manchuria as

well as the precariousness of its imagined nationalization of the frontier.

Kim's short story depicts the difficult life of Korean peasants in Manchuria by highlighting an idler in the Korean community who turns out to be a Korean patriot. The story is told from the first-person perspective of a Korean doctor who is conducting a year's worth of fieldwork in Manchuria for medical research. In a Korean village, the narrator hears people talking about an abhorrent rascal nicknamed "Wildcat." According to the villagers, Wildcat does no farm work and always forces other villagers to provide him with daily necessities. However, after the narrator tells Wildcat that a Korean villager has been persecuted to death by his Chinese landlord, Wildcat suddenly explodes and goes off to fight the landlord. The next day, he is found dying in front of the village. Using his last strength, he looks towards the east and starts to sing a Korean song about red hills and white clothes—the typical symbols of the Korean nation. His solo soon develops into a chorus by all the villagers as he closes his eyes in the arms of the narrator.

This nationalistic story about Manchuria was an exception in Kim's oeuvre in many ways. By then, Kim was generally known in Korea as a pioneer naturalist writer, a master of exquisite aesthetic sensibilities and succinct prose style. He had never touched on the topic of Manchuria in particular, or on nationalist themes in general; neither had he ever been to Manchuria. In fact, what immediately motivated him to write about Manchuria was the Korean newspapers' coverage of the Wanbaoshan Incident (萬寶山事件; Chin. wanbaoshan shijian/ Jap. manpōzan jiken/ Kor. manbosan sakōn) that broke out in Manchuria in July 1931, the year before Kim published the story. Beyond this immediate catalyst, the fact that a writer with no experience of Manchuria could write a story about Manchuria indicates that by then, decades of media coverage of the frontier had already made it a familiar land, with a set of symbolic meanings, for the Korean people.

The Wanbaoshan Incident was a mild dispute between Chinese and Korean peasants over

irrigation rights in a village near Changchun. Rice-growing Korean farmers had dug a canal to irrigate their paddy fields; fearing that the canal would flood their dry fields, Chinese peasants opposed this construction. Although it incurred intervention by the Japanese police and Chinese government officials, the conflict ended with few casualties on either side. However, immediately after the event, the Japanese reframed the event for the Korean press as a violent armed attack on the Koreans by the Chinese farmers. Newspapers in Korea soon covered the incident in sensational language. This coverage instigated mass riots against Chinese people in Seoul and across the Peninsula. Breaking out on the eve of the Manchurian Incident, the Wanbaoshan Incident marks the radicalization of Japan's Manchurian penetration. In manipulating the report of the incident, the Japanese had hoped to instigate ill-informed anti-Chinese sentiment among the Koreans in both Manchuria and Korea and to create a sense of urgency that would push Koreans to call on the Japanese for protection.<sup>21</sup>

Shocked and stimulated by the reports about the Wanbaoshan Incident in Korean newspapers and by his own experience of violent anti-Chinese riots in Seoul immediately following the incident, Kim settled to compose "The Red Hill," a story about Korean immigrants in Manchuria and their connection to their homeland.<sup>22</sup> But as we can see, Kim's story barely touches upon the incident in 1931, and is not even about the conflict between Korean and Chinese farmers in Manchuria in general. Instead, many key elements in Kim's story, such as the Chinese landlords'

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed study of the Wanbaoshan Incident as well as the media and literary representation of the incident in English, see Hyun-Jeong Lee, "Reimagining the Nation in Manchuria: The Representation of Peasant Collectivity in Chinese and Korean Discourses on the Wanbaoshan Incident (1931)" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2009). According to Korea scholar Park Yōng-sōk's study, the false information about the event was first released by the Japanese Embassy in Changchun to a local correspondent of *Korea Daily* (Choson ilbo) named Kim I-sam. After Japan's maneuver in the event became clear, Kim was murdered mysteriously in a hotel in Changchun. See Park Yōng-sōk, *Manpōzan Jiken Kenkyū: Nihon Teikoku Shugi no Tairiku Shinryaku Seisaku no Ikkantō Shite* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> Yi Sang-gyöng, "Kim Tong-in 'Purgün san' ūi Tong Asiajök suyong," *The Journal of Korean Modern Literature* 44, no. 12 (2014): 252–3.

maltreatment of the Korean tenants, the protagonist Wildcat's resistance against the landlord, and the Korean people's sorrowful longing for their hometown, resonate with the tradition of Korean literature of Manchuria, especially Ch'oe Sō-hae's writing from the 1920s. In fact, Kim's protagonist is so reminiscent of the independence fighters featured in earlier literary works that some critics have suggested that Wildcat should be read as a frustrated hero with a revolutionary past.<sup>23</sup> Having never been to Manchuria himself, it was all too natural for Kim to draw from existing literary traditions that dealt with the frontier. This was especially the case considering the story was not based on thorough research into the event but was instead composed and finished within a half-day in a burst of passion and indignation.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, "The Red Hills" involves the intricate historical background of the Wanbaoshan Incident on the one hand, while immediately inheriting the full complexity that earlier Korean literature of Manchuria had established on the other. The multilateral and multilayered social and national relations surrounding the Manchurian Korean community that the author consciously or unconsciously embraces in the text anticipate the interpretative divergence that characterized its later translations.

In terms of Manchurian-Korean relations, Kim's story takes a Peninsula-centered view of the frontier. The narrator depicts Manchuria by saying "there was nowhere in Manchuria without Koreans." This statement is a stretch, as Korean people constituted less than 5% of the total population in Manchuria at the time and were mostly concentrated in Eastern Manchuria.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> Yi Tae-ki, "Kim Tong-in ūi tanp'yōn sosōl kamja wa pulgūn san haesōk," *Kugō kyoyuk* 37, no. 7 (1991): 237.

<sup>24</sup> Kim Tong-in, et al., "Samch'ölli sa chuch'oe munsa chwadamhoe," *Samch'ölli* 4, no. 7 (May 15, 1932): 29.

<sup>25</sup> In 1930, the Korean population in Manchuria amounted to 607,119, and the total population in Manchuria was 31,000,000. See Park Hyun-ok, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria*, 43–4.

exaggeration implies that the author is committed to emphasizing a prominent Korean presence in Manchuria. At the same time, however, the narrator denounces almost everything in Manchuria, including his fellow countrymen's way of life. Manchuria, in general, is depicted as "the wilds," where people have "not yet received the baptism of civilization." The Koreans, although working hard on the land, establish absolutely nothing. They can only work on Chinese landlords' property, they have to submit all they grow to their landlords, and they are frequently treated in inhuman ways by their landlords. Our hero is even less productive. He detaches himself from all farm work and lives a parasitic life. This negation of Manchuria reaches a climax in the final scene of the story, in which all of the villagers look towards the east and start to sing a song that depicts the mountains and rivers of Korea. Setting their feet on the land of Manchuria, they nevertheless turn their backs to it and find consolation only in conjuring up the peninsular landscape in hometown melodies. Affirming a Korean presence in Manchuria on the one hand, while negating a Manchurian-Korean identity on the other, the story joins earlier frontier writings in representing Manchuria as a space of Korean nationalism outside the nation.

As for its representation of the Chinese, the oppressive relationship between the Chinese landlords and the Korean tenants reminds us of the twofold proletarian-nationalist orientation iconic of Ch'oe Sō-hae's Manchuria-themed works. The way the author depicts the oppression in the following paragraph is particularly representative of this orientation:

An elder, Mr. Song, loaded that year's harvest on a donkey and went off to the village where the Chinese landlord lived. He came back a corpse. He was beaten up because his harvest was said to be no good, and his broken, bent body was tied on the donkey's back. He just made it home, and as his shocked family took his body down off the donkey, he breathed his last breath.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Kim Tong-in, "The Red Hills: A Doctor's Diary," in *Modern Korean Short Stories*, trans. W. E. Skillend, ed. Chung Chong-wha (Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), 4, modified according to the first publication of the story.

The familiar dichotomy of a greedy and cruel landlord persecuting an obedient and pathetic peasant easily marks the episode as a narrative about class contradiction and struggle. At the same time, the national modifier “Chinese” before the word “landlord” adds an additional nationalist connotation to the narrative. The story can therefore be read as an accusation either of the Chinese in the national sense, or of the landlords as the oppressive class. The two dimensions are of course not mutually exclusive, as has been well demonstrated in Ch’oe’s literature. And yet, when the story was later translated into Chinese and Japanese, this ideological symbiosis became a key fork that bifurcates the interpretations of the two translations. To be fair, the homeward gaze in the last scene of the story may justify an anti-Chinese nationalist reading over an anti-landlord proletarian one. Such a reading may well represent the author’s true intent, given that he wrote the story in the aftermath of the Wanbaoshan Incident. But writing within the traditions of Korean literature of Manchuria, the author creates enough interpretative space in the text for a proletarian reading as well.

Finally, with regard to Japan, the story speaks for and against Japanese imperial rule at the same time. Inasmuch as Japan had actively promoted Korean migration to Manchuria throughout the colonial period, a story about the bleak reality of the immigrant community readily challenges this imperial practice. In addition, given the colonial relations, the heightened Korean nationalism that defines the story entails an anticolonial stance by nature. Kim’s characterization of the hero, which reminds the readers of the independence fighters on the frontier, further strengthens such a stance. At the same time, as the Korean scholar Yu Su-jeong has pointed out, the story, by echoing the misled upsurge of anti-Chinese nationalist sentiment in Korea following the Wanbaoshan

Incident, is paradoxically complicit in Japan's imperial expansion in Manchuria.<sup>27</sup>

The story garnered little attention from the reading public when first published in 1932. In 1939, Kim republished it after minor revision.<sup>28</sup> In 1940, this revised version was translated into Japanese and Chinese consecutively.

In Japan, it was translated by Shin Ken under the title “Akai yama” and was included in a book titled *Representative Works of Korean Fiction* (*Chōsen shōsetsu daihyōsakushū* 朝鮮小說代表作集, 1940).<sup>29</sup> What draws our attention here is the high visibility of Manchuria in the collection. Among the twelve Korean short stories included in this collection, three deal with Korean agrarian migration to Manchuria. We therefore need to interpret the Japanese version of “The Red Hills” within the overall Manchuria narrative in the anthology. The first Manchurian story, Kim Tong-ni’s “The Wild Rose” (“Nobara” 野ばら; Korean title: “Tchillekkot” 칠렛꽃, 1939), depicts the emotional turbulence experienced by a young rural Korean woman before she departs for Manchuria to reunite with her husband. The second is Kim Tong-in’s “The Red Hills.” The third, which is also the last story of the book, is Yi T’ae-jun’s “The Peasants’ Army” (‘Nōgun’ 農軍; Korean title: “Nonggun” 농군, 1939). The story gives a vivid account of the struggle against the local Chinese peasants by Korean immigrants for their right to build irrigation

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<sup>27</sup> Yu Su-jöng, “Singminji Chosön i chaehyön hanŭn Manju: Kim Tong-in ūi ‘Purgūn san’ kwa 1920-yöndae Simmun kisa ūl Manju tamnon,” in *Kundai Tong Asia tamnon ūi yōksōl kwa kulchōl*, ed. Chon Sōng-gon (Seoul: Somyōng Ch’ulp’an, 2011), 245–70.

<sup>28</sup> He changed all of the “Chinese” (Chunggugin 종국인) in the story into “Manchukuo-ans” (Manjukukin 만주국인) and included the story in his newly published collection. In Manchukuo, the Chinese people were referred to as the “Manchurians” (Manin 만인 or Manjuin 만주인), which is slightly different from “Manchukuo-ans.” It looks like Kim intended to re-situate the text in the new Manchukuo era but was somehow confused with the new terms. In addition, there are two more revisions to the original text, but they are irrelevant to the discussion in this chapter. For a detailed list of the revisions and an analysis of them, see Yi Sang-gyōng, “Kim Tong-in ‘Purgūn san’ ūi Tong Asiajōk suyong,” 257–60.

<sup>29</sup> Shin Ken, ed., *Chōsen shōsetsu daihyōsakushū* (Tōkyō: Kyōzaisha, 1940).

infrastructure and to reclaim paddy fields. It is, apparently, a conscious representation of the Korean understanding of the Wanbaoshan Incident. The three Manchuria-themed stories, when read in the order of their appearance in the collection, coincidentally provide a temporal narrative about how the peasants in Korea imagine Manchuria as a land of hope, how they suffer under Chinese oppression in reality, and how they finally rise up to fight against the oppression. In this narrative, the Koreans are innocent, the Chinese are evil, and the Japanese—the real power behind the scene that pits the two peoples against each other for its own sake—are left out of the picture. In their entirety, the Manchurian stories in this book veil the Japanese ambition of frontier expansion with sentimentalism and a portrayal of the tragic heroism of the Korean farmers.

Furthermore, the high visibility of Manchuria in this collection is but a manifestation of a broader interest in the topic of Manchuria that held sway in the imperial literary world from the late 1930s up to the final years of the empire. During that time, to facilitate the incorporation of Manchuria into the increasingly totalizing Japanese empire, legions of Japanese and Korean writers were recruited to travel to Manchukuo and represent their frontier experience through literature.<sup>30</sup> In general, their Manchuria-inspired work contributed to the endorsement and justification of the Japanese imperial project. The majority of their frontier writing, infused with an imperial passion for the continent and an admiration of the frontier reclamation project, represents Manchuria as the embodiment of imperial glory.<sup>31</sup> Slightly outside the mainstream, a

<sup>30</sup> On Japanese organizations that organized writers in Japan to visit Manchukuo, see Ozaki Hotsuki, *Kindai bungaku no shōkon: kyū shokuminchi bungakuron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Bookstore, 1991), 265–81. Note that not only Japanese writers were being organized. Korean writers who lived in Japan and wrote in Japanese, such as Chang Hyok-ju, were also targeted. For a collection of works by Korean writers about their visits to Manchukuo with a foreword introducing them, see Minjok Munhak Yōnguso, ed., *Ilche malgi munindūl ūi Manju ch'ehōm* (Seoul: Yōngnak Ch'ulp'an, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Representative works of this type include two novels published in 1943 by the Japanese-writing Korean writer Chang Hyok-ju (Japanese name: Noguchi Kakuchū), *The Happy People* (Kōfuku no tami) and *Reclamation* (Kaikon). The two stories, written from an articulated perspective of “Japan and Korea as One Body,” define Korean immigrants in Manchuria as imperial subjects and delineate how Japanese and Koreans became one body amid the hard work of reclamation on the imperial frontier. They created a sensation in the metropole and were quickly

few works were critical of Korean immigration to Manchuria and of Japanese imperialism in general. Yi T'ae-jun's "The Peasants' Army," for example, highlights the hardships the Korean immigrants faced on the frontier and so challenged Japanese propaganda that portrayed Manchuria as a promising destination for Korean immigration. However, as we have already seen, such works, inasmuch as they could not blame Japan explicitly, may paradoxically have justified Japanese expansion in Manchuria by portraying pathetic Korean peasants in need of protection.<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, the interpretative space of Kim Tong-in's ambivalent story was greatly circumscribed by the imperial semiotics regarding Manchuria in the 1940s. Although it was a relatively faithful translation of the original, the Japanese version of Kim's story reads much differently and delivers greatly simplified emphases in comparison to the Korean version.<sup>33</sup> Japanese readers who encountered the story within the collection would have been most conscious of the Chineseness, and not the landlord-ness, of the "Chinese landlord" character. They would also have missed the anti-imperial stance behind the nationalist story, or would have considered it secondary to the anti-Chinese sentiment. Through translation, the Korean Peninsula-centered view of Manchuria that imagines it as a Korean national space is overwritten by a Japanese metropole-

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canonized as masterpieces of imperial literature. Noguchi Kakuchū, *Kōfuku no tami* (Tokyo: Nanpō Shoin, 1943); Noguchi Kakuchū, *Kaikon* (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1943).

<sup>32</sup> The Korean scholar Kim Chae-yong divides works about Manchurian Koreans published in Japan, Korea, and Manchuria in the late 1930s and 1940s into two categories: immigration literature and reclamation literature. The first type is critical of Japanese imperialism. It highlights the pathetic life of Korean immigrants in Manchuria as victims of imperialism. The second type identifies Korean peasants in Manchuria as imperial subjects engaging in frontier reclamation. It portrays a rosy picture of the Korean settlements in Manchuria and anticipates a bright future for the Japanese empire through frontier stories. I borrow his categorization in my discussion of the Manchuria boom. Nevertheless, I argue that although the first type of Korean literature of Manchuria certainly shows a more oppositional attitude towards the empire than the second, these works were hardly free from imperial appropriation as long as their content involved national tension more than class struggle and did not denounce Japanese imperial expansion in explicit ways. Kim Chae-yong, "Ilche mal Han'gugin ūl Manju insik," in *Manbosan sakōn kwa Han'guk kündae munhak*, ed. Kim Chae-yong (Seoul: Yǒngnak Ch'ulp'an, 2010), 11–38.

<sup>33</sup> There are many studies about problematic translations in the Korean boom. For example, see the two cases discussed in Yun Tae-sök, "1940-yöndae Han'guk esō ūl pönyök," *Minjok munhaksa yön'gu* 33 (2007): 327–35.

centered view that redefines the frontier as a Japanese imperial space.

Several months after it was translated into Japanese, the story was again translated into Chinese in Manchukuo under the title “Zhese de shan” 赭色的山. This time, it was transformed into an allegorical articulation of Chinese anticolonial nationalism. The translation was included in the *Special Issue for Translation* of the Manchukuo Chinese literary journal *Style* (*Zuofeng* 作風, 1940). This issue, very unusually for the time, contains a clear message of resistance. In the preface, the author announces that “a new life is starting its struggle,” “like the cry of an imprisoned lion to recover his freedom.” According to the editor, the key ideas behind the issue include “anti-war, and anti-pillaging, exile and poverty.” Moreover, the editing team intended to mimic the collections of literature from “weak nations” that were popular in China Proper in the 1930s. At the time, implicated in the very notion of “weak nations” was a call for national independence, in most cases against colonial rule. The issue demonstrates the editing team’s best effort to implement these ideas. Many works included in the issue are indeed by writers from the so-called “weak nations,” such as Korea, Bulgaria, and Spain. But as the chief editor later recalled, they were not able to find enough stories from the weak nations to fill up the entire issue. Accordingly they supplemented them with works that were at least considered progressive literature by their contemporaries. These include works by Percy Bysshe Shelley and O. Henry.<sup>34</sup> As a result, although the journal does not explicitly denounce Japanese colonial domination in Manchuria, in context any reader would easily catch its intended criticism of the colonial society. The journal was banned by the Manchukuo police right after the publication of its first and only issue.

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<sup>34</sup> For an analysis of the ideological orientation of the issue in general and of each story included in it specifically, see Xie Qiong, “Weimanzhouguo Zuofeng zazhi ji chaoxian wenxue fanyi,” *Hangzhou shifan daxue xuebao*, January 2015, 66–72.

The issue contains three Korean stories, all translated from Japanese translations.<sup>35</sup> In China proper in the 1930s, translations of Korean literature were frequently seen in the collections of literature from weak nations that the editing team of *Style* used as models.<sup>36</sup> In other words, in *Style*, the genre of Korean literature itself indicates national pain and nationalist struggles. Among the three Korean stories, two are focused on dislocated Koreans. In addition to Kim Tong-in's "The Red Hills," Yi Kwang-su's (이광수 1892-1950) "Ka-shil" ("Kajitsu" 嘉實; Korean title "Ka-shil" 가실, 1923) is situated in pre-modern Korea. The protagonist, Ka-shil, a young man from Shilla, is conscripted and sent to fight with the Kokuryō army. In the battlefields, Ka-shil finds that soldiers from both sides are merely ordinary people who are innocently sacrificing their lives for their rulers. After Ka-shil is captured and released by a Kokuryō general, he wanders to a Kokuryō village and establishes a life there, but he always dreams of returning to his hometown. At the end of the story, he finally sets out on his homeward journey.<sup>37</sup> The third Korean story, "Pig" ("Buta" 豚; Korean title "Ton" 돈, 1933) by Yi Hyo-seok (이효석 1907-1942), depicts a peasant's poor living conditions in rural Korea.<sup>38</sup>

Within the context of the translation issue of *Style*, the two Korean stories about wandering Koreans who dream of returning home allegorically bespeak the nationalistic nostalgia of the

<sup>35</sup> The three Korean stories in the issue had all been recently translated into Japanese. Among the three, two can be found in the Japanese collection *Representative Works of Korean Fiction*. The third story, Yi Kwang-su's "Ka-shil," was translated into Japanese and included in *Ka-shil: Collection of Short Stories by Yi Kwang-su* (*Kajitsu: Ri Kōshū tanpenshū*) in 1940. Yi Kwang-su, *Kajitsu: Ri Kōshū tanpenshū* (Tokyo: Modannihonsha, 1940).

<sup>36</sup> Xie Qiong, "Weimanzhouguo Zuofeng zazhi ji chaoxian wenxue fanyi," 67.

<sup>37</sup> This story was selected and translated by Wang Jue, who was later identified as an underground KMT member. See Ōkubo Akio, "Manshūkoku no Chosen bungei ni kansuru kōsatsu: Chūgokugo shinbun zasshi no ichibetsu," *Nihon teikoku shita / go no higashiajia bungaku* (Taejön: Conference proceedings, 2013), 143–152.

<sup>38</sup> In as much as "Pig" is conventionally considered a transitional work in the writer's career that marks his aesthetic turn from proletarian literature to erotic literature, the story mixes social concern with the peasant protagonist's poor living conditions with erotic depictions of the scene of the pig's copulation. When read within the Chinese translation issue, however, it is the social component of the story that gets emphasized.

Chinese people under the Manchukuo rule. As the literature of the time shows, many Manchukuo Chinese intellectuals saw themselves as dislocated people living under foreign rule and longed to return to their home country of China Proper.<sup>39</sup> Under Japanese surveillance, Chinese writers in Manchukuo could not address their homeland nostalgia explicitly in their works. Instead, some of them wrote stories about homesick exiles from other foreign nations, for example the post-revolution white Russians, as allegories of their own situation. In a contemporary report on the ideological tendencies of Manchukuo Chinese literature drafted by three imprisoned Manchukuo Chinese writers for the Manchukuo police, the authors reported that the short story titled “The Half-blooded” (“Hun xue er” 混血兒, 1942) by Shi Jun (石軍 1912-?), a Manchukuo Chinese writer, intended to “arouse the idea of motherland among people in Manchuria through lamenting the painful life of white Russian émigrés in Manchuria.”<sup>40</sup> I argue that similar techniques were used in the translation issue of *Style* as well. In the issue, there were five stories altogether about Korean, Russian, and German people who were forced to leave their homes by war, revolution, or poverty. Kim’s Korean story, together with other stories about national nostalgia, can therefore be

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<sup>39</sup> In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discuss the subtle relationship between Manchuria and China Proper. By 1945, Chinese people both in Manchuria and in China Proper were ambivalent about whether Manchuria was indeed part of China. During the Manchukuo period, when Chinese people travelled from Manchuria to China Proper, they considered it a “homecoming” experience. The best illustration of this experience is Manchuria-born Chinese writer Xiao Jun’s short story “Yinghua,” *Xiao Jun quanji* 3 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2008): 266–76.

<sup>40</sup> The report is titled “Capital Police Bureau Special Duties Section Secret Document No. 3650.” It was submitted on November 29, 1943. Its central part was drafted by the three leading Manchukuo Chinese left-wing writers, Wang Guangti, Guan Monan, and Li Jifeng. After being arrested and imprisoned in 1941, these three were required to censor publications of Chinese literature in Manchukuo periodically and compose censor reports. In the final version of the report, they summarized the ideological tendencies of Manchukuo Chinese literature and the techniques their colleagues used to convey ideological messages in circuitous ways. They also attached a close reading of nine selected literary works as case studies, including Shi Jun’s short story “The Half-blooded” (*hun xue er*), published in 1942. For the original text of the report and a detailed study of it, see Okada Hideki, *Zoku: Bungaku ni miru manshukoku no iso* (Tokyo: Kenbun Press, 2013), 282–96; 412–35. In addition, the Northeastern Writers Group writers, namely the Manchuria-born Chinese writers who later moved to China Proper that I discuss in chapter 1, also employed similar strategies in their writing. For example, see Luo Feng, “Shoutiqin de qitaozhe,” *Yeying* January 1, 1936, 24–5.

read as an allegorical articulation of Chinese nationalism on behalf of Manchukuo Chinese intellectuals.

This allegorical reading is further supported by a minor difference between the Chinese and Japanese translations of the original text. In Kim's story, the narrator mentions that in addition to Korean, the protagonist Wildcat also speaks some Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. He then draws the conclusion that "[Wildcat] has scraped together a living in many places, but no one knew his background for certain." The description of the protagonist's linguistic background is well preserved in the Japanese translation. In the Chinese translation, however, the phrase "he also knew some simple words of Japanese" has gone missing and the protagonist's talent in foreign languages is diminished to Chinese and Russian only. As the sole obvious modification to the original text, it is unlikely that this omission is due to the translator's oversight. Rather, it shows the translator's intention to dissociate the nationalist hero from anything Japanese, including Japanese language. Within the reality of colonial conditions, it was very common for Korean nationalists of the time to speak some Japanese; but this attribute proved unacceptable for the Chinese translator. Arguably, behind this de-Japanizing Chinese translation, an anti-Japanese sentiment is at work.

In this way, as far as national and territorial implication is concerned, the message the Chinese version of Kim's story delivers is the exact opposite of the message delivered by the Japanese version. At first sight, one might wonder how a Korean story that demonizes the Chinese could have been translated into Chinese in such a positive light. But reading the Chinese translation within the translation issue of *Style*, Chinese readers would have been likely to focus more on the class markers of the "Chinese landlord" than the nationalist markers, or they might have read the condemnation of the Chinese as merely part of the overall denunciation of a Japanese Manchuria. In other words, they could plausibly accept the story as being about class oppression and

anticolonial struggle. In this mode of reception, the more the original story negates a Manchurian-Korean identity and privileges the nation in the Peninsula, the more it strikes a chord with nationalist Chinese readers. For them, what matters is not so much the malice between the Chinese and the Koreans highlighted in the original story, but its posture of rejection of a colonial frontier.

Such a reading requires a well-programmed anthologizing context. Outside the respective collections in Japanese and Chinese, the reception of the translations of this highly ambivalent text may have gone out of control. In the year following the publication of *Style*, another Chinese editor published a *Collection of Korean Short Stories* (*Chaoxian duanpian xiaoshuo xuan* 朝鮮短篇小說選, 1941) in Manchukuo.<sup>41</sup> It was a random collection of eight Chinese translations of Korean stories that had been previously published in journals and newspapers in Manchukuo, including the three in *Style*. The collection has no foreword or postscript, nor can we identify a thoughtful principle for the selection and organization of the stories. The only theme of the anthology is that the stories are all “Korean,” an emphasis that would naturally draw the readers’ attention to the expression of a Korean identity in each work. After reading Kim’s “The Red Hill” in this collection, Chen Yin (陳因 1914—1944), a renowned Manchukuo Chinese critic, felt completely disoriented. In his review of the story, he complains,

[‘The Red Hill’] is a story with a strong national sentiment. However, it is quite easy for us to form discontent criticism towards a story like this from the perspective of this shore across the turbulent Yalu River. . . . At least we feel astonished. We cannot help but feel puzzled when we come across a story like this that depicts the self-mutilation between the two peoples sharing the same fate.<sup>42</sup>

Without a context that supports an allegorical reading of the story and within the context of a

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<sup>41</sup> Wang He, ed., *Chaoxian duanpian xiaoshuo xuan* (Xinjing: Xinshidai Press, 1941).

<sup>42</sup> Chen Yin, “Chaoxian wenxue lüeping: Chaoxian duanpian xiaoshuo xuan (xu),” *Shengjing shibao*, Oct. 8, 1941, 5.

national literature collection, Chen reads the story as written from a Korean stance that is essentially different from, and contradictory to, the Chinese stance “across the turbulent Yalu River.” In the same article, he conjectures that the story “must have been written under someone’s order some ten years ago to incite the general public.” In other words, Chen puts the story back into its original context of the post-Wanbaoshan Incident chaos and suspects that the writer was ordered to compose the story as part of Japan’s larger plot to mislead and inflame the Korean people in the Peninsula. Chen therefore draws the conclusion that the writer “fails to embrace a correct world view and is only playing tricks in the shallow and narrow national circle.” Chen’s reading showcases the uncertainty and subtlety associated with the translation of frontier literature. With the original text offering so many different possibilities of interpretation, every slight manipulation in translation and anthologization can fundamentally affect its reception.

As is very clear, the Korean, Japanese, and Chinese versions of the same story all portray the frontier of Manchuria as a national/imperial space belonging to each respective nation. The study of this case demonstrates how literary territorialization works through translation. In frontier literature, the complicated national relations often manifest themselves on multiple levels with ambivalent and conflicting implications in a single text, as is seen in Kim’s “The Red Hills.” Kim’s story provided ample space for manipulation when translated and anthologized in other languages whose speakers also laid claim to the same piece of land. In the process of translation, the territorial implication of the text was dramatically changed; translation became the battlefield for the multinational frontier contestation.

Translation as competition was common in imperial literary practice in the Japanese empire. In his chapter “Translating Texts, Transforming Identities,” Ying Xiong discusses how the Manchukuo Japanese translator Ouchi’s Japanese translation of Manchukuo Chinese literature in

the early 1940s conveys an ideological connotation different from that of the original texts. For example, the translator's minute modification in translation twists the implication of proletarian solidarity in the original Chinese text into an implication of racial harmony in Manchukuo in the Japanese translation.<sup>43</sup> Translation of a Korean story about the Korean people's marginal presence in a multinational imperial frontier may further complicate the binary between the colonizer and the colonized. In the case of Kim's "The Red Hills," the Japanese translation can be properly seen as an example of a colonizer's translation, in which the colonizing power consolidates its domination over the colonized through literary translation and anthologization, but the colonizers' manipulation is soon undermined by the Chinese retranslation of the Japanese translation. This, however, does not necessarily mean that an anticolonial alliance is formed between the Chinese translation and the original Korean text, because in the original text both the Chinese and the Japanese are cast as perpetrators.

As we have seen, Kim Tong-in's story, like other works about Manchurian Koreans by earlier Korean writers, successfully recreated Manchuria as a Korean national space outside the nation. At the same time, quite paradoxically, in the process of translation their literary claims to the frontier lent a voice to other national claims to the same piece of land. Kim's case therefore reveals the complexity of the Manchurian-Korean community, of the Korean literature of Manchuria, and of the translating context surrounding this literature in East Asia. In the following section, I will discuss a group of Korean writers who actually wrote in Manchuria about Manchuria in the late 1930s and 1940s. For this group of writers, all the complexities represented in Kim's story were part of a living reality that they had to deal with in their actual literary activities. In a time when

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<sup>43</sup> Ying Xiong, "Translating Texts, Translating Identities," in *Representing Empire: Japanese Colonial Literature in Taiwan and Manchuria* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 198–234, and 216 in particular.

narratives about the Manchurian-Korean community were increasingly enlisted to support a Japanese imperial claim not only to the frontier but also to the entirety of East Asia, they attempted to carve out a Korean cultural space by writing in Manchuria about Manchuria. But when they wrote, published, and considered translation, they had to carefully calibrate their relations to local authorities, who were always alien to them, and to other peoples living in the same region. The text of Kim's story and its translations therefore symbolize and anticipate the subtext and context of Manchukuo Korean literature in the 1940s, the topic of the next section.

### **Confronting the Politics of (Anti) Translation: The Absence of Japanese Translation**

In November 1943, Yǒm Sang-sōp, the renowned master of modern Korean literature who had lived in Manchuria since 1936, wrote a foreword for the Manchukuo Korean writer An Sukil's collection *The North Field* (Pugwǒn 북원, 1944), the only single-authored Korean collection published during the regime.<sup>44</sup> In the foreword, Yǒm painfully acknowledges that Manchurian-Korean literature has long been treated with apathy and indifference in the Manchukuo literary world. To break through the predicament, he emphasizes two issues. First, he suggests that Manchurian-Korean literature should move its center of activity from Kando to Xinjing, the capital of Manchukuo. Second, he calls for an active practice of translation of works by Manchurian-Korean writers. He argues that even if the center of Manchukuo Korean literature is moved to Xinjing, he would not expect it "to fulfill its initial purpose and reach a high level" were it written only for Korean readers. Here he implies translation, and by translation he means having Korean

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<sup>44</sup> Yǒm Sang-sōp, "Pugwǒn sōmun," 20-segi Chungguk Chosōnjok munhak saryo chōnjip 9 (Yanji: Yanbian renmin chubanshe, 2009), 615-6.

works translated into Japanese or other local languages and published in Manchukuo and in Japan. Unfortunately, as he points out with indignation, he had “not heard of any news” about plans to translate his frontier colleagues’ works by the time he wrote the article. Looking forward, neither would he hear much by the end of the regime. As far as we know today, no work of Manchukuo Korean literature was ever translated or published in Japanese during the Manchukuo period, and only one was ever translated into Chinese.

In this arguably most important literary criticism on Manchukuo Korean literature written by its leading figure, translation is highlighted as a central issue. Why was translation so important to Manchukuo Korean writers? When Yōm argues that without translation Manchukuo Korean literature would not “fulfill its initial purpose,” what is the purpose he refers to? At the same time, why was it so difficult for them to get their works translated? And if nothing was translated into Japanese, the lingua franca of the regime, why was one story translated into Chinese? This and the next section will explore the Manchukuo Korean writers’ obsession with translation in the 1940s through the above questions. This obsession, I argue, symbolizes the Korean writers’ aporic desire to carve out a Korean cultural territory on the frontier as compensation for losses within the nation. The desire is aporic because the frontier Korean writers were empowered and suffocated at the same time by the unique political condition of being dominated by two overlapping but conflicting imperial orders: the multiethnic nation-state in Manchuria and the assimilative imperial state in Korea. The different responses to the Korean writers’ obsession with translation by the Manchukuo Japanese authority and by Chinese writers are indicative of their different positions in and approaches to the matter of frontier rivalry. In this section, I will investigate the conspicuous absence of Japanese translation of Manchukuo Korean literature during the Manchukuo period. In the next I will examine the one and only Chinese translation of Manchukuo Korean literature

during the same period, that of An Su-kil's short story "The Kitchen Girl" ("Puǒng'nyō" 부엌녀, 1940).

Translation facilitates dissemination. This function of translation has been well recognized by Korean writers in the Peninsula ever since the inception of modern Korean literature: "It is only after it [literary translation] develops to a certain extent that the literature could broaden its sphere and could be discussed as literature within the criticism of a world scale."<sup>45</sup> In an environment of asymmetrical power relations, such as a colonial one, literary translation from the language of the weak to the language in power becomes all the more important for the weak. In 1939 and 1940, the Korean writer Kim Sa-ryang (김사량 1914–1950) enthusiastically advocated translating Korean literature into Japanese and translated many works himself. For him, translation was an essential institution that could at once introduce Korean literature and culture to the imperial metropole and grant Korean writers the right to write in Korean within the nation. At the time, writing and publishing in Korean was becoming increasingly difficult for the Korean writers, and Kim hoped to resist the pressure of linguistic assimilation, or at least delay it, through the promotion of translation.<sup>46</sup>

Manchukuo Korean writers shared with their peninsular colleagues the general view of translation as a means of expanding cultural influence without having to give up one's national language. And yet what truly drove their obsession with translation was their particular status as

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<sup>45</sup> Chōng In-sōp, "Kagyanal' kwa oeguk munhak yon'gu," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 19, 1927.

<sup>46</sup> Kim's view on translation is well elaborated in his article "Chōsen bungaku fūgetsuron," first published on *Bungei shuto* in 1939. See Kim Sa-ryang, "Chōsen bungaku fūgetsuron," *Kin Shiryō zenshū IV* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1973), 14–16. For more about Kim Sa-ryang and his view of translation in English, see Satoru Hashimoto, "Afterlives of the Culture: Engaging with the Trans-East Asian Cultural Tradition in Modern Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese Literatures, 1880s–1940s" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2014), 310–4; 332–3. For more about Kim Sa-ryang in general, see Nayoung Aimee Kwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 41–79.

Manchukuo subjects: in the entire Japanese empire, they were the only ones who could legally write in the Korean language and about Korean identity, albeit as a particular ethnic identity in Manchukuo. In their attempts to develop a Manchukuo Korean literature, translation proved to be a crucial symbol of cultural definition, a promise of recognition from the governing authority, and a stumbling block that reveals the ultimate limit of their literature.

In the early 1930s, only a small group of Korean writers lived in Manchuria. This group included An Su-kil, who later became the central pillar of Manchukuo Korean literature, and the acclaimed woman writer Kang Kyōng-ae (강경애 1906–1944).<sup>47</sup> From 1936 up to the late imperial years, however, many more Korean writers, journalists, and intellectuals were lured to Manchukuo. In 1936, the radical assimilation policy of “Japan and Korea as One Body” was created under the reign of the newly inaugurated Governor-General of Korea, Minami Jiro. Although the policy was not formally announced until 1938, colonial intellectuals who worked in the press, such as Yōm Sang-sōp, were promptly informed and immediately sensed the change in the political climate. In the same year, Yōm accepted the position of chief editor at *Manchuria and Korea Daily* (*Mansōn ilbo* 만선일보), the only Korean periodical in Manchukuo at the time, and left Seoul for Manchuria.<sup>48</sup> The Korean writing and publishing environment deteriorated soon thereafter. Starting in the late 1930s, one after another Korean periodical was forced to close, or

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<sup>47</sup> Between 1926 and 1939, Kang Kyōng-ae had lived in Manchuria for a total of ten years. Among writers of Korean literature of Manchuria, she was unique for her strong proletarian and communist tendencies. Although never a former member of the Communist Party, she worked closely with party members and other sympathizers in Manchuria. In the early to mid-1930s, Kang Kyōng-ae, An Su-kil, and other Korean writers in Manchuria formed a writing circle called “Pukyanghoe” and published an internal journal titled *Pukyang*. On their literary engagement, see Ch'ae Hun, *Ilche kangjōmgi Han'guk chaeman munhak yōn'gu* (Seoul: Kip'un saem Press, 1990), 119–36.

<sup>48</sup> Kim Chae-yong, “Haebang chikhu Yōm Sang-sōp kwa Manju chaehyōn ūi chōngch’ihak,” *Hanminjok munhwa yōn'gu* 50 (2015): 71–2.

cut out pages, or insert pages in Japanese, or shift entirely to Japanese.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, all literary publications in Korea were expected to embody the colonial dictate that the Koreans were Japanese imperial subjects. In Manchukuo, however, the Korean people were officially listed as one of the “five ethnicities in harmony” and were granted a Korean cultural space. In 1938, *Manchuria and Korea Daily* was able to double the frequency of its publication, double its pages, recruit new members from Korea, and open a literary column, thanks to a large endowment from the Japanese.<sup>50</sup> As a result, a group of journalists and writers who had lost their jobs in the dwindling Korean press and who were unwilling or unable to convert to Japanese writing emigrated to Manchuria.<sup>51</sup> In 1938, *Manchuria and Korea Daily* also secured Ch’oe Nam-sŏn as its general advisor. Ch’oe was among Korea’s most prominent modern intellectuals, historians, and writers. He went to Manchuria primarily to take up the position of Professor of Korean History at the Manchukuo Kenkoku (lit. nation-building) University.<sup>52</sup> Even today he is still known for his complicated and ambivalent views on Japanese and Korean culture. However, fundamentally he, like Sin Ch’ae-ho, believed that the land of Manchuria contained the roots of Korean history.<sup>53</sup> In this way, by the end of the 1930s, conditions for the emergence of a new literature in the frontier were ripe. The number of writers was increasing, and the space for publication, the literary column

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<sup>49</sup> Im Chong-kuk, *Ch’inil munhangnon* (Seoul: Minjok Munje Yǒn’guso, 2013), 58–82.

<sup>50</sup> Ch’oe Sam-nyong, “Chosŏnjok munhak ūi saengsōng kwa t’och’akhwa ūi silchūng,” in *Haebang chōn munhak p’yǒngnonjip*, ed. Ch’oe Sam-nyong (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013), 2–3.

<sup>51</sup> See Kim Chae-yong, “Ilche mal Han’gugin ūl Manju insik,” Kim Chae-yong, ed., *Manbosan sakōn kwa Han’guk kündae munhak*, 11–36; An Su-kil, “Yongchōng Sinkyōng sidae,” 20-segi *Chungguk Chosŏnjok munhak saryo chōnjip* vol. 9, 627–34.

<sup>52</sup> Kenkoku University was established in 1938 in Xinjing directly under the supervision of the Manchukuo State Council.

<sup>53</sup> Ch’oe Nam-sŏn is in general known as a leading collaborative intellectual in modern Korea. For an analysis of his nuanced political stance as reflected in his life and works, see Sō Yǒng-ch’ae, *Ach’om ūi yǒngungjuūi: Ch’oe Nam-sŏn kwa Yi Kwang-su* (Seoul: Somyōng Ch’ulp’an, 2011) especially pages 27–75.

in *Manchuria and Korea Daily*, was small but secure.

In 1940, Manchukuo Korean writers announced the formal establishment of a new Manchurian-Korean literature (*manju chosǒn munhak* 만주조선문학) in the literary column in *Manchuria and Korea Daily* through a series of articles titled “New Proposals for the Construction of the Manchurian-Korean Literature” (*manju chosǒn munhak kǒnsǒl sinjeǔI* 만주 조선문학 건설 신제의).<sup>54</sup> For the purpose of clarity, in this chapter I refer to this new Manchurian-Korean literature as Manchukuo Korean literature. The authors were aware that Korean literature of Manchuria had existed for decades, but they called for a renewed literature to be produced by the locals, about the locals, and for the locals. While earlier writers of Manchuria-themed works, such as Ch'oe Sǒ-hae and Kim Tong-in, considered themselves Korean writers and published all their works in Korea, Manchukuo Korean writers emphasized that they should primarily publish their works locally, although they would also expect a modest readership in Korea and even Japan.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, earlier Manchuria-themed works constantly represented Manchuria as the extension of the Peninsula and the source of suffering; in these stories, the moment of revelation mostly involves some kind of national awakening or national longing. Manchukuo Korean writers, however, had a different view of the reality of the frontier community to which they all belonged. Their works portray Manchuria as a new home for Korean immigrants; it is a land of promise that allows them to take root, survive, and thrive as Koreans. In their Manchurian narratives, all the sufferings that had been highlighted in the earlier Korean literature of Manchuria are inherited; however, they are either encapsulated within a dark, primitive past that contrasts with the bright

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<sup>54</sup> *Mansǒn ilbo*, January 12–February 6, 1940.

<sup>55</sup> *Manchuria and Korea Daily* had correspondence and distribution branches in Seoul and Tokyo. Chang Ch'un-sik, *Ilche kangjǒngi Chungguk ūi Hanin iju munhak*, 39.

present and future, or sublimated into ordeals that immigrants must overcome as frontier pioneers. This new understanding of the frontier is crystallized in the name An gave to the Korean settlements in Manchuria: The Northern Hometown, or *pukhyang* 북향. This “*pukhyang* spirit” was at the core of works by many writers of Manchukuo Korean literature.<sup>56</sup>

But it would be naive to think that in promoting a literature of the new homeland, the Manchukuo Korean writers pushed the peninsular literary world completely out of their minds. On the contrary, both Yōm and An believed that what they had achieved in Manchukuo was not only meaningful for themselves or the Korean community in Manchuria, but also significant for their fellow countrymen in the Peninsula. In retrospect, Yōm Sang-sōp explained his motivation for accepting the position of chief editor at *Manchuria and Korea Daily* in 1936 as follows:

At the time, M newspaper [referring to *Manchuria and Korea Daily*], as the representative institution for a million of compatriots in Manchuria, certainly contributed to the improvement of their welfare and culture. In addition, at that moment of crisis, it was able to call out a word, “I’m here,” and therefore had significant value as a window hole through which words that were to be said could be said with dignity.<sup>57</sup>

Although Yōm does not elucidate what he exactly means by “the moment of crisis” and the “words that were to be said,” it is quite clear that both phrases refer to the colonial conditions in Korea at the time. In other words, in Yōm’s view, *Manchuria and Korea Daily*, located on the frontier bordering the Korean nation, had the capacity to give a voice to those who could not speak in Korea. It is certainly possible that in this article written in 1962, Yōm amplified his anticolonial engagement during the colonial years. But Manchukuo did provide at least some hope to Korean writers that they might break through the line of linguistic and cultural oppression set up by the

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<sup>56</sup> Yi Hae-yōng, “Manjuguk ūi kukka sōngkyōk kwa An Su-kil ūi pukhyang chōngsin,” *Kugō kungmunhak* 160, no. 4 (2012): 519–41.

<sup>57</sup> Yōm Sang-sōp, “Hoengbo mundan hoesanggi,” *Yōm Sang-sōp munjang chōnjip* vol. 3 (Seoul: Somyōng Ch’ulp’an, 2013), 598–9.

Japanese in the Peninsula. An Su-kil also recalled that at the time, writers from Korea occasionally sent their Korean works to *Manchuria and Korea Daily* for consideration when they could not publish them back home. Entering the 1940s, when Korean collections published in Manchukuo became known to the Korean literary world, the frontier attracted even more Korean writing. After An published his single-authored collection *The Northern Field* in 1943, he even received inquiries from writers in Korea about having their Korean collections published in Manchukuo.<sup>58</sup> It is no wonder that in 1988, when the Korean scholar Oh Yang-ho published his pioneering study of Korean literature in Manchuria, he praised Manchuria highly as the only pure land that had “not been contaminated by the poisonous elements of the Japanese occupation” during the years from 1941 to 1945.<sup>59</sup> This is of course an overstatement, but it nevertheless signifies a desire to territorialize Manchukuo Korean literature as an alternative but authentic source of Korean national literature that compensated for the absence of national literature within the nation, a desire that was shared by colonial writers and postcolonial scholars alike.

Indeed, Manchukuo Korean literature is not only a matter of literary *representation* of the frontier space, but most crucially a literary *occupation* of it—an occupation of the frontier with Korean literature. Content-wise, these writers’ work might not represent Manchuria in as nationalist a way as their peninsular colleagues’ does. While earlier Korean writers nationalized Manchuria by recreating the frontier land and the Korean community there as an extra-territorial source of national and nationalist sentiment, the Manchukuo Korean writers’ work often involves an almost excessive appeal to Manchukuo ideology. Stringent censorship was of course a key reason. *Manchuria and Korea Daily*, since its establishment, had been considered by the Japanese

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<sup>58</sup> An Su-kil, “Yongchöng Sinkyöng sidae,” 646.

<sup>59</sup> O Yang-ho, *Han'guk munhak kwa Kando* (Seoul: Munye Press, 1988), 14.

as a tool of political propaganda.<sup>60</sup> In addition, since the mid-1930s, it was subjected to daily inspection by Japanese censors sent from the Kanto Army.<sup>61</sup> Conscious on a daily basis of monitoring eyes, writers had to circumscribe their stories within the frame of a Manchukuo nation-building discourse. More importantly, for Korean writers and intellectuals who were looking for an alternative Korean space in Manchuria after the mid-1930s, when most revolutionary activities had been suppressed by the Japanese, the only hope was that the Japanese could fully implement the “five ethnicities in harmony” policy and grant them a minimal ground for the cultural and political articulation of an ethnic Koreanness. Therefore, instead of evading the Manchukuo ideology, Manchukuo Korean writers often explicitly address it in their literary work, as if to remind the Japanese that they are members of Manchukuo and that by law they deserve a Korean space there.<sup>62</sup>

Accordingly, Manchukuo Korean writers such as Yǒm and An made the frontier settlement a cultural, alternative Korean territory not through a Peninsula-centered representation of the frontier, but by actually moving to Manchuria and writing and publishing in their national language there. If any message of anticolonial resistance can be read into the case of the Manchukuo Korean

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<sup>60</sup> *Manchuria and Korea Daily* had a strong Japanese background to begin with. Back in 1924, the Japanese consulate in Kando established a Korean newspaper, the *Kando Daily* (*Kando ilbo*). The *Kando Daily* was once the most influential Korean journal in Manchuria. After Japan established Manchukuo in 1932, it launched another local Korean newspaper, the *Manchuria and Mongolia Daily* (*Manmo ilbo*), in 1933 as the official journal that represented the voice of the Manchukuo government. In the mid-1930s, the government tightened its control over publications and supported the merging of the two newspapers into one titled *Manchuria and Korea Daily*. For more about the two newspapers, see Ch'oe Sang-ch'ǒl, *Chungguk Chosǒnjok ὅllonsa* (Kyōngnam: Kyōngnam Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 1996), 113–24.

<sup>61</sup> Both Yǒm and An recalled how the Kanto Army had closely monitored the newspaper as well as other Korean publications in Manchuria. Yǒm resigned from *Manchuria and Korea Daily* in 1939 because of increasingly suffocating censorship. See An Su-kil, “Yongchǒng Sinkyǒng sidae,” 634–7; Yǒm Sang-sōp, “Hoengbo mundan hoesanggi,” 599.

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed analysis of the identification with Manchukuo ideology in An's works and among other Manchukuo Korean intellectuals, see Yi Hae-yōng, “Manjuguk ūi kukka sǒngkyōk kwa An Su-kil ūi pukhyang chōngsin,” *Kugō kungmunhak* 160, no. 4 (2012): 519–41.

writers, it is not from what they wrote, but from their physical deterritorialization of themselves from the Peninsula and their literary occupation of Manchuria. Like nomads who leave because they refuse to be captured by a state order, these Korean writers, unwilling for various reasons to be captured by the assimilative imperial order, chose to go outside the boundaries of the order and to come to terms with a frontier imperial order that from their perspective was less oppressive. Manchukuo Korean literature, in this sense, is primarily and ultimately about a literary presence on the frontier, about the existential cry that Yōm uttered in his memorial article: “I’m here.”

To promote such a literature, Manchukuo Korean writers were aware of the importance of translation from the very beginning. In their proposals for the new “Manchurian-Korean literature,” many authors emphasized the necessity of incorporating the new literature into the multilingual Manchukuo literature and the importance of having it recognized as one of several ethnic literatures in Manchukuo. One way of accomplishing this, they suggested, was through literary translation. In other words, they considered translation as an admission ticket that would formally grant them cultural entrance to the frontier. Their tone was optimistic, and their optimism was justified at the time: 1940 was the year when the Manchukuo government started to integrate the region’s fragmented multilingual literatures into a total and totalizing “Manchukuo literature.” Manchukuo Japanese writers were active in translating works by Manchukuo Chinese writers into Japanese and publishing them in Japan. Through the mediation of Japanese language, Chinese works from Manchukuo were acknowledged and applauded by influential critics in the metropole.<sup>63</sup> In the same year, the representative Manchukuo Russian writer Baikov’s novel *The Great Wan: Story of an Amur Tiger* (1936) was translated into Japanese and the writer was treated

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<sup>63</sup> Ōuchi Takao, *Manshū bungaku 20nen* (Xinjing: Kokumin Gahōsha, 1944), 269.

cordially by high-ranking Manchukuo officials in Xinjing.<sup>64</sup> Towards the end of the year, the Japanese further translated and published the first collection of multiethnic Manchukuo literature, *Collection of Selected Short Stories by Japanese, Chinese, and Russian Writers in Manchukuo* (*Nichi-Man-Ro zaiman sakka tanpen senshū*, 日満露在満短編選集), in Tokyo.<sup>65</sup> More immediately relevant to the Korean writers, in April 1940, *Manchuria and Korea Daily* invited Japanese and Chinese writers and cultural officials and organized a roundtable discussion with local Korean writers in order to promote Korean literature in Manchukuo.<sup>66</sup> During the discussion, Korean writers repeatedly inquired about the possibility of translation. The Japanese participants assured them that if the Korean writers translated their works into Japanese, the Japanese colleagues would help publish their work in their journals. A Chinese participant further added that the Chinese writers could then translate the Japanese translations into Chinese and publish them in Chinese journals as well. It seemed that a rosy future for Manchukuo Korean literature was on the horizon.

Their expectations were soon met with frustration. In 1941, the first collection of Manchukuo Korean literature, *The Burgeoning Land: Collections of Works by Korean Writers in Manchuria* (*Ssak t'ünün taeji: chaeman Chosönin chakp'umjip* 짹트는 대지: 재만 조선인 작품집, 1941), was published by the *Manchuria and Korea Daily* Press. In the foreword, Yōm Sang-sōp celebrated the collection as “a big harvest” of Korean literature.<sup>67</sup> Yōm believed that works in the collection, decently presented, would attract the attention of Manchurian-Japanese and Chinese

<sup>64</sup> “Baikuofu Zhuan,” *Qingnian wenhua* 1, no. 3 (1943): 44–5.

<sup>65</sup> Yamada Seizaburō et. al., eds., *Nichi-Man-Ro zaiman sakka tanpen senshū* (Tokyo, Shun'yōdō Shoten, 1940). It was published in December 1940.

<sup>66</sup> “Nae Sōn Man Munhwa chwadamhoe,” *Mansōn Ilbo* April 5–11.

<sup>67</sup> Yōm Sang-sōp, “Sō,” in *Ssak t'ünün taeji: chaeman Chosönin chakp'umjip*, ed. Sim Yōng-ch'ol (Xinjing: Mansōn Ilbo Ch'ulp'ansa, 1941), 3.

writers for translation. But nothing happened as he had expected.<sup>68</sup> In 1942, a *Collection of Selected Creative Works by Writers of Different Races in Manchukuo* (*Manshūkoku kaku minzoku sōsaku senshū* 1 滿洲国各民族創作選集 1, 1942) was published in Japan. Co-initiated and co-edited by Kawabata Yasunari, a prominent cultural figure in modern Japan, the collection includes works by Manchukuo Japanese writers as well as Japanese translations of works by Manchukuo-Chinese and Russian writers, but nothing by Manchukuo Korean writers.<sup>69</sup> In the following years, several other Korean collections were published in Manchukuo but also passed unnoticed by the Japanese. In 1943, An Su-kil published his single-authored collection *The North Field*. As mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, in the foreword to the collection, Yōm made a strong appeal for the translation of works in this collection as well as works by other Manchurian-Korean writers in order to introduce them to other peoples in Manchukuo; but again, no one responded to his appeal. In 1944, a second *Collection of Selected Creative Works by Writers of Different Races in Manchukuo* (*Manshūkoku kaku minzoku sōsaku senshū* 2 滿洲国各民族創作選集 2, 1942) was published in Japan, also co-initiated and co-edited by Kawabata Yasunari.<sup>70</sup> This time, the collection even included one work by a Manchukuo-Mongolian writer, and yet Korean writers were still excluded. The Manchukuo regime ended in 1945, together with the Manchurian-Korean writers' hope of seeing their works translated in Japanese.

Scholars have extensively discussed this peculiar absence of Manchukuo Korean literature in Manchukuo literature collections. Most scholars focus on the Japanese side to provide tentative answers to the question of why the Japanese writers and editors did not want to include Manchukuo

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<sup>68</sup> Yōm Sang-sōp, Yōm Sang-sōp, “*Pugwōn sōmun*,” 616.

<sup>69</sup> Kawabata Yasunari, *Manshūkoku kaku minzoku sōsaku senshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, Sōgensha, 1942).

<sup>70</sup> Kawabata Yasunari, *Manshūkoku kaku minzoku sōsaku senshū*, vol. 2, ed. Kawabata Yasunari (Tokyo, Sōgensha, 1944).

Korean literature in their notion of “multiethnic Manchukuo literature.” Quoting the Korean scholar Kim Chae-yong, Annika Culver argues that the Japanese have always viewed Manchurian Koreans as an intractable presence because of their long history of participation in the independence movement against Japanese colonial rule. Accordingly, including works by Manchukuo Korean writers with a clear emphasis on their Koreanness in collections of Manchukuo literature would have been considered “dangerous.” Moreover, Culver points out that the publication of collections of Manchukuo literature in Japanese translation in the metropole would have figuratively marked the integration of Manchukuo into the Japanese imperial system. Kawabata Yasunari, the general editor of both collections, makes it clear in his foreword to the second collection that the book represents “the important practice for a Great East Asian literature” and sets a model for Japan’s future cultural construction in the South, Japan’s newly acquired colony.<sup>71</sup> In the context of the entire empire, the so-called Korean literature had already been assimilated into the Japanese writing of imperial locality by then. On this imperial horizon, the erection of a Korean literature written in Korean and only *translated* into Japanese, even as an ethnic literature in Manchukuo, would appear jarring and confusing, and might send a message the Japanese would find undesirable.

My investigation of the Korean aspect of the literary gap, from the perspective of the Korean writers’ literary territorialization of the frontier, supports, supplements, and further complicates these discussions. A close reading of Yōm’s foreword to *The North Field* shows that a territorial contestation on the cultural and symbolic front was taking place between the Korean writers’ desperate desire to have their works translated and their Japanese colleagues’ sheer indifference to

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<sup>71</sup> Kawabata Yasunari, “dainikan jo,” in *Manshūkoku kaku minzoku sōsaku senshū* vol. 2, 4–5. For the whole discussion, see Annika Culver, *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 180–90.

this desire. The following excerpt, immediately preceding Yǒm's complaint about the absence of translation for their works, is most revealing:

It has been three or four years since a Manchukuo national literature and art was given birth in Manchukuo, but Korean writers are still drifting outside the circle. No matter on which side the cause and reason lie, the phenomenon is absolutely abnormal....[included in the collection] are literary works written by a Manchukuo citizen about life in Manchuria; so even though they are written in Korean, they are nevertheless brilliant pieces of Manchukuo literature. They of course should be sent to the Manchukuo literary world first and the Manchukuo literature and art circle should be the first one to accept it. It is not that Manchurian Koreans particularly favor works written in Korean, but it just does not make sense to ignore the Manchukuo literary world and first run to the Korean literary world. If the Manchukuo literary world is indifferent [to our literature] because they are in Korean, then my resentment will go to the Manchukuo literary world and I believe the Manchukuo literary world will receive it with good will.<sup>72</sup>

Here, Yǒm argues for a dissociation of Manchukuo Korean literature from the peninsular literary world and a determination to bring it into the realm of Manchukuo literature. Although Manchukuo Korean writers proposed to publish their works in Manchuria instead of Korea from the very beginning, Yǒm's statement here seems to target a more specific point of view. This point of view—the source of which is unrevealed in the article—believes Manchukuo Korean literature belongs to the peninsular literary world and refuses to accept it into the Manchukuo literary world. Likely this is the point of view held by the Japanese, or by an authority higher than Yǒm, rather than by members of the community of Manchukuo Korean writers. In other words, while these border-crossing Korean writers were then physically located in Manchuria, the debate focused on whether their literature should occupy a space locally. For early Korean writers, like Ch'oe Sō-hae, who favored a Peninsula-centered Korean literature of Manchuria, it seemed natural to have a physical life in the frontier land while sending their literary work back to the Peninsula. However, for Manchukuo Korean writers who aimed for a literary occupation of the frontier, it was crucial

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<sup>72</sup> Yǒm Sang-sōp, “*Pugwǒn sōmun*,” 616.

that their literature stay with their bodies and claim a space in the Manchukuo literary world.

In 1943, when Yōm wrote this essay, associating Manchukuo Korean literature with the peninsular literary world seemed a detrimental strategy to Yōm and his likeminded peers. By then, the peninsular literary world had already been dominated by Japanese writing and, as we mentioned earlier, it was a time when writers in the Peninsula were contacting their frontier colleagues to request opportunities to publish in Manchukuo. The Manchukuo Korean writers' Korean works, therefore, were unlikely to find space for publication in the Peninsula. What is worse, the cultural and political climate in the Peninsula had begun to assimilate Manchukuo Korean literature in terms of its ideological orientation, as some Manchukuo Korean writers abandoned their ethnic Korean identity and started to portray Manchurian-Korean immigrants as Japanese imperial subjects.<sup>73</sup> For these reasons, in the foreword Yōm expresses a complete rejection of the point of view that associates Manchukuo Korean literature with the peninsular literary world. Heavily dressed in a Manchukuo ideology, he insists on positioning Manchukuo Korean literature as one of the many ethnic literatures in the Manchukuo literary world.

In this context, translation marked a crucial form of recognition for Manchukuo Korean writers. It is true in more than a philosophical sense that any territory entails recognition from an authoritative other. Yōm certainly understood that translation of their works in Manchukuo would signify the authoritative acknowledgment of the frontier cultural territory defined by the Korean writing of an ethnic Korean identity in Manchukuo. Had translations of their works been included in the two collections of Manchukuo literature published in the metropole, the translation would have signified acknowledgment not only from the Manchukuo authorities but also from the empire. However, what mattered practically to Yōm and his colleagues was that only by having their works

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<sup>73</sup> Kim Chae-yong, “Ilche mal Han'gugin ūi Manju insik,” in *Manbosan sakōn kwa Han'guk kündae munhak*, 17–25.

translated and introduced in Manchukuo could they sever themselves from the literary and political influence of the Peninsula and maintain their literary ground on the frontier. Translation, in this case, marks recognition and, more importantly, differentiation; what they truly feared was not being passed over as unknown, but being associated with a type of literature they had gone so far to disavow.

In this respect, a quick review of the ambivalent identity of the Manchurian Koreans in general is helpful. In social life, Manchukuo Koreans all held dual nationality in Manchukuo and in the General Government of Korea. This situation indicated that they were never solely ethnic Koreans in Manchukuo but were also imperial subjects of the Japanese empire.<sup>74</sup> As Hyun Ok Park neatly points out in his sociological study of Korean agrarian communities in Manchuria, “dual nationality represented the incompatibility of national membership in the Korean and Manchukuo states rather than enjoyment of membership in both.” While they were recognized as Manchukuo citizens, their rights were nevertheless limited due to Koreans’ inferior status throughout the empire as colonized and assimilated people.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Manchukuo Korean literature also suffered from a malleable identity and had multiple definitions. While Yǒm, An, and many other writers were trying hard to claim a literary space on the frontier, they were constantly pushed back to the peninsular literary world by the force Yǒm addressed in his essay, likely the Japanese point of view. Both positions could be justified based on the legal identity of the Manchukuo Koreans. Accordingly, it took extra effort and repetitive emphasis of their Manchukuo identity for Korean writers to differentiate themselves from authors in the Peninsula, and a strong appeal for translation to garner an authoritative confirmation of such differentiation.

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<sup>74</sup> Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of The North Korean Revolution*, chapter 4 and p. 137 in particular.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, my close reading of Yōm's foreword and other materials suggests that what the Manchukuo Korean writers desired was not just any translation of their works, but a translation that was initiated and undertaken by the Japanese or the Chinese—not by themselves. I argue that it is this particular need that truly manifests the Manchukuo Korean writers' dilemma with regard to translation. My investigation starts with the conspicuous statement in Yōm's foreword quoted above: "no matter on which side the cause and reason lies, the phenomenon is absolutely abnormal." Why are fault and responsibility indeterminable here? If the Korean writers had desired translation so intensely, should it not be the case that they had made every possible attempt to promote translation and that the "cause and reason" for their exclusion from the Manchukuo literary world came from the Japanese side? The ambiguous tone in Yōm's statement suggests otherwise, that in practice both the Manchukuo Japanese writers and Korean writers showed only tepid attitudes to translation.

In retrospect, Yōm's statement corresponds well to the roundtable discussion sponsored by the *Manchurian and Korean Daily* back in the 1940. In the discussion, the Japanese and the Korean participants faulted each other for lacking motivation in promoting Manchukuo Korean literature. Some of the most conspicuous conversations are as follows:

Sugimura [Yūzō] [Japanese]: So you don't want to enter the literary world in mainland Japan?

Pak P'ar-yang [Korean]: This is because we don't have an opportunity to do enter.  
Sugimura: There's no such thing like that. Isn't it because you guys did not show enough intention to actively participate (in the literary world in mainland Japan)?

Pak P'ar-yang: The relations are tricky here. We as Korean writers of course want to enter, but we don't have a collaborative relationship with publishing capitals in mainland Japan.

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Yoshino [Haruo] [Japanese]: Anyway, we think you Korean writers were so indifferent to Japanese writing and do not put an effort even in translation. At least in Manchukuo, if Korean writers themselves do not make the effort to translate and introduce their own literature, there will be little opportunity for the Manchukuo literary world to get to know

Korean literature.

Pak P'ar-yang: I've already mentioned that it's because of the lack of mutual communication. It is not that we Korean writers don't want to do so.

Jue Qing [Chinese]: We also want to know Korean literature. But we Manchurians [referring to Manchukuo Chinese] do not know the language; neither do the Japanese. So if Korean writers can introduce their works into Japanese themselves, then we Manchurian writers, who are good at Japanese translation, can further translate them into Manchurian [referring to Chinese]. Isn't it the case?

Kim Yǒng-p'al [Korean]: OK. So the Manchukuo literary world, that is, the Manchurian-Japanese Cultural Association and the Manchukuo Association of Literary and Speech will show goodwill to those translations?

Sugimura: What do you mean by "goodwill?" Our Manchurian-Japanese Association is a government association that goes beyond the racial difference among all people in Manchukuo, so you don't need to worry about that.

In analyzing this colonial roundtable discussion, Nayoung Aimee Kwon argues that the seemingly intimate space for mutual sharing between the colonizer and the colonized in fact often exposed tensions and failures arising from fundamentally differing visions.<sup>76</sup> The roundtable discussion quoted above, sponsored and published by the Manchukuo Koreans rather than the Japanese, exposed even more. There was essentially no trust between the Korean and the Japanese participants. The Koreans doubted whether the Japanese would indeed publish the translations, and the Japanese accused the Korean writers of making no effort to translate. After several rounds of "mutual sharing" in the form of accusations, the three parties finally reached an agreement that if Manchukuo Korean writers would first translate their works into Japanese, Manchukuo Japanese writers would help publish their work, and Manchukuo Chinese writers would help publish them in Chinese.

This seemingly satisfactory agreement apparently had problems; otherwise translations would have appeared. On the Korean writers' part, disappointment came from the fact that they were supposed to initiate the translation project and actually translate their own work themselves.

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<sup>76</sup> Nayoung Aimee Kiwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan*, 131.

In a memorial article written in the 1980s, An Su-kil recalls the unfortunate situation concerning the translation and introduction of Manchukuo Korean literature as follows: “the Japanese writers translated works, published them in their own journals, and even published single-authored collections for the Chinese writers, but they made no contact with our writers and we did not insist on this kind of thing either.”<sup>77</sup> Yǒm’s foreword to *The Northern Field*, written in 1943, also presents a subtle resistance to the Japanese proposal. It criticizes his Korean colleagues for not being active enough in promoting their literature, but Yǒm’s own attitude to the matter is also rather reserved; he does not call for his fellow writers to engage in translation and work with the Japanese on publication. On the contrary, when he argues for the promotion of translation, he always keeps the subject of translation unclear: for example “if our cultural activities only reach the Koreans” and “we had expected that two or three pieces from *The Burgeoning Land* would be translated and introduced in Japanese or Chinese.” Here, the passive voice—“be translated”—forms a sharp contrast to the active voice used by the Japanese in the roundtable discussion held years earlier. In the discussion, the Japanese had repeatedly emphasized that “you Korean writers should translate your works yourselves.” Yǒm appears to have been waiting for someone outside their community to translate and introduce their works.

An easy way to explain Manchukuo Korean writers’ inertia in pursuing translation is that they wanted the Japanese to take the initiative to contact them; in other words, they were waiting for the Japanese to treat them in the same way as the Japanese treated other non-Japanese writers in Manchukuo. As An recalls with indignation, Manchukuo Japanese writers were very active in translating and introducing Manchukuo Chinese literature. Manchukuo Chinese writers had never produced creative works in Japanese, nor had they translated their own works into Japanese,

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<sup>77</sup> An Su-kil, “Yongchōng Sinkyōng sidae,” 647–8.

although some of them were perfectly able to do so.<sup>78</sup> Works by Russian and Mongol writers, too, were translated by Japanese who knew their languages.<sup>79</sup> But the Japanese writers did not touch works by Korean writers. In the roundtable discussion quoted above, the Chinese participant Jue Qing stated that the work of translating Manchukuo Korean literature could only be done by the Koreans themselves, because the Chinese and the Japanese did not know their language. In general, it is true that the Japanese rarely had the interest or opportunity to learn Korean during the colonial period.<sup>80</sup> But this was not necessarily the case in Manchukuo. Among Manchukuo Japanese writers, one Imamura Eiji was actually Korean and knew some Korean language even though he identified himself as Japanese and wrote in Japanese.<sup>81</sup> In any case, it was important for the Korean writers to receive the same treatment that their Chinese, Russian, and Mongol counterparts in Manchukuo received. When the project of translating and introducing non-Japanese literatures in Manchukuo was initiated by the Japanese, it signified their acknowledgment of the collective identity embodied in those literatures as an *other*, as belonging to a group essentially different from the Japanese. This was precisely what Yǒm, An, and many other Manchukuo Korean writers hoped to achieve by writing in Korean on the frontier.

The deeper problem involved in the Korean writers' hesitation to pursue translation concerns

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<sup>78</sup> In chapter 2, I discussed how Gu Ding refused his Japanese friends' suggestion that he write in Japanese although his Japanese was good enough to do so. Another Manchukuo Chinese writer, Jue Qing, was also known for his proficiency in Japanese.

<sup>79</sup> For a detailed comparison of Manchukuo Japanese writers' different attitudes towards Manchukuo Chinese, Russian, and Mongolian literature and towards Manchukuo Korean literature, see Kim Chae-yong, "Tong Asiajōk maengnak esō pon Manjuguk Chosōnin munhak," in *Munmyōng ūl c'unggyōk kwa kündae Tong Asia ūi pyōnhwan*, ed. Yi Hae-yōng and Yi Sang-u (Kwangmyong: Kyōngjin, 2010), 282–6.

<sup>80</sup> Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature*, 132–3.

<sup>81</sup> For more about Imamura Eiji, see Okada Hideki, "Manshūkoku no chōsenjin sakka Imamura Eiji," *Bungaku ni miru "Manshūkoku" no isō* (Tōkyō: Kenbun Shuppan, 2000), 279–82; Kim Chang-sōn, "Imamura Eichi yōn'gu," *Manju munhak yōn'gu* 29–50.

the political implications of intra-imperial literary translation. Here, a comparison between views on translation held by the Manchukuo Korean writers and their peninsular colleagues is illuminating. In 1940, the same year the Manchukuo Korean writers proposed the “new Manchurian-Korean literature” and promoted translation, the “Korea boom” (*Chosŏn pum*) struck Tokyo—a boom of Japanese translation of works from the Korean Peninsula.<sup>82</sup> In this year, a large number of Korean works of fiction were translated into Japanese, published in Japan, and reviewed by authoritative Japanese critics. Both the collection *Representative Works of Korean Fiction* and the peninsular Korean writer Kim Sa-ryang’s translation practice, mentioned earlier, were part of this boom. During the boom, Japanese-speaking Korean writers were enthusiastic about translating their own and their colleagues’ work into Japanese. Kim Sa-ryang, for example, called for Korean intellectuals in Tokyo to form a “translation club” and translate their fellow writers’ works; moreover, he also offered to reach out himself to find support from Japanese publishers.<sup>83</sup> However, the Korea boom lasted for merely a year before writers turned to writing directly in Japanese. For colonial Korean writers, the line between translating their Korean works into Japanese themselves and writing directly in Japanese was just too thin. Scholars today generally view the Korea boom as a precursor of the total literary integration of Korean literature as a local, rural, or provincial part of Japanese imperial literature. It prepared Korean writers to write directly in Japanese for a Japanese readership on the one hand, while it prepared Japanese readers to accept literature from Korea as a local part of the imperial literature on the other.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> For general information about the boom, see Nakane Takayuki, “Chihō to shite no Chōsen, jōkyōsuru sakka,” in *“Chōsen” hyōshō no bunkashi: kindai Nihon to tasha o meguru chi no shokuminchika* (Tokyo, Shin'yōsha, 2004),

<sup>83</sup> Kim Sa-ryang, “Chōsen bungaku fūgetsuron,” *Kin Shiryō zenshū IV* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1973), 14–6; “Chōsen bunka tsūshin,” *Kin Shiryō zenshū IV*, 28–30.

<sup>84</sup> Yun Tae-sōk, “1940-yōndae Han'guk esō ūi pōnyōk,” 317–20.

Situated in Manchuria, Yǒm and An had enough opportunity to sense the danger embedded in this kind of self-initiated translation project. In addition to witnessing the ephemeral Korean boom, they had noted alarming moments in the roundtable discussion in Manchuria in 1940. While the Japanese participants agreed to publish translations of Korean works on the one hand, they kept peppering their Korean colleagues with questions that implied linguistic assimilation on the other, such as “so, do Korean writers consider Japanese writing as heresy, or as mainstream?” And “do Korean middle school graduates read Korean better, or do they read Japanese better?” As we have seen, for the Japanese both in and outside Manchukuo, Korean writers’ translation of their work into Japanese and their conversion to Japanese writing were two contiguous stages that led towards the goal of imperial assimilation. Manchukuo writers like Yǒm and An were apparently not interested in translation of this kind, although Yǒm was a near-native Japanese speaker and writer and was fully capable of translating his and his frontier colleagues’ work.<sup>85</sup>

In his discussion of translation and subjectivity in modern Japan, Naoki Sakai argues that translation was irreparably associated with “the emergence of Japanese language and Japanese ethnicity” because the regime of translation “gave rise to the possibility of conceiving of a spoken ordinary language...as distinguished from and in contrast to the language(s) of ... China.”<sup>86</sup> For the Japanese, and during the time period Sakai examines, the representation of translation “enables the representation of ethnic or national subjects,” for it “transforms difference in repetition into species difference (*diaphora*) between two specific identities.”<sup>87</sup> In the case of the colonial Korean

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<sup>85</sup> Yǒm had studied in Japan from age fifteen to twenty-three. He went to Japan in 1912 and finished middle school and high school in Tokyo. He then briefly studied at Keio University and returned Korea in 1920. In 1926, in his early thirties, he went to Japan again and studied Japanese literature in Tokyo for another two years. See Kim Yun-sik, *Yǒm Sang-sōp yǒn'gu* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 1987), and 359–64 in particular.

<sup>86</sup> Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 2.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 15.

writers in both Korea and Manchukuo, however, translating their work into Japanese themselves would not provide the same differentiating function. As a group of colonized people, whatever differences they could address through translation would be easily manipulated by the Japanese imperialists to serve as parameters that integrated, rather than differentiated, the two identities behind the translated and translating languages. Such was the logic of intra-imperial translation. Korean writer-translators like Kim Sa-ryang who were active primarily in Korea and Japan had no choice but to come to terms with this logic.<sup>88</sup>

However, doing so would have been impossible for Manchukuo Korean writers who had occupied a territory outside the sphere of the Japanese assimilation policy and who had been trying hard to dissociate themselves from the literary world in the Peninsula. For them, translating their work themselves would have represented everything they wanted to reject. The moment they started to translate, they would be giving up the very purpose that had made them desire translation in the first place. The only kind of translation they wanted had to be initiated and practiced by the Japanese. Only in this way could the linguistic difference brought out in translation be physicalized, through the different identities of the translators and writers, as a difference between specific kinds and not simply a repetition. But this kind of translation was unacceptable to the Japanese because it essentially violated the Japanese imperial order.

As a result, the cause of introducing Manchukuo Korean literature to a broader readership through translation, of expanding the Manchukuo Koreans' cultural territory so as to seek recognition of it, was doomed to end in a deadlock from the very beginning. Looking back to the

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<sup>88</sup> Note that in individual practice, the Korean writers' self-translation does not always conform to colonial assimilation. Satoru Hashimoto's research shows that although translation is generally represented as conformist, Kim Sa-ryang's self-translation in practice exposes rather than mediates the irreducible difference between the Japanese and the Korean. Satoru Hashimoto, "Afterlives of the Culture: Engaging with the Trans-East Asian Cultural Tradition in Modern Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese Literatures, 1880s–1940s," 325–40.

1940 roundtable discussion, one realizes that the concerns of both the Japanese and the Korean participants proved justified: the Japanese indeed did not intend to translate and introduce works by Manchukuo Korean writers to other peoples in Manchukuo or to people in the imperial metropole, and the Koreans were indeed not as active as the Japanese hoped in promoting translation.

The Manchukuo Korean writers' obsession with translation—their desire for it, their anxiety about it, and perhaps their awareness of its impossibility—reveals the historical and theoretical possibilities and limits of the Korean writers' project of establishing a frontier cultural territory as an alternative national space. Historically, Manchukuo Korean writers lived in a transitory stage of a broader process of frontier closure in East Asia, a stage in which the macro imperial order of the empire and the micro national order of Manchukuo coexisted on the frontier. This situation provided Manchukuo Korean writers an opportunity to challenge the imperial order by strategically appropriating the national order for their own ends, but it also made them an unfortunate and unwelcome embodiment of the irreconcilable contradiction between the two orders in the Japanese imperial system. Manchukuo Korean writers were confronted with a predicament that propels us to rethink the viability of the strategy of establishing a cultural territory outside the nation as an alternative national space in a time of national crisis. For such a strategy to fulfill its full significance, the frontier literature in question must acquire meaning not only within the frontier but also in relation to the nation located outside the frontier. In other words, the strategy entails a process of translation in a social sense, that is, a translation of a frontier meaning into a national meaning. However, as the case of Manchukuo Korean literature has shown, a number of factors prevented such translation. These factors included oppression from precisely the power that had pushed the nation into crisis in the first place and many other obstacles that would

arise in the local environment where the alternative cultural territory was situated.

### **Intimacy and Distance: The Chinese Translation of An Su-kil's "The Kitchen Girl"**

In 1941, Wu Lang, the chief editor of *New Manchuria* (*Xin Manzhou* 新滿洲), an influential Manchukuo Chinese journal, planned to publish a “Feature of Works by Manchukuo Japanese, Manchurian, Korean, and Russian Writers” (*zaiman Ri Man Xian E gexi zuojia zhan teji* 在滿日  
滿鮮俄各系作家展特輯) in the journal.<sup>89</sup> He contacted a Manchukuo Korean writer and journalist residing in Xinjing for recommendations of works by Manchukuo Korean writers. This writer recommended An Su-kil and arranged a meeting between An and Wu. Before long, the Chinese translation of An's short story, “The Kitchen Girl,” appeared in the journal. Although not by the Japanese authority, it was nevertheless the first and only translation of any piece of Manchukuo Korean literature throughout the Manchukuo period. Set against the absence of translation of Manchukuo Korean literature into Japanese, this translation from Korean to Chinese does not necessarily indicate the formation of an anticolonial alliance between the Manchukuo Chinese and the Manchukuo Koreans. Rather, I argue that it resulted from an opportunity arising from the environment of a multinational contestation on the frontier for the Manchukuo Korean writers who desperately desired acknowledgment. That being said, translation between the two colonized languages without a visible mediation of the colonial lingua franca was in itself a challenge to the colonial cultural structure. The fact that this translation project involved all kinds of misconceptions, miscommunications, misunderstandings and misrepresentations indicates that

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<sup>89</sup> *Xin Manzhou* 3, no. 11 (1941). For more details about how Wu and An collaborated on the translation, see Kim Chang-sōn, *Manju munhak yǒn'gu* (Seoul: Yǒngnak, 2009), 75–86.

it marks a successful breakthrough of different types of structural limits inherent in the colonial culture. In this translated text, we witness both the intimacy and the distance between the two dominated peoples in a colonial frontier.

*New Manchuria* was the leading Chinese-language cultural journal in Manchukuo. It lasted from 1939 to 1945. The journal, like *Manchuria and Korea Daily* and most long-lasting periodicals in Manchukuo, had an official background. It was published by the Manchuria Book Corporation, the government-assigned publisher for textbooks and books on national policies, and therefore the first several pages of each issue were always dedicated to treatises on Manchukuo cultural policies.<sup>90</sup> *New Manchuria* published a decent collection of literary works in each issue. Entering the 1940s, as many smaller Chinese journals perished due to the centralization of publication in Manchukuo, *New Manchuria* secured a good team of writers, and works it published were once described as “works representative of Manchukuo” by a contemporary critic.<sup>91</sup> The chief editor of the journal, Wu Lang (吳郎 1912–1957), was an authoritative literary critic in the Manchukuo Chinese literary world. In 1943, he was invited to attend the second *Greater Asian Writers’ Conference*, the premier writers’ conference in the Japanese Empire, as a representative from Manchukuo.<sup>92</sup>

In materializing this translation project, the Chinese and the Korean writers had separate motivations. We do not know exactly what led Wu to publish a “Feature of Works by Manchukuo Japanese, Manchurian, Korean, and Russian Writers” in 1941; still, evidence shows that a political

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<sup>90</sup> For more information about the journal New Manchuria, see Liu Xiaoli, *Yitai shikong zhong de jingshen shijie: Weimanzhouguo wenxue yanjiu* (Shanghai: China Eastern Normal University Press, 2008), 10–65.

<sup>91</sup> Ding Lin, “Kangde shi nian du shang ban nian xin manzhou wen yi zhi wo guan.” *Xin Manzhou* 9 (1943): 98.

<sup>92</sup> For more about the Greater East Asian Writers Conference, see Ying Xiong, *Representing Empire: Japanese Colonial Literature in Taiwan and Manchuria*, 308–11.

competition in cultural form with the Japanese was at work. In addition to introducing Manchukuo Korean literature, the literature that had always been neglected by the Japanese, the feature also displays an ordering of the works different from that in the Japanese collections. As has been mentioned earlier, in 1940, Manchukuo Japanese writers translated and published a *Collection of Selected Short Stories by Japanese, Chinese, and Russian Writers in Manchukuo* in Tokyo. It includes eight short stories ordered in the following way: Japanese-Russian-Chinese-Japanese-Japanese-Russian-Japanese-Chinese. Overall, Japanese works come first, and then Russian, and then Chinese. In the next two Manchukuo literature collections published in 1942 and 1944, Japanese works also came first. In the feature Wu edited and published in *New Manchuria* in November 1941, however, the order of the works was Russian-Korean-Japanese-Chinese. Works by their very own Chinese writer appear last, indicating courtesy to other frontier cultures. Works by the Japanese writer were placed second to last. These minor details of the feature indicate a reinterpretation of the “five ethnicities in harmony” culture of Manchukuo that is different from the Japanese interpretation.

In fact, from 1941 to 1943, *New Manchuria* published several features and articles involving multiple cultures in Manchukuo. In January 1943, during the New Year and Lunar New Year season, the journal published an article titled “Harmonious Customs of the New Year” (“xiehe de niansu” 協和的年俗).<sup>93</sup> The word “harmonious” echoes the key word “harmony” in “five ethnicities in harmony.” The article introduces the New Year customs of four peoples in Manchukuo in the following order: Russian, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. It is exactly the same order as in the “Feature of Works by Manchukuo Japanese, Manchurian, Korean, and Russian Writers.” The article effectively embodies the national policy of Manchukuo while subtly

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<sup>93</sup> Shu Jia, “Xiehe de niansu,” *Xin Manzhou* 5, no. 1 (1943): 102–4.

rearranging the order of the “races.” In September 1943, the journal carried another feature addressing “five ethnicities in harmony”: “Life in the Final War by Women from Five ethnicities” (“Wuzu nüxing juezhan shenghuo pu” 五族少女決戰生活譜).<sup>94</sup> The cover page of the feature is shown in Figure 2:

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<sup>94</sup> “Wuzu nüxing juezhan shenghuo pu,” *Xin Manzhou* 3, no. 9 (1943): 102–8.



Figure 2. Cover page of the column “The Chart on The Life during the Decisive War by Women of Five ethnicities” (“Wuzu nüxing juezhan shenghuo pu” 五族少女決戰生活譜), *New Manchuria*, 1943.9, p102.

The five vertical boxes at the bottom list the authors of the articles included in the feature from the right to the left: Miss Diyuan Zhizi (Japanese); Miss Zhang Minghe (Korean); Miss Salangeer (Mongolian); Miss Qiumakouwa (Russian); Miss Yang Ruixue (Man [Chinese]). This time, the

Japanese comes first, but the boxes do not match the picture above. The original painting of this picture, titled “Picture of Five ethnicities in Harmony” (*gozoku kyōwa zu* 五族協和図), hangs on a wall inside the front gate of the building of the Manchukuo State Council, the highest administrative department of Manchukuo (see Figure 3):



Figure 3. Picture of Five ethnicities in Harmony (五族協和圖; *gozoku kyōwa zu/ wu zu xie he tu*), Okada Saburōsuke, 1936.

Highlighted in this foundational picture are girls from the following races: Han, Manchu, Japanese, Korean, Mongol, from left to right. In this depiction, Han Chinese and Manchu Chinese are distinguished, and Russian representation has gone missing. Especially in the early years of Manchukuo, in an effort to weaken Chinese nationalism and strengthen their sovereignty claim over Manchuria based on the idea of “national self-determination,” the Japanese endeavored to distinguish the Han Chinese from the Manchu Chinese and elevate the position of Manchu Chinese.<sup>95</sup> As the regime was consolidated, the constitution of the five ethnicities became flexible.

<sup>95</sup> The Japanese reestablished the Manchu Emperor of the Qing dynasty, the dynasty that had been overthrown by

In cultural realms such as literature, Manchu Chinese and Han Chinese gradually merged into the one category of *man*; this occurred because in terms of language and literature there was little difference between them. In any case, for Han Chinese intellectuals in Manchukuo, the constitution of the five ethnicities had never been flexible: throughout the regime they seldom differentiated Manchu Chinese and Han Chinese as two races. We might read their view as a gesture of resistance against the Japanese rationalization of Manchukuo. The different takes on the constitution of “five ethnicities” in Manchukuo by the Japanese and the Chinese are explicit in the cover page of the feature.

To summarize, the features and articles involving multiple cultures in Manchukuo published in *New Manchuria* echo the Manchukuo ideology on the surface; however, a closer analysis shows that the editing team was in fact committed to taking the lead in reinterpreting the Manchukuo national policy of “five ethnicities in harmony” from a Chinese perspective. In this space of negotiation, the national relations in Manchukuo are subtly reshuffled and the colonial hierarchy is challenged. It is with this motivation that Manchukuo Korean literature, as well as the Korean culture in Manchukuo in general, was introduced to the scene.

As for An, the Manchukuo Korean writer, the major consideration in having his work translated and published in Chinese was of course the introduction of Manchukuo Korean literature to the Manchukuo literary world. This is evident from the particular story he chose.<sup>96</sup> The protagonist of the story is a poor girl from a Korean village. After marrying a rich man, she is severely persecuted by his family members. She falls in love with a laborer in the neighborhood and he suggests they flee to Manchuria. She refuses, but her relationship with the laborer is

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the Republican government in 1912, as the puppet emperor of Manchukuo.

<sup>96</sup> The story being translated was likely An’s own choice. Kim Chang-sŏn, *Manju munhak yǒn’gu* (Seoul: Yǒngnak, 2009), 84–5.

disclosed to her mother-in-law. She is then sent back to her own parents. When she cries in grief, children from the neighborhood blame her for not being determined enough to run away to Manchuria with her lover. Many scholars wonder why An chose this story for translation. It is hardly his most representative work, nor is it the best work to represent Manchukuo Korean literature. His best and most representative works are mostly realistic descriptions of the life of Korean immigrants in Manchuria. But as we have seen in Kim Tong-in's case, works about Korean immigration to Manchuria almost inevitably involve negative characterization of the local Chinese. Indeed, at roughly the same time that he submitted "The Kitchen Girl" to the Chinese journal, he was writing another novella titled "The Rice" ("Pyō" 麥, 1941) that was based on the Wanbaoshan Incident. In this widely acclaimed story, the Chinese authority in Manchukuo is portrayed as the victimizer of Manchukuo Korean agrarian immigrants.<sup>97</sup> In contrast, in "The Kitchen Girl," Manchuria is depicted not as the stage where a harsh immigrant life unfolds but as a land of hope and free love in the imagination of a poor girl in Korea. Behind An's choice of this short and benign story for translation into Chinese was his careful consideration of its reception by Manchukuo Chinese readers. Here we again witness the complexity of Manchukuo Korean literature in terms of national relations and the influence of national relations on the translation and dissemination of literature in Manchuria.

Like other Manchukuo Korean writers, An was centrally concerned with highlighting Koreanness. The story "The Kitchen Girl," short as it is, delineates a typical natural and social landscape in a Korean rural setting. A contemporary Manchukuo Korean critic praised it for its "distinct local color with a pleasant and delicate flavor."<sup>98</sup> Moreover, in An's postwar memorial

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<sup>97</sup> An Su-kil, *Pyō*, *Mansōn ilbo* November 16–December 25, 1941.

<sup>98</sup> Ch'oe Ki-jöng, "pip'yöng haengwi ūl modok e hanghayö (5)," *Mansōn ilbo* October 20, 1940, 4.

article, one thing he criticizes about the Chinese translation was that “the protagonist in ‘The Kitchen Girl’ is a Korean rural girl, but the illustration of the woman protagonist in the publication looks like a Chinese girl rather than a Korean girl.”<sup>99</sup> Indeed, on the first page of the Chinese translation, the illustration presents a girl with Chinese hair and clothing style. The fact that An had a clear memory of the illustration is phenomenal, because regarding this translation project, his memory is in general unreliable. In the memorial article he wrote in the postwar years, he remembered the titles of both the journal and the feature incorrectly.<sup>100</sup> And yet he could not forget that the Chinese illustrator had misrepresented the national identity of his protagonist. Clearly, he cared about whether his work was properly introduced to Manchukuo Chinese readers as representative of Korean literature and culture.

In any case, for An, the Chinese translation of his work—the only translation of Manchukuo Korean literature during the Manchukuo period—signifies the literature’s first and final entrance into the Manchukuo literary world. In An’s memorial article, he did not mention the two Japanese collections at all; rather, he recalled the Chinese translation in detail. He even misremembered the title of the feature as “Collection of Works by Different Races in Manchukuo” (*zaiman geminzu zuopinji* 在滿各民族作品集) instead of the correct “Feature of Works by Manchukuo Japanese, Manchurian, Korean, and Russian Writers.” The title An remembers is similar to the titles of the two Japanese collections: *Collection of Selected Creative Works by Writers of Different Races in Manchukuo* (*Manshūkoku kaku minzoku sōsaku senshū* 滿洲国各民族創作選集). Perhaps in An’s mind, the Chinese feature that included his work was the true collection of Manchukuo

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<sup>99</sup> An Su-kil, “Yongchōng Sinkyōng sidae,” 647.

<sup>100</sup> In his memory, the translation was published in the feature of “Collections of Works by Different Races in Manchukuo” (*zaiman geminzu zuopinji*) in the journal *New Sky and Land* (*xin tiandi*). Ibid.

literature.

In this way, starting from different points of departure, Wu and An collaborated on a textual encounter between the two languages and literatures. For An, this encounter opened the possibility of collaboration between Manchukuo Chinese and Manchukuo Korean writers and intellectuals, although it may not have constituted an anticolonial front. An remembers that when he met with Wu in Xinjing to discuss issues regarding the translation, he said, “we are in the same circumstances and let’s collaborate on literary activities” and that Wu answered, “right, right.”<sup>101</sup> We are not sure what he meant by “similar circumstances,” but likely it refers to the fact that both Manchukuo Chinese and Korean writers were under Japanese rule, and both groups could only promote their literary activities in collaboration with the Japanese. At the time, among Manchukuo Korean writers, it was a matter of common sense to acknowledge they were in a similar situation as the Manchukuo Chinese writers and they therefore could learn from their Chinese colleagues how to promote literature written in their national language within the framework of Manchukuo literature.<sup>102</sup> As seen above, when joining Wu in literary collaboration, An’s major concern was to bring Manchukuo Korean literature into the Manchukuo literary world; he was not interested in forming a resistance front with Chinese writers against colonial rule.

Wu was even less optimistic about this kind of literary collaboration than An was. As the editor of the feature, he realized how difficult such collaboration would actually be in the process of editing. In the postscript to the feature he complains,

At first everything about the plan seemed good, but I only figured out that this was in no way an easy task when I started to invite the writers. We did not have too many pages for the feature and we had to differentiate writers from different races, and so before long the editor was confronted with great difficulty in choosing the writers. There were even more problems

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Xie Qiong, “Bei hushi de ningshi: Manzhouguo nei xianman wenxue jiaoliu xinjie,” *Chūgoku tōhoku bunka kenkyū no hiroba*, forthcoming.

after that.<sup>103</sup>

We can gather from the translated text that one of the “more problems” Wu refers to was looking for translators. The quality of the Chinese translation of An’s story was mediocre, with quite a number of grammatically awkward sentences. It contrasts with the quality of the translation of the Japanese work included in the same feature, Shibutami Hyokichi’s (瀧民飄吉) “The House on the Taiping Street” (“Taiping jie de zhuzhai” 太平街的住宅), and with many other Chinese translations of Manchukuo Japanese literature that had been previously published in the same journal. The low quality of the translation suggests the absence of qualified literary translators from Korean to Chinese in Manchukuo.

We do not know what other problems Wu confronted in editing the feature. In the next year, as if to conclude his encounter with Manchukuo Koreans, he published an article titled “My Contact with Manchukuo Korean People” (“wo yu xianxi de chuyan”).<sup>104</sup> In the article he highly praises An Su-kil’s “The Kitchen Girl,” but complains that there was just too little communication between Manchukuo Chinese and Korean writers and intellectuals. He argues that a mutual understanding between different peoples is key to building up a culture of racial harmony, and he faults the Koreans for the problem:

In Manchuria, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the Korean people. I especially consider it important to know more about the Manchukuo Korean culture. The work of harmony entails knowing, understanding and comprehending. If this cannot be achieved, then we will not be able to accomplish the true objective of the work of harmony. . . .

Frankly speaking, most Korean people do not carry a spirit of unity in Manchuria. They sometimes even take advantage of their good conditions in Manchuria and isolate themselves from Manchukuo Chinese people. I think this is the most urgent problem to correct. Manchukuo Korean people should make good use of their position and their good conditions of harmony to take up a mediating position between Manchukuo Chinese and

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<sup>103</sup> *Xin Manzhou* 3, no. 11 (1941): 140.

<sup>104</sup> Wu Lang, “Wo yu xianxi de chuyan,” *Shengjing shibao* June 24, 1942.

Japanese and promote a result of harmony with them. This is the only way Manchukuo Koreans should go.

Unlike An, who showed a friendly attitude towards Wu and Manchukuo Chinese writers, Wu was very critical and quite pessimistic about the prospect of a collaborative relationship between Manchukuo Chinese and Korean intellectuals. The “good conditions” of the Korean people here refers to their identity as imperial subjects. As we have discussed earlier, Manchukuo Korean people held dual nationality in Manchukuo and had access to certain privileges exclusive to imperial subjects. Although studies have shown that their ambiguous national identity ultimately undermined rather than strengthened their rights, Wu’s article indicates the belief among Manchukuo Chinese people that Manchukuo Koreans had an advantage and were closer to the Japanese because of their higher position in the colonial hierarchy.<sup>105</sup> From what we have discussed so far, it is clear that as far as the literary realm was concerned, Wu’s conception of the Manchukuo Koreans was sheer misunderstanding.

In this case of frontier translation, therefore, we witness a successful collaboration between two dominated peoples, but also the distance between them. In the process of translation, the major concern of both peoples was to secure and strengthen their cultural power on the frontier. For Manchukuo Korean writers, Chinese translation marked the final acceptance of their literature in the Manchukuo literary world and the consequent acknowledgment of a Korean cultural territory on the frontier, although not through an authoritative mediation. For Manchukuo Chinese writers, to organize a feature of a multilingual Manchukuo literature in translation was to take the cultural leadership to manifest and interpret the Manchukuo national policy of “five ethnicities in harmony,” a work that was normally undertaken by the Japanese, from a Chinese perspective. The textual

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<sup>105</sup> For example, see Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution*, 133-9.

encounter in the translation can thus be seen as an intersection of the two frontier cultural spheres.

Nevertheless, I argue that a translation of a Korean work into Chinese in Manchukuo, as a literary translation between two colonial languages, in itself presented a challenge to the Japanese domination of the frontier. We are familiar with the metaphor of the core-periphery structure in an empire as an incomplete wheel with a hub and spokes but no rim. The key point of this structure is the absence of a rim, or of relations between the peripheral units in a colonial system.<sup>106</sup> In recent years, this model has been challenged by a new model using the metaphor of a web or a network that highlights the horizontal links among the colonized people.<sup>107</sup> Regarding the literary realm in the Japanese empire, Satoru Hashimoto's study shows to what extent and over how many obstacles writers from different Japanese colonies established communication with each other.<sup>108</sup> In his case studies, however, such communication was still primarily mediated by the Japanese language. In the case of the Chinese translation of the Korean story in Manchukuo, the lingua franca was done away with, at least in the final presentation of the publication.

From the perspective of colonial studies, it is clear that most of the difficulties Wu and An encountered in their collaboration were in fact structural problems inherent to the Japanese colonial culture. It was difficult for Wu to invite writers to join his project. First and foremost, this was because he did not have institutional support as the Manchukuo Japanese writers had. Manchukuo Japanese writers, through the official organization “Association of Literature and Speech” (*bunwakai* 文話会) and the “Union of Literature and Art” (*geibun renmei* 芸文連盟), were able

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<sup>106</sup> Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 1–18.

<sup>107</sup> This metaphor comes from Tony Ballantyne's book *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014). See “Introduction: Relocating Colonial Histories” in particular.

<sup>108</sup> Satoru Hashimoto, “Afterlives of the Culture,” 301–56.

to take control over cultural workers of different races in Manchukuo and mobilize them for all kinds of propaganda activities, including the translation and publication of several collections of Manchukuo literature. In contrast, to find An, Wu had to seek private help from his acquaintances, because there was no official network to facilitate horizontal literary exchanges between Manchukuo Chinese and Korean writers. The absence of Korean-Chinese translators can explained similarly. In Manchukuo, as in other Japanese colonies, the Japanese government had put significant effort into promoting the Japanese language. Since 1936, Japanese language education had been compulsory in all Manchukuo primary and middle schools; it was not long before Japanese language classes outnumbered classes in the students' native languages.<sup>109</sup> However, there was little institutional support for Manchukuo Chinese and Korean people to learn each other's language. Accordingly, the colonial social structure that obstructs horizontal linkage among colonized peoples is the key institutional cause behind everything Wu complained about in the translation project and also behind the lack of understanding between Manchukuo Chinese and Korean intellectuals. Colonial social structure decisively distanced the two peoples who shared the same piece of land and interacted on a daily basis. It is in this sense that I argue that translation itself challenged the Japanese colonial domination in Manchuria and showed that multinational territorialization of the frontier could check unilateral imperial power.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined how literary translation participates in frontier contestation. Through the lens of translation, the chapter also illuminates the achievements and failures of the

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<sup>109</sup> Yasuda Toshiaki, *Teikoku Nihon no gengo hensei* (Seori Shōbō, 1997), 251–3.

Korean writers' literary territorialization of Manchuria as an alternative national space outside the nation in the 1930s and 1940s. Translation, as a textual interpretation of the intricate inter-national relations surrounding the Manchurian Koreans, manifests the complexity of Korean literature of Manchuria in general and marks the desire, anxiety, and predicament of the Manchukuo Korean writers in particular. The fact that translation, or its absence, often undermines or complicates the common effort of the peninsular and Manchukuo Korean writers to define a cultural territory outside the nation at a time of national crisis indicates the precariousness of the outcome of their literary effort. Nevertheless, Korean literature written on about the frontier was meaningful to the Korean nation then and now, and through translation, it also became meaningful to Chinese intellectuals in the frontier as an allegorical voice of their pain, or as an ally in their frontier competition.

In 1965, a Korean writer was arrested for criticizing the US Army then stationed in South Korea in his literary work.<sup>110</sup> An Su-kil wrote an article to support the writer in which he evoked the Japanese translation of Kim Tong-in's short story "The Red Hills" as a counterexample:

If he [referring to the writer] is punished, then...the punishment will result in a regression of history that was unheard of even during the Japanese colonial period. In 1932, Kim Tong-in's "The Red Hills" which contains the lyrics for a patriotic song passed the censorship, appeared in the magazine, and was even translated into Japanese later, but he did not receive any punishment. If what was unheard of even during the Japanese colonial period would be put into practice now, twenty years after liberation, then it would mean nothing but turning the clock of history backwards. <sup>111</sup>

This paragraph presents a romantic encounter between the two protagonists of my chapter—

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<sup>110</sup> In 1965, Korean writer Nam Chöng-hyön published a short story titled "The Dunghill" (*Punji* 분지) to criticize the sexual violence the US soldiers committed against local Korean women. The writer used the imagery of a dunghill to symbolize Korea under the US Army's control. Nam was soon arrested and pronounced guilty. The result created a sensation among Korean writers and intellectuals. This event is retrospectively referred to as the "Dunghill Censor Incident" (*Punji p'irhwak sakön* 분지 필화 사건).

<sup>111</sup> An Su-kil, "Punji nün mujoe ta," *Tonga Ilbo* May 25, 1967, p. 5.

romantic because it was based on one Manchurian Korean writer's well-intentioned misunderstanding of another Korean story about Manchuria. At the time, An Su-kil considered the Japanese reception and translation of Kim's nationalist story simply as a sign of the colonial master's tolerance and benevolence. However, this chapter has made it clear that, in the Japanese translation of the story, the Korean nationalist sentiment in the original text was in effect reframed into a testimony that justified Japanese frontier expansion. The fact that even a writer who had actually lived and written in Manchuria was not aware of the trickiness of the translation highlights the complexity of frontier literature and its translation. At the same time, the article also indicates that for An, the Japanese translation of works written in Korean during the colonial period was essentially about authoritatively accommodating and recognizing the voice coming from the colonized people. It is perhaps this view of translation as a subtle but victorious transgression of an otherwise rigorous power hierarchy that sustained his frustrated obsession with translation during the years of his life on the frontier.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Meaning of Deterritorialization: The Representation of *Kogoroshi* in Japanese Repatriation from Manchuria**

#### **Introduction**

Japan's sudden surrender in 1945 set in motion yet another round of radical changes on the frontier. Manchukuo collapsed in a matter of days, and on its debris came marching the Soviet red infantry. The quick turn of events anticipated the bumpy journey the numerous Japanese, Koreans, and Taiwanese would have to take toward home, as Manchuria returned once again to Chinese hands. On a grand historical scale, this was a dramatic process of frontier closure, one intimately tied to issues of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This final chapter of this dissertation offers a case study of literary deterritorialization that examines the postwar Japanese literary engagement with Japanese repatriation from Manchuria. It analyzes how postwar Japanese authors circumscribed the transnational trauma of repatriation by retreating into the framework of national narrative in literature as well as in other media forms. This practice fitted Japanese nationals' experience on the frontiers conveniently into the postwar milieu of the self-contained nation state. At the same time, this chapter investigates how a critical look at the experience of frontier repatriation in postwar media products can go hand in hand with other criticisms of ignorance of and discrimination against marginalized groups in postwar Japanese society, thus exploring the critical power generated by encounters with difffrontier perspectives.

Repatriation took place not only in Manchuria, but also across all former Japanese colonial territorial possessions, from Korea to Taiwan to occupied China Proper. It involved not only Japanese returning to Japan, but also Koreans, Chinese, and Taiwanese finding their ways back to wherever they supposedly belonged.<sup>1</sup> East Asia underwent a sweeping process of deterritorialization following the dissolution of the imperial order; the converse process of reterritorialization by the self-contained nation-state immediately followed. These changes entailed massive demographic redistribution throughout the region, anticipating the onset of literary reterritorialization in postwar national literatures in all the newly (re)born states. In this sense, literature about Japanese repatriation from Manchuria—or in other words the former colonizers' withdrawal from a contested frontier—is an archetypal example of a broader trans-East-Asia literary phenomenon. The problematics and dilemmas that the Japanese case presents will thus be valuable to the study of other postwar national literatures in East Asia as well.

If territorialization is the process of making both a land and the people on it territorial, then deterritorialization is its reverse. In this process, people withdraw from the land; more importantly, they withdraw from the territorial consciousness that associated them with the land. It bespeaks the complex dynamics through which a group of people is severed from a geographic space in both the physical and mental senses. Moreover, in the conceptual framework of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, deterritorialization always goes hand in hand with a new round of reterritorialization. The subject is constantly released from one set of territorial relations and is then immediately captured by another in a seamless manner.<sup>2</sup> For Japanese repatriation—and

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough study of the demographic movement across East Asia following the collapse of the Japanese empire, see Araragi Shinzō, *Teikoku igo no hito no idō: posutokoroniarizumu to gurōbarizumu no kōsakuten* (Tokyo: Benseishuppan, 2013); also see Araragi Shinzō, ed., *Teikoku hōkai to hito no saiidō: hikiage, sōkan, soshite zanryū* (Tokyo: Benseishuppan, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of

other cases of repatriation across East Asia—the new order that re-territorialized the returnees was the order of the postwar nation-state. In this sense, the journey of repatriation is itself a good metaphor for the process of de/reterritorialization: it was a one-way journey that started from an old imperial domain and ended at the doorstep of the new postwar nation.

Specifically, the chapter focuses on the representation, remembering, and forgetting of *kogoroshi* 子殺し, a Japanese term whose literal meaning is “to kill a child.”<sup>3</sup> It considers narratives of *kogoroshi* during repatriation from Manchuria in postwar Japan as a literary form of engagement with imperial deterritorialization. In the context of Japanese repatriation in the aftermath of the WWII, *kogoroshi* refers to the act of Japanese repatriates killing Japanese babies and young children of their own volition. These acts were usually committed with the hope, or perhaps illusion, that doing so would make it easier for others in the repatriation group to return. Unimaginable as it now seems, Japanese parents could be the perpetrators, killing their own children voluntarily or at the command of the repatriation troop leaders in order to protect other repatriates. In other scenarios, desperate repatriates killed their children in anticipation of their own collective suicide.

In the chapter, I argue that the killing of one’s own child symbolizes the kind of cannibalistic self-consumption that is inevitably involved when an empire is forced to abandon its frontiers and radically reduce itself to the status of a nation. This final but intensified moment in imperial history reveals the fundamental contradictions embedded in the enterprise of imperial expansion; it also exposes the complicated roles that ordinary people play in this process—both as individuals and as a collective. Moreover, by examining how *kogoroshi* in repatriation is dealt with in postwar

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Minnesota Press, 1987), throughout and 174–221 in particular.

<sup>3</sup> See the next section for a detailed definition of *kogoroshi*.

repatriation literature and mass media, we are able to see how this horrific moment in deterritorialization was suppressed, forgotten, and eventually recalled for both integration and appropriation. The remembrance and forgetting of the event indicate how and why it is challenging to become fully engaged in a reflection on deterritorialization. It is not only because people lack time for reflection as they are immediately reterritorialized by a new order, but also because the new round of reterritorialization is essentially built upon the same forces that drove the previous round.

In addition to the symbolic implication of *kogoroshi*, this trauma as a social event also provides an ideal site for us to examine how postwar Japanese literary and media narratives deal with issues of victimhood, perpetration, and agency. In postwar Japan, stories of repatriation are most commonly told as narratives of victimization. This is one of the reason repatriation is conventionally associated with women—especially woman from Manchuria. As Lori Watt observes, “one of the most enduring images of the repatriate in Japan is a bedraggled woman from Manchuria, sometimes with children in tow, with a rucksack on her back.”<sup>4</sup> The authors of repatriation literature are primarily women.<sup>5</sup> More importantly, the feminized narrative of victimization they wrote proved useful for both the repatriate authors and their domestic readers in postwar society. Pathetic repatriation stories reminded people in Japan at once of their own ordinariness and superiority.<sup>6</sup> For repatriates, war victim status entitled them to state assistance.<sup>7</sup> In these ways, repatriation narratives were useful in transitioning society from the expectations of

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<sup>4</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), 99.

<sup>5</sup> Narita Ryūichi, “Hikiage ni kansuru joshō,” *Shisō* 2003:11, 158.

<sup>6</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 123–4.

<sup>7</sup> Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 61.

war and empire to the norms of the postwar nation-state.

However, episodes of *kogoroshi* bring uncertainty and complexity to victimization narratives. This is because taking the lives of the most vulnerable and innocent members of one's own community, regardless of the desperate circumstances, sounds like an unimaginable act of pure violence. In these narratives, however, repatriates who take the lives of children, especially the mothers, are victims, perpetrators and *felo-de-se* at the same time: victims because they are often forced to kill, perpetrators in the sense that they take the action to kill, and *felo-de-se* because by killing their children they are at the same time killing their own compatriots. Due to the ambiguity and sensitivity of the subject matter, the treatment of *kogoroshi* in repatriation requires cautious handling in both repatriation literature and the mass media—whether the sources intend to remember or to forget. As we will see, any serious engagement with the issue of the victimization of children in repatriation naturally challenges the conventional repatriation narrative.

This chapter investigates selected memoirs, works of fiction, essays, films, news reports, and photographs concerned with the *kogoroshi* that took place during the Japanese repatriation from Manchuria. Following a brief introduction to the terminology, I will first read Izutsu Kikue's memoir, *The Continental Bride* (*Tairiku no hanayome* 大陸の花嫁, 2004) to identify the elements involved in the victimization of children in repatriation and the critical significance they may bear. Next, I will examine the representation of the victimization of children in repatriation literature and mass media from 1949 to the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> For early representation in the late 1940s to mid-1950s, I start with Fujiwara Tei's *The Shooting Star Is Still Alive* (*Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru* 流れる星は生きている, 1949), a novel that established the genre of repatriation literature. I will also

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<sup>8</sup> Izutsu Kikue, *Tairiku no hanayome* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004).

consider its film adaptation. We will see that the novel extensively addresses threats to children in repatriation; at the same time, it uses various devices to evade and mediate the thorny questions it raises. The film further whitewashes the fiction, rendering the cruelty towards repatriating children almost invisible. Similar problems arise when I present several media reports featuring parents who committed filicide during repatriation. I will then examine the memory of repatriation in the context of the social discussion of *kogoroshi* in the 1970s. At that time, Fujiwara Tei participated in the discussion by relating it to her repatriation experience, but the connection was completely dismissed by the editor. This willful dissociation, I argue, testifies to Japan's transition from a geographically expansive empire to an economically affluent nation. Finally, I will look into several works published in the late 1970s and early 1980s concerning abortions performed at repatriation ports in Japan. The abortions were given to women who had been raped during repatriation. These works present a dialogical relationship between the postwar controversy over abortion and the abortions performed during repatriation. A contextualized close reading of these works indicates a productive cross-pollination between two types of reflection on two types of territorialization in the imperial and the postwar periods, although not without limits.

Few current scholarly works in the English-speaking world or in Asia have addressed the victimization of children as a separate topic with respect to repatriation. In Lori Watt's *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* and in Mariko Asano Tamanoi's *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan*, both authors highlight the experience of women's repatriation from Manchuria as a special and representative case of Japanese repatriation in general; however, both authors treat experiences related to children in parallel with other forms of suffering these women experienced. In their discussion of memories of repatriation retained by Japanese orphans left in Manchuria, however, we find traces of the

trauma of being victimized by their own people. Some orphans were intentionally abandoned by their parents, and many were old enough to remember the scene in which they were abandoned—something they could never forget.<sup>9</sup> My project was in part motivated by the sizable gap between the burning centrality of the issue of *kogoroshi* in works of repatriation literature written by young mothers repatriating to Japan from Manchuria and the relative lack of attention to their stories in both Japanese postwar mass media and scholarly works.

### **Defining *Kogoroshi* in Repatriation**

The key words of the chapter are, needless to say, repatriation and *kogoroshi*. In this dissertation, repatriation is the equivalent of *hikiage* 引揚 in Japanese. *Hikiage* is the nominalization of the verb *hikiageru*, which literally means “to lift and land something,” such as a sunken ship or a piece of cargo. Its extended meaning includes “to withdraw” or “to be repatriated.” In the context of imperial Japan, *hikiage* was applied extensively to the process of repatriation of Japanese people, both military personnel and civilians, from former Japanese colonies after the defeat. Lori Watt points out that *hikiage* differs from the English word “repatriate” in that the English word contains the root *patria* and connotes a relationship between the returnee and the homeland; in contrast, the Japanese word emphasizes the act of returning more than the repatriate’s tie to the nation.<sup>10</sup> The word *hikiage*, therefore, does not assume a self-evident longing for homeland among the repatriates. Indeed, because the Japanese imperial presence in Manchuria had lasted for decades by the time of repatriation, many Japanese repatriates, especially repatriated

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<sup>9</sup> Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan*, 85.

<sup>10</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 57.

children, found it difficult to regard Japan as their “homeland.”

The Japanese term *kogoroshi*, on the other hand, literally means to kill or abandon to death a child of any age—whether or not the child is one’s own. It is therefore distinguished from both infanticide, which refers to the killing of babies only, and filicide, which is limited to the murder of one’s own children. In Japan, the social understanding of *kogoroshi* can distinguish specific types according to particular circumstances, for example infanticide, filicide, or the killing of a child to whom one has no relation.<sup>11</sup> However, in the case of repatriation, it is crucial to keep the definition of *kogoroshi* open to all of these possible connotations.

First, in terms of the perpetrator, children in repatriation were sometimes victimized by their mothers, or by other repatriates, or as a result of their mothers being forced by other repatriates in the name of collective survival. However, in postwar Japanese media culture, guilt and blame are almost always directed at the mothers; in contrast, other perpetrators, ranging from repatriation group leaders—in most cases men—to the imperial nation, which launched and lost the war in the first place, often get off scot-free. What this chapter aims to convey is precisely the point that *kogoroshi* in repatriation and beyond is not only about mothers and motherhood—even in cases involving children who were actually killed by their mothers; rather, it has something to do with the institution of nation and the mechanism of (de)territorialization.

Second, forms of *kogoroshi* vary too. These include killing, abandoning, and some types of selling of children of various ages, as well as the late abortion of fetuses. In the repatriation literature discussed in this chapter, the age of victims ranges from infancy to as old as six. Moreover, in the context of Japanese language and Japanese repatriation, the boundary between killing and

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<sup>11</sup> For a detailed typology of *kogoroshi* in Japan, see Inamura Hiroshi, *Kogoroshi: sono seishin byōri* (Tokyo: Seishin Shobō, 1978), 13–39.

abandoning is often blurred. In Japanese, “abandon” and “throw away” are the same word (*suteru*捨てる). In repatriation literature, the word is used to describe both cases: i.e., leaving a child behind the repatriation troops or throwing a baby into a river or out of a vehicle. Either case may lead to the death of the victim. Selling children, on the other hand, may involve good or bad intentions, or both. When the seller cares little about the child’s fate and sacrifices the child simply for money, it is very close to *kogoroshi*. Finally, during the 1970s in Japan, the definition of *kogoroshi* expanded to include late abortion; this expanded notion was retrospectively applied to the postwar repatriation period to refer to late abortions given to pregnant repatriates during or upon their return.

Such an expansive definition of *kogoroshi* may sound too loose, but, as evidenced in the following oral account of a Manchurian repatriation survivor, different forms of victimization of children are grouped together in an astonishingly flowing continuity:

There was no path in the steep mountains. They have no choice but to abandon the children who bound their hands and feet. One, two, more and more people abandoned their children in the river. . . . “mommy, no!” cried the child, but the mother pushed the child down the river as if in a dream, and absent-mindedly looked at him/her flow away as if being swallowed by the muddy stream. If she did not abandon the child there, she would die. And if the child was left behind, he/she would die. . . . At the time Chinese people came with rice and gold to buy children, young girls or wives. . . . [Some sold their children] with the thought that if they survived, they would come back to Japan one day; others went to Chinese people’s houses to sacrifice their children or the young girls [for money].<sup>12</sup>

The survivor’s narrative shows that whether killing, abandoning, or selling children, the actions all arise from a similar emotional state of desperation and detachment experienced by mothers caught in extreme conditions beyond their control. Of course, this particular narrative does not

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<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, quoted in Sakabe Shōko, *Manshū keiken no shakaigaku: shokuminchi no kioku no katachi* (Kyoto: Sekai Shisōsha, 2008), 116.

exhaust all forms of victimization, such as children being harmed by fellow repatriates or abortion. This suggests that *kogoroshi* in repatriation concerned different people in various ways in postwar Japan. The variation in the phenomenon and discourse of *kogoroshi* is one topic of scrutiny in this chapter.

By the end of World War II, the expansion of the Japanese Empire had brought around seven million Japanese civilians and military personnel outside Japan to its colonies or wherever its power reached. The number was approximately 10% of the total population of Japan at the time.<sup>13</sup> Starting from the Soviet entry into the war on August 8, 1945, most overseas Japanese sought to return to Japan as quickly as possible from Manchuria, Inland China, the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan, Chishima (Kuril Islands) and Karafuto (Sakhalin), Southeast Asia, and elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> However, because of the huge number of repatriates and the lack of organized repatriation right after the defeat, their homecoming journey turned into a nightmare that lasted from months to years. And yet miraculously, more than 90% of the total Japanese overseas at the time arrived in Japan alive,<sup>15</sup> although they were frequently described as “dying” (*shini kaketa* 死に掛けた) by the time they reached Japanese harbors.

Japan expanded its military and economic reach to Manchuria long before it established Manchukuo in 1932. The Japanese population in Manchuria by the end of the war rose to a total of more than 1,500,000 civilians and around 500,000 military personnel. While in Manchuria, overseas Japanese individuals and their families worked at Japanese companies, reclaimed

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<sup>13</sup> According to Wakatsuki Yasuo, different sources have slightly different numbers of the overseas Japanese civilians and militaries. See Wakatsuki Yasuo, *Sengo hikiage no kiroku* (Tokyo: Jiji Tsūshinsha, 1991), 46.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed analysis of the multiple factors that motivated overseas Japanese to move back instead of staying at the end of the war, see Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 197–8.

<sup>15</sup> See Wakatsuki Yasuo, *Sengo hikiage no kiroku*, 252.

farmland as new settlers, or served in the Japanese army. In August 1945, after being drafted to fight against the Soviet Army and being ordered to surrender within a week, most Japanese men in Manchuria were detained by Soviet and Chinese takeovers and repatriated through military routes. As a result, the remaining Japanese who started their repatriation journey right away, devoid of Japanese military protection, were largely women, children, and the elderly. The majority went to Southern Manchuria and boarded repatriation ships there; some, including Fujiwara Tei, went east to Korea and boarded a ship in Pusan; others, such as Izutsu Kikue, went west to Mongolia to spend the winter. Whichever route they took, the trip lasted for one to three years, which would have meant one to three winters in Northern China with minimal supplies.<sup>16</sup> During the trip, they moved by freight train, truck, bus, bullock-cart, and on foot; they stayed at refugee camps, quarantine centers, schools, stations, and random backyards; they suffered malnutrition, diphtheria, typhus, and dysentery; they were attacked, detained, and threatened by the Soviet Army, the Chinese Nationalist Army, the Chinese Communist Army, local armed forces, and civilians; and yet they had to do whatever work was available to sustain themselves and their children. On the way, 180,000 died and 11,000 were left behind;<sup>17</sup> many survivors died shortly after their return. In particular, the mortality rate was considerably higher than average among Japanese agrarian emigrants to Manchuria; sometimes most of the repatriates from a single branch-village lost their lives due to external attack or collective suicide.<sup>18</sup>

As Lori Watt points out, among the returnees in postwar Japan, those from Manchuria are of particular importance because the widespread social image of the repatriates is based on the

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<sup>16</sup> Yamamoto Yūzō, *Manshū: kioku to rekishi* (Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai, 2007), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Wakatsuki Yasuo, *Sengo hikiage no kiroku*, 163–4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 163–9.

women, men, and children who were returning from Manchuria. It was these women and children who had to travel under military attack from multiple powers for a long distance across the land of Manchuria, and it was these men who were kept in a Soviet camp in Siberia for an extended time. Repatriates from Manchuria spoke of the worst suffering in the Japanese repatriate experience. Moreover, according to Watt, women from Manchuria and men from Siberia faced particularly difficult situations at home in postwar Japan. Women were often suspected of having been raped by Soviet soldiers; men detained by the Soviets were suspected of having been contaminated by Communism. These suspicions created and sustained a special stigma for these two groups. The stigmatization was solidified in official discourse, the press, novels, films, and social criticism in postwar Japan.<sup>19</sup>

Moving to the issue of *kogoroshi* in the repatriation from Manchuria to Japan, I have to rely on resources such as official reports of specific cases, newspaper reports, and memoirs to reconstruct the tragic scene due to the lack of substantial historical studies on the topic. Stories about *kogoroshi* exist extensively in written and oral Manchurian repatriation accounts as completed actions, attempts, or serious considerations. Some accounts depict how the mother or other people close to the child plan to kill the child, or hesitate about doing so. A more elusive version is found in confessions like “I really appreciated that the child had died” after a child in custody is found dead for unclarified reasons.<sup>20</sup> According to the accounts, in addition to the forms of victimization mentioned previously, people—parents or not—also starved the children, choked them with their own hands or with fabric, or fed them potassium cyanide, a poison that many Japanese carried during repatriation so that they could commit suicide in extreme conditions. Out

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<sup>19</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 98–137.

<sup>20</sup> Inomata Yūsuke, “Manshū imin no hikiage keiken,” *Ajia yūgaku* 145, 71.

of fear that small children and their cries would expose them to the Soviet soldiers, one Japanese community is said to have gathered all small children in a haystack and to have set it on fire before starting their journey.<sup>21</sup> The mental states of those committing the action also vary. Some fulfilled the actions in a state of resignation, or, to use the language of the survivor quoted earlier, “absent-mindedly”; others did so out of an intense instinct for survival. Some parents killed their children before committing suicide; others did it before rushing forward to fight attackers. Among all these examples, I did not find a single account that recalls killing a child from the first-person perspective.

An absent husband, an extended journey, a desperate mother thinking about sacrificing her children or worrying about her children being harmed—these elements constitute a typical scene of postwar Japanese repatriation from Manchuria. The shadow of *kogoroshi* persists as an acute pain and a lasting wound both in the minds of individuals and in the collective memory of repatriation from Manchuria. In stories and memoirs by women repatriates, *kogoroshi* or its attempts by mothers or by members of the Japanese community stands out as the most striking trauma among all possible forms of suffering one can imagine a repatriating mother might endure. Mass media, although showing less concern with stories about the deliberate victimization of children than memoirs, has played a role not only in further spreading such stories among domestic Japanese people but also in placing them in the larger context of postwar society. As one can imagine, violence against children in repatriation within the Japanese community is not an easy experience to remember or forget for any party involved in this tragic history.

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<sup>21</sup> This incident is recorded in a news article by the Japanese woman journalist Mochizuki Yuriko. See Mochizuki Yuriko, “Bōkyō no miyako Shinkyō,” in *Daitōa senshi dai 6-kai haihon Manshū hen: jō*, ed. Ikeda Tasuku (Tokyo: Fuji Shoen, 1969), 262–99.

### ***The Continental Bride and the Significance of Kogoroshi***

In this section, I will analyze Izutsu Kikue's repatriation memoir *The Continental Bride* to illustrate the nature and meaning of *kogoroshi* to the repatriating mother and beyond. Repatriation literature is called *hikiage-mono* in Japanese. As Mariko Asano Tamanoi observes, although a generic term for “genre,” *mono* is primarily used for classifying popular cultural productions; in other words, the term “indicates the genre’s lower position in the hierarchy of cultural production: it is neither ‘literature’ (*bungaku*) nor ‘history.’”<sup>22</sup> Tamanoi goes on to point out that most examples of repatriation literature are indeed written by amateur authors for only a small readership.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, although most examples of repatriation literature claim to be faithful to the author’s memory, the genre differs from the genre of “memoir” in that many examples are candidly fictionalized. According to Tamanoi, the genre was first established by Fujiwara Tei’s *The Shooting Star Is Still Alive*, which we will discuss in the following section. The full blossoming of the genre took place from the late 1960s to the 1990s.

We can identify some common characteristics shared by works of Manchurian repatriation literature. First, the central theme is suffering. Second, they closely resemble each other in terms of narrative structure: most stories begin with either the Soviet invasion of Manchuria or Japan’s capitulation and end with the repatriates’ arrival in either ports of disembarkation in China or entry ports in Japan.<sup>24</sup> Also, many books or articles about Manchurian repatriation include maps that illustrate the repatriation routes. Of course, the maps were drawn retrospectively; this means that, in the process of writing their works, the authors have reconstructed the geography of their

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<sup>22</sup> Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan*, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 55–9.

repatriation trips with the help of maps. In this way, examples of Manchurian repatriation literature vividly represent the temporal and spatial dimension of how the Japanese, as individuals and as a group, withdrew from Japan's formal colony.

Izutsu Kikue's *The Continental Bride* is a repatriation memoir reprinted in 2004 by the established Japanese publisher Iwanami Publishing House. The reprinting is based on the first edition privately published by the author herself.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the memoirs published immediately after the repatriation, Izutsu's memoir represents a different group of women who "could only write about [the repatriation experience] after reaching old age."<sup>26</sup> According to the author, the purpose of writing the memoir is to "pass down the author's memory of the Manchurian experience ...to later generations."<sup>27</sup> Loosened from the social pressure and expectation for repatriation memoirs during the postwar national reconstruction, and first published privately only for people close to the author, this less-embellished work provides a good entrance point for understanding the general experience of *kogoroshi* in repatriation. In addition, the temporal distance also allows the author to reflect on the multilayered meaning of repatriation accumulated throughout the postwar years. The book thus also illuminates what the experience means to the repatriate and how the meaning reveals itself as time passes.

The memoir recalls the narrator's life from when she determined to marry and move to Manchuria up to the present day. The majority of the book is devoted to her repatriation experience as an agrarian settler in Manchuria and as a young mother of a two-year-old baby girl and her repeated encounter with the traumatic memory of repatriation in postwar Japan. In the memoir, the

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<sup>25</sup> See Shintani Yoko, "Sensō o kataritsugu tame ni," in *Tairiku no hanayome* by Izutsu Kikue (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004). It is unclear when the first private version was published.

<sup>26</sup> Shintani Yoko, "Sensō o kataritsugu tame ni," in *Tairiku no hanayome* by Izutsu Kikue, 222.

<sup>27</sup> Izutsu Kikue, "Preface," *Tairiku no hanayome*, 3.

narrator's relation to her baby is central to her repatriation experience. When the news of Japan's surrender reaches the settler village Izutsu lived in, Japanese people in the branch-village are divided into two parties. The "suicide party," led by the schoolmaster, suggests a collective suicide (*shūdan jiketsu* 集団自決) to preserve the Japanese spirit and to avoid being arrested, humiliated, and killed by the enemy. The "anti-suicide party," led by the village head, rejects this proposal. At first, Izutsu supports collective suicide and is determined to die with her daughter. When committing collective suicide in Japanese repatriation, parents were responsible for ending the lives of their children, who were too young to do it themselves. In Manchuria, because most fathers had already been drafted by the Japanese army or detained by the Soviet or Chinese armies, this responsibility was usually imposed upon mothers. In the memoir, the schoolmaster's family is the first to commit collective suicide. Izutsu witnesses the adult members of the family shooting their children first and then shooting themselves with a pistol. However, when she is about to kill her own daughter, the village head, the leader of the "anti-suicide party" dissuades her by asking, "Your husband will return. How would anyone explain this to your husband then?" Hearing the question, Izutsu gives up the idea of committing collective suicide.<sup>28</sup>

Later, a group of Koreans attacks the village, slaughters many of the Japanese residents, takes away all their belongings, and burns down their houses. Izutsu and her baby narrowly survive the calamity. Separated from other villages, she joins a repatriation troop nearby. It is a well-organized troop with more than six hundred repatriates. However, anyone who jeopardizes the survival of the group will be severely punished—even put to death. Adding to her anxiety, Izutsu also hears that a mother has killed her newborn baby. In this environment, hearing more and more complaints from other members that her baby cries a lot while she is away performing farm work, she senses

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<sup>28</sup> Izutsu Kikue, *Tairiku no hanayome*, 50.

malice towards her baby. From then on, she has to hide her baby whenever she goes out to work.

The group successfully survives the cold winter in Northern Manchuria. In the spring, the group leader decides to move to Qiqihar, where people can be relocated to repatriation camps. While living in the camp, Izutsu and the other repatriates have to find all kinds of jobs to sustain themselves. Izutsu notices that near the camp there is a market for trading children for money or goods. She considers herself lucky to have found work as a wet nurse for a Chinese household. The household treats her and her baby very well, but the job, by nature, takes away the baby's food.

In the summer of 1946, Izutsu and her daughter are able to leave Qiqihar for the repatriation port. Although malnutrition is making her baby girl sicker with each passing day, Izutsu tries every means to keep her alive. When they finally arrive at her husband's home in October, family members refuse to accept the baby, asserting that she is "dying." Like many other families in Japan at the time, the family is in dire circumstances and does not want to waste their precious provisions on a dying baby. Besides, Izutsu's husband has not yet returned. Not knowing whether he is alive, some family members are not sure to what extent they are responsible for this woman and her sick baby. As a result, Izutsu is forced to return to her own family with her baby, who dies shortly afterward, in January 1947.

As is seen, victimization of children during the repatriation could take place in various conditions. Of course, children can be harmed by external powers such as the military or rebelling local people, but in such circumstances, children and adults were often slaughtered without discrimination. In contrast, within the Japanese community itself, children were especially targeted, either by their parents or by other fellow repatriates. Spiritually, children were often the hope and comfort of their mothers. Practically speaking, however, during and right after repatriation, children were nothing but burdens, distractions, and often sources of danger—everyone might

want to get rid of them. Besides, it was very easy to terminate a child's life in the harsh environment of repatriation. In Izutsu's memoir, a reoccurring scene presents the narrator explaining to herself (as well as to readers) why she could not give up her baby: because she herself had grown up without much parental love, because she wanted the baby girl to live and meet her father, etc. It reads as if in repatriation, letting a child die is expected; choosing not to do so is what requires explanation.

The extreme situation was directly caused by Japan's defeat and withdrawal, which forced Japanese people, children and adults alike, to leave Manchuria and return to Japan in adverse conditions. Some were violently attacked; others decided to commit suicide. Back in domestic Japan, the sudden withdrawal of a huge population from the frontier to the metropole placed additional pressure on the already destitute island. As a result, returnees from formal colonies were often viewed as unwelcome outsiders.<sup>29</sup> Children were the most vulnerable of the vulnerable and the least likely to survive; thus, children were often sacrificed within the community of Japanese repatriates as well as by the Japanese in general. In this sense, the victimization of children in repatriation symbolizes the cannibalistic self-consumption involved in the forcible downsizing of an empire to a nation.

In the long run, the scene of desperate mothers and sacrificed children in repatriation not only is tied to the final defeat, but is a necessary ending of the entire imperial enterprise. It can be seen as the climax of the fate of Japanese women, especially agrarian settlers, in the imperial frontier of Manchuria; it also represents the finale of the state's biopolitical mobilization for the purpose of imperial expansion. In other words, to account for the tragedy of mothers and children in repatriation, one should keep in mind the imperial state's long-term intervention in the family life

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<sup>29</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 77–90.

and sexuality of its members. It was state intervention that led to their migration, production, and reproduction in adverse conditions in the first place. As Izutsu exclaims in her memoir,

In times that applauded “Be Fruitful and Multiply,” women followed the national policy and gave birth to five, six, and, in the case of poor peasant women, seven, or even eight children. And then, they were driven to Manchuria, the so-called “Royal Paradise” or whatever. In the end, their husbands were taken by the war, and the war was lost. And a woman was not able to take care of her children all by herself.

“You are making the children cry! Just dispose of them!” was yelled at woman, and she killed her own children. Or, if she could not kill, she left them there or sent them to the Chinese. The mothers were then killed or died of malnutrition. The children became left-behind orphans.<sup>30</sup>

“Be Fruitful and Multiply” (*umeyo fuyaseyo* 生めよ増やせよ), originally a statement from the Bible,<sup>31</sup> was Japan’s wartime population policy enacted in 1941 in response to the decreasing birth rate, expanding colonization, and war preparations in the 1930s. “Royal Paradise” (*ōdō rakudo* 王道樂土), on the other hand, was one of the two fundamental national slogans of the Japanese Manchukuo, another being “Five Ethnicities under One Union.” In Izutsu’s narrative, women responded to the moves of the empire by producing more babies and by leaving their homes to settle in strange lands; in the end, these women lost their husbands and either killed their babies with their own hands or left them orphaned.

To be sure, this was not the case for Izutsu. Rather, what Izutsu describes is a scenario she conceives as even worse than her own. She uses it to encourage herself that her situation, with no husband and one baby only, is not as bad as it might be. Yet Izutsu’s case was not so different from the most extreme case. According to Izutsu’s memoir, she immigrated to Manchuria as a “continental bride” in 1943 and gave birth to her baby there. Starting from 1937, the Japanese government launched a Manchurian immigration plan to support the empire’s expansion and wars.

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<sup>30</sup> Izutsu Kikue, *Tairiku no hanayome*, 90.

<sup>31</sup> Genesis 1:28.

Mobilizing and exporting women from Japan to Manchuria was an important part of the policy, because increasing the numbers of Japanese women would promote both agricultural production and biological reproduction in Japanese Manchuria. The women, mostly agrarian women, who responded to the call to marry pioneers in Manchuria were referred to as the “continental brides.”<sup>32</sup> In short, “continental brides” were officially sanctioned imperial immigrants; producing children in Manchuria was their duty.

Izutsu agrees to become a continental bride because wartime economic depression and the stringent ration system have made her life in rural Japan too bleak to continue. She responds to the continental bride recruitment call in her area, and an arrangement is made for her to marry a member of the “Youth Colonization Volunteer Corps for Manchuria-Mongolia” (*Man-Mō kaitaku seishōnen giyūgun* 滿蒙開拓青少年義勇軍). The Corps was officially founded in 1937. Its major function was to recruit Japanese farm boys typically between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two to live and work on newly reclaimed land in Manchuria.<sup>33</sup> Izutsu does not mention how old her husband was when he married her, but she recalls that the age of the oldest member in the Corps branch that her husband-to-be belonged to was twenty-three. Izutsu meets her husband for the first time at their wedding, which has also been arranged by local officials. The two move to Manchuria the following day. In Manchuria, Izutsu and other new continental brides receive brief training at the “Continental Bride Training Camp” (*tairiku no hanayome yōseijo* 大陸の花嫁養成所) and then settle down in their respective settler villages. In 1944, Izutsu’s husband is conscripted; in the same year, she gives birth to their daughter. When the baby girl is a year old, Japan is defeated and

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<sup>32</sup> Sidney Xu Lu, “Diasporic Imperialism: Japan's Asia-Pacific Migrations and the Making of the Japanese Empire 1868–1945” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 144.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Suleski, “Reconstructing Life in the Youth Corps Camps of Manchuria, 1938–45: Resistance to Conformity,” in *East Asian History* 30 (Dec. 2005): 68.

she starts on her repatriation trip.

At first glance, it may seem strange that a memoir titled “The Continental Bride” places so much focus on a repatriation experience in which sustaining the life of a baby becomes the central concern. It forms a sharp contrast to the life of continental brides described by the famous Japanese writer Hayashi Fusao in his 1939 novel, also titled *The Continental Bride*, which tells a romanticized story of young Japanese women looking for love and family in Manchuria.<sup>34</sup> Looking closely into Izutsu’s memory, however, it is clear that the narrator’s life as a continental bride culminated in her final fight during repatriation to save her baby’s life. Marrying and moving to Manchuria for economic reasons, producing a baby in Manchuria, sending her husband off to join the army, repatriating with the baby, and witnessing her baby die after her return—with some variation, this was the typical life trajectory of many continental brides.<sup>35</sup> In this trajectory, being a continental bride involves little romantic longing for love and family, and the true ordeal comes only after the bride establishes a second generation for the empire.

Furthermore, the deaths of these children were not merely a consequence of imperial expansion and warfare; they also represented the *kogoroshi* intrinsic to Japanese imperialism. They were not only their parents’ children; they were also children of the state and were produced to be sent to the frontiers or battlefields—both places filled with life-threatening hazards. The association between the tragic fate of repatriating children and of imperial subjects in general can be found in a book on repatriating women and children published in 1979. In that year, Kamitsubo Takashi, a Manchurian repatriate and a journalist in postwar Japan, produced a documentary and a book about the heartbreakng experience of repatriating orphans, many of whom died of

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<sup>34</sup> Hayashi Fusao, *Tairiku no hanayome* (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> For more about continental brides’ lives, see Sidney Xu Lu, “Diasporic Imperialism: Japan’s Asia-Pacific Migrations and the Making of the Japanese Empire 1868–1945,” 144–85.

malnutrition soon after returning to Japan, and of repatriating women, many of whom were subjected to abortions because they had been raped during repatriation.<sup>36</sup> In the postscript of the books, he writes,

I titled this book *Songs of the Water Children* [water child: a literal translation of *mizuko*, meaning aborted babies in Japanese]. Water children and red children [red child: a literal translation of *akago*, meaning babies] refer to babies and the babies that have died in water, that is, babies that have been aborted. Speaking of red children, I cannot help but recall the slogan of “the red children of the Emperor (*tennō no sekishi*). [In Japanese, “red child,” or *akago*, is also used metaphorically to refer to an emperor’s people. In imperial Japan, “the red children of the Emperor, or *tennō no sekishi*, is used to describe the Emperor’s love of his people or the people’s loyalty to the Emperor.] The phrase is of course a dead phrase today, but during wartime, even for people of my age [the author was a primary school students in Manchuria then],<sup>37</sup> it was a phrase that was repeatedly heard.

Here, I see a remarkable coincidence between water children and red children. Is it not as if the people who went to Manchuria and Korea, and more broadly, the grassroots people who made the history of Japan during a time of “the red children of the Emperor,” have all followed the fate of water children?

In this statement, a direct association is established between babies aborted from pregnant repatriates, children victimized and abandoned in repatriation, and imperial subjects sacrificed for the empire in general. Categorizing aborted babies among victimized children represented a new way of conceptualizing abortion that gained currency in the 1960s and 1970s in the mass media, the topic of which will receive a full discussion in a later section. In any case, the association established here propels us to ask to what extent the Japanese imperial project entailed *kogoroshi*, that is, the consumption of its subjects, especially young subjects. From this perspective, repatriated children were merely the untimely surplus of the huge imperial reproduction

<sup>36</sup> The documentary is *Hikiage kō Hakata wan*. This 44-minute, made-for-television documentary was broadcast in Kushu on June 28, 1978. The associated book, largely based on the documentary, is *Mizuko no fu: hikiage koji to okasareta onnatachi no kiroku: Shōwa shi no kiroku* (Tokyo: Gendaishi Shuppankai Hatsubai Tokuma Shoten, 1979). The book will be discussed in detail in later sections. See also Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 116–8.

<sup>37</sup> In 1945, Kamitsubo was a fourth-grade student in Manchuria. See Kamitsubo Takashi, “Imamo sugu sensō no kizu: Minshū no kiroku kizande okaneba,” *Asahi Shimbun*, August 19, 1979.

machine—untimely because they had not grown old enough to be sacrificed for the empire. Izutsu’s husband, a member of the Youth Corps, which recruited boys as young as fourteen, stands for another form of imperial *kogoroshi*. He was first mobilized to immigrate to Manchuria for land reclamation and then drafted into the military. Numerous other Japanese youth followed similar paths, especially during the period of the total war.

Inasmuch as the association between killed or abandoned children and imperial subjects sacrificed for the empire functions as a powerful and critical metaphor in Kamitsubo’s narrative, this narrative runs the risk of oversimplification. Focusing only on the children, it frames *kogoroshi* as primarily an event of victimization. But if we move our focus from the children to the adults, then the event deserves a more nuanced and complicated analysis in terms of human victimhood, agency, and perpetration.

First of all, the tragedy did not concern only a one-to-one murder-victim relationship, but more often than not took place in a collective context that involved many more people. Take Izutsu as an example. At first, she agrees to commit collective suicide because she thinks it is the right way to carry on the Japanese spirit, which is itself an integral part of a collective ideology. However, when she is confronted with the question of “how would anyone explain the situation to your husband,” she hesitates and eventually gives up the thought of suicide. We know that this conflict has an unhappy ending: after repatriation, with the husband himself missing, her husband’s family refuses to accept the dying baby, leading directly to her death. A hidden truth about this conflict is revealed years after it happened. Many years after repatriation, Izutsu reunites with someone repatriated from the same branch-village in Manchuria. To her surprise, he tells Izutsu that the schoolmaster who proposed collective suicide was in fact instructed by a higher repatriation headquarters to organize the repatriation. He concealed the instruction because he thought

committing an honor suicide was the right thing to do. In Izutsu's memoir, the schoolmaster is portrayed as someone who has always firmly believed in Japanese imperial ideology. To save the baby or to kill the baby; to follow the Japanese spirit or to fulfill one's responsibility to one's husband; does the baby belong to the husband's family or to her own family; are imperial subjects supposed to die or live—these questions are not merely about individual decisions, but involve broader familial or social orders. These orders were formerly imposed on individuals as part of a coherent system, but as the empire collapses, they no longer hold together.

And yet this context does not take agency and responsibility away from the adult immediately involved in child-killing. Rather, I argue that the guilty adult nevertheless assumes a complicated role in the violence. She/he is certainly a victim, but also a perpetrator and a *felo-de-se*. In Izutsu's memoir, the woman protagonist is a victim in the sense that the ideology of honor death is closely related to the imperial mobilization of its subjects for warfare. She is also a potential perpetrator; as a perpetrator, she is no longer a passive sufferer, but an active subject who thinks and acts. When she first supports the "suicide party," she buys into the idea of an honor suicide. She tells her baby that "you will die together with your mother" and ties a white headband across the baby's head. In Japan, people tied white headbands to raise morale and to display their Japanese spirit—whatever that may have meant. Therefore, everyone in the "suicide party" in Izutsu's village tied a white headband to express their determination. Finally, she is also a *felo-de-se*, not only because the victimization of the baby is part of the collective suicide, but also because babies have all been part of mothers' physical bodies in a literal sense. Of course, mothers, like Izutsu, may ultimately choose not to kill. This decision involves even more thinking and acting. In the context of repatriation, an environment that is particularly harsh for children, there are just too many things a mother must consider, weigh, desire, and perform to sustain her child's life. As later discussion

will show, this complexity makes it extremely hard and controversial to assign responsibility for murderous action in the contexts of both repatriation and postwar Japan.

The anthropologist Veena Das argues that intimacy and violence are almost always interlocked in the social space, just as they are in the domestic sphere. From this perspective, the literary representation of *kogoroshi* in repatriation, a form of intimate violence that naturally involves both the social and the domestic, will lead us to a more comprehensive understanding of the role individual subjects played in the imperial withdrawal through the lens of the mother-child relationship. Mothers involved in filicide in repatriation were imperial subjects writ large. They were not, as implied by most repatriation literature and mass media in postwar Japan, merely passive victims. They suffered the imperial calamity, they took part in it, and they consumed their own compatriots in the process. They practiced all of these roles by thinking and acting day by day as active subjects. They should not be seen as a neutral or transparent proxy for an unscrupulous state; rather, they actively contributed to the system. In the process, they both victimized other people and were victimized as individuals and as a collective.

Ueno Chizuko, the leading feminist scholar in Japan, points out that the conventional approach to wartime Japanese women as absolute victims is harmful and dangerous. She argues that such a view often displaces people's attention from the important fact that many Japanese women also actively and passionately participated in the imperial enterprise by oppressing local people in colonies or supporting the war on the home front. In her book *Engendering Feminism*, she studies how several influential Japanese feminists of the prewar period, such as Ichikawa Fusae and Yamakawa Kikue, were later deeply involved in war mobilization and propaganda, and argues that an aspiration for women's civil power was behind their activity. Chizuko contends that the study of Japanese women's history should be shifted from the model of what she calls "a victim

historical view” (*higaisha shikan* 被害者史觀) to “a perpetrator historical view” (*kagaisha shikan* 加害者史觀) and that a reflection on women’s history is needed. This reflection, according to her, is crucial to a correct understanding of Japanese imperial history in general.<sup>38</sup>

Stories about *kogoroshi* in repatriation bear similar significance in a more complicated way. Unlike those in Chizuko’s case studies, these repatriates, including women, did not commit violence toward those outside their community; rather, all of the violence took place within the community of Japanese people. Moreover, unlike the feminists in Chizuko’s study who may or may not have been fully aware of the implications of their wartime acts, the adults involved in *kogoroshi* were fully aware of what they were doing and were more often than not stricken with guilt. Finally, these adults did not commit violence out of a desire for power but rather to snatch a minimal hope of survival. The tragedy of *kogoroshi* in repatriation, therefore, sheds light on the issue of the guilt and responsibility of former imperial subjects within the national community, with people outside the community acting only as catalysts or background factors. This allows a deepened reflection on the aspect of implosion during the final days of Japan’s empire. However, as a literary engagement with the process of deterritorialization, stories featuring *kogoroshi* primarily represent this process as struggles strictly internal to the community.

Here a comparison between narratives of *kogoroshi* and rape in repatriation from Manchuria to Japan might be illuminating. The comparison is not about suffering; that is, it is not about which experience is worse than the other. First of all, it makes little sense to make a comparative assessment of suffering. Second, because represented experience is different from experience itself, it is impossible to compare experiences based on how they are represented. Rather, the comparison is helpful in demonstrating how different narratives of different forms of suffering can be used to

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<sup>38</sup> Ueno Chizuko, *Nashonarizumu to jendā* (Tōkyō, Seidosha, 1998), 11–74.

illustrate social discourses.

The experience of rape in repatriation was largely silenced in postwar repatriation literature and mass media. Many factors account for this silence. Studies of trauma and examples in literature show that women's experiences of being raped are extremely difficult to represent in language—to the extent that the experience is often considered unspeakable.<sup>39</sup> Besides, as Lori Watt has observed, there is a collective silence among women who were assaulted by Soviet soldiers in Manchuria during repatriation because "the women had nothing to gain and a great deal to lose by confirming suspicions of the violation." According to Watt, Japanese women raped by Soviet soldiers outside Japan could hardly contribute to the compelling discourse of the Japanese people as victims of World War II. Rather, talking about it would only bring stigmatization. In postwar Japan, people preferred to distance themselves from the suspicious women rather than identify with them.<sup>40</sup> This problem may have been of less concern for Izutsu, who wrote in her eighties, a half-century after the repatriation had ended; but consciously or not, she may have been influenced by the tradition of the genre.

When repatriation literature does evoke rape, women are often rendered purely as victims, or their agency is manifested in the way they shrewdly and narrowly escape the violence. In *The Continental Bride*, sexual violence occurs twice. The first happens when the Soviet soldiers attack the village and go looking for Japanese women. Two are discovered and chased. One, Izutsu's sister, ends up hiding in a huge urn; the other buries herself in a pile of sawdust. After the horror, the two girls feel they have had enough and swallow potassium cyanide—only to find they have survived the next morning. The second time, the Communist army drafts Izutsu and other women

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<sup>39</sup> Mieke Bal, "Visual Rhetoric: The Semiotics of Rape," in *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition: The Northrop Frye Lectures in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 68.

<sup>40</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 125.

into working in a fabric factory, but at night she sees a shadow lying on top of one of the women. The women all act as if they have seen nothing and heard nothing; the next day, Izutsu and several other women flee. In both cases, the women are victims; guilt and responsibility are not easily assigned in either instance.

Moreover, in the case of rape, the perpetrators are almost always men from outside the Japanese community. In reality, it is likely that rape also took place within the Japanese community, but such rape has hardly ever entered narratives about repatriation. Accordingly, stories about rape in repatriation, if they were ever told, were often used in postwar Japan to allegorically map out the relations between Japan and other countries. Naturally in these relations Japan was the pure victim. *Kogoroshi*, in contrast, was an issue that mostly involved the internal troubles of the Japanese community. The stories about this experience in postwar Japan were essentially related to the way the Japanese viewed themselves as they projected their future as citizens of a self-contained postwar nation-state.

### ***The Shooting Star Is Still Alive: The Offset in Early Repatriation Literature and Media***

Important and illuminating as the tragedy of children in Japanese repatriation from Manchuria is, its significance was largely skirted in postwar Japanese society. To be sure, the entire genre of repatriation literature, as well as the repatriation experience itself, was often marginalized in postwar Japan because it took place during the transition from empire to nation.<sup>41</sup> If we think of deterritorialization not only as the physical withdrawal from the geographical frontier but also in

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<sup>41</sup> For example, see Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan*, 59; Pak Yu-ha, “*Hikiage bungaku ni mimi o katamukeru*,” *Ritsumeikan Studies in Language and Culture* 24, no. 4 (2013): 115–8.

terms of the mental working-through of the changes in territory and identity, then it is obvious that the process continued in postwar Japan well after the physical withdrawal had ended. This process was carried out in most cases through a dissociation from, rather than an engagement in, the turbulent imperial history. Acts that purposely end the lives of children are full of complexity, ambiguity, and intensity; as such, there is even less space in literature and media to address them than there is for other repatriation experiences. Looking closely at literature and media reports provides evidence of effort taken to mediate and evade the horrible experience in the early postwar period through the 1950s. In particular, this section will look at Fujiwara Tei's *The Shooting Star Is Still Alive*, which is a classic example of repatriation literature, the film version of Fujiwara's novel, and several newspaper reports.

Fujiwara Tei's *The Shooting Star Is Still Alive* is among the earliest and most representative repatriation-themed novels/memoirs in postwar Japan that "established the historical image of the [Japanese] repatriates."<sup>42</sup> First published in 1949, it has been reprinted numerous times and was also adapted into a film.<sup>43</sup> According to Fujiwara, the book is a work of fiction. As she confesses in the postscript, "I have used true names for me and my three children; for all other characters, I have used pseudonyms. I took the characters and words of people in my group and in other groups as models and recorded the pathetic life in the book, in which I am always the central character."<sup>44</sup> She goes on to write that people who took the same repatriation route would complain that the reality was much worse than the fiction, but as long as she is still living in the beautiful world, she

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<sup>42</sup> Narita Ryūichi, "Hikiage ni kansuru joshō," 156.

<sup>43</sup> The book was first published in 1949 by Hibiya Shuppansha in Tokyo. Some of the reprints are Tokyo: Kaiseisha, 1965, 1976, 1990, 1999, 2015; Tokyo: Seishun Shuppansha, 1971; Tokyo: Chūō Kōron sha, 1976, 1984, 1986, 1994; Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002, 2003; and so forth. The film has the same title as the book and was released in 1949: Film, Kennosuke Tateoka, dir., *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru* (Tokyo: Daiei Kabushiki Kaisha, 1949).

<sup>44</sup> Fujiwara Tei, *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru*, 317.

does not want to depict deserted human beings and call it reality. As for her motivation, she says she wrote to leave something to her then-missing husband and still-young children and to allow herself to start a new life in postwar Japan. Although authors' accounts of their own works are never fully reliable, Fujiwara's postscript is adequate to show that her intention is to work through the trauma and to reintegrate herself into postwar Japanese society.

Once one is aware of the prevalence of *kogoroshi* in repatriation from Manchuria to Japan, finding repeated references to the victimization of children in this classic piece of repatriation literature is not surprising. In August 1945, shortly after the Soviet military launch an attack in Manchuria, Fujiwara and her children join a self-organized repatriation group made up of employees and families of her husband's company, the Bureau of Aerology in Xinjing, and start their journey back to Japan. The group flees from Manchuria to a city in North Korea in the same month, but they are delayed there until the end of July 1946. During this delay, the thirty-nine group members live communally in a shabby house. There, Fujiwara notices that Tamio, an ill-behaved and malnourished six-year-old boy, is treated badly by his stepmother Higashida, but he never cries. By the end of the winter, he has died, and the doctor finds that his body is covered with bruises and festering sores. Though most children are poorly fed at the time, it is clear that Tamio had been abused to death by his stepmother.

As the winter passed, food rationing is stopped and the group has to rely solely on their own efforts to find sustenance. This proves a challenge for Tei and other mothers with several children. When no work is available, they beg and search garbage bins. When even that cannot sustain the children, Sakiyama, the mother of a seven-year-old, a five-year-old, and a newborn baby, asks Fujiwara, "Mrs. Fujiwara, two children and one baby, which is more important for you?" Fujiwara answers that both are important, but Sakiyama replies vaguely that that is for people who can do

both; for her, she can only think of her own situation. One morning the baby is found dead, and the men accompanying Sakiyama to the grave hear her murmuring, "My good baby please forgive your mommy, my good baby please bear with your mommy..." Here Fujiwara hints at child murder.

Later, during the trudge across the thirty-eighth parallel, it is Fujiwara who asks herself the same question. When she feels she is at the end of her strength dragging all her three children across the mountainous borderland, she recalls the question that Sakiyama asked her earlier:

"Mrs. Fujiwara, two children and one baby, which is more important for you?"

These were Mrs. Sakiyama's words.

"Two children and one baby, both are important."

Now I no longer have the confidence to answer my heart like this. I know clearly by reason that I have to sacrifice Sakiko in order to save Masahiro and Masahiko's lives, but looking at the babyish head of little Sakiko, who is loudly sucking the melon, I just don't have the courage or whatsoever is needed to do any harm to Sakiko.<sup>45</sup>

Although in the past she answered Sakiyama that all children were important, at this moment she becomes hesitant. The narrator just hints at the thought that she might give up Sakiko. And what prevents her from doing any harm to the baby girl is described as something against reason, something that is purely out of emotion and affection. The implication is that according to reason, abandoning a baby in this situation is not committing a crime, but is the right thing to do.

In August 1946, Fujiwara and her group finally approach the thirty-eighth parallel that marks the division between North Korea under the Soviets' control and South Korea under the US's control. The trudge across the thirty-eighth parallel lasts for nine days, mostly on foot. Along the way, two people help Fujiwara by taking care of her children, but both end up abandoning them. One is a woman named Sato from Fujiwara's group, who offers to take the two elder children with her, but when she observes that three-year-old Masahiko is dying of the cold, she leaves the two

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<sup>45</sup> Fujiwara Tei, *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru* (Tokyo: Hibiya shuppansha, 1949), 229. My translation. This is the version I use in this chapter, unless otherwise noted. As later discussion will show, this novel has many versions and printings.

children at a resting place and moves on alone. Fujiwara finds them, takes them to a haystack and rubs the younger one for the whole night to bring him around. The next day, she goes to Sato to borrow a large amount of money to hire a bullock to carry the children. Although Sato apparently feels remorse for what she has done, she refuses to give her any money. Fujiwara fiercely accuses Sato of abandoning her children and threatens that if the children die their ghosts will curse her for her entire life. Sato finally agrees to lend money to Fujiwara. Because Fujiwara and her children can barely walk, a Japanese security guard asks a man from a different group to take one of Fujiwara's children with him. In the mountains the man abandons the child, who is later picked up by the Allies.

This novel features several successful and unsuccessful attempts at murdering or abandoning children in the experience of several repatriating mothers. For the young mothers, sustaining their children's lives proves to be a central issue on their repatriation trip. Consequently, *kogoroshi* often turns out to be either the biggest threat from the outside or the deepest fear from the inside.

However, as a fiction writer, Fujiwara describes plots of *kogoroshi* in a way that defuses the tension, circumvents the moral ambivalence, and contains the story well within the framework of the victimization narrative—all for good reasons. The episode of Tamio's death illustrates the point. In the novel, after Higashida's abuse of her stepson is exposed, people are all shocked by her cold-bloodedness. Higashida cries a lot and talks to no one for the whole winter. Later, when Fujiwara's child is dying, she sends for the doctor and raises money from group members for Fujiwara. Fujiwara goes to Higashida to express her gratitude. Quite unexpectedly, Higashida talks about Tamio's death. "The thing called love is pre-decided," she starts, and goes on to explain,

Even if two people mean to love each other, if there is no factor/element (*inshi* 因子) of love between each other, then there is no way they would be able to love each other. ... Some people even cannot love their own children. For them, too, there has been

no common factor/element of mutual love between them from the very beginning. This has been the case between me and Tamio. ... He was a terrifying child. If he lived and grew up, what would he have become. ... I am not a hypocrite. I returned his defiance in his heart with violence. Blood from his head and feet...<sup>46</sup>

Higashida's explanation goes on for two pages, but is eventually cut short by Fujiwara: "Higashida, please stop. I now understand your feeling. Japan's defeat is an important reason and the biggest reason for Tamio's death." Higashida looks relieved and from then on helps Fujiwara even more by taking care of her children, especially the little baby Sakiko. "I like her, Sakiko," she confesses to Fujiwara. When Fujiwara's son is seriously sick and in urgent need of money for treatment, Higashida even raises money among fellow repatriates for Fujiwara. And when she wants to complain to Fujiwara that certain group members had been mean when giving donations, her conversation is again cut short. "Who donated?" Fujiwara asks straightforwardly. "Everyone," Higashida answers. Fujiwara suddenly feels "a warm current in her chest" and exclaims that she is so happy to be in a group where "people's beautiful hearts are united together in difficulty."

The first thing to notice in this episode is that Tamio is Higashida's stepson rather than her biological son. The episode may well have been based on a real event that Fujiwara experienced during repatriation; in any case, however, when writing the novel, it is the author's choice to make Tamio a stepson. Persecuting a stepson to death in repatriation, although still disturbing, would not be as unexpected or shocking for readers as it would be if the boy were the biological son of the abusive woman—plenty of stories about evil stepmothers circulate in different cultures, including the Japanese culture.

Fujiwara's responses to the event and to Higashida's confession are also intriguing. Apparently, the death of Tamio troubles Higashida and propels her to doubt the universality of

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<sup>46</sup> Fujiwara Tei, *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru*, 135–6.

mother love. She speaks to Fujiwara in a confessional manner, clearly expecting to talk the issue through. Many studies have shown that mother love is as institutional as it is natural.<sup>47</sup> Higashida's doubt could potentially start a philosophical discussion about the nature and limit of mother love. However, Fujiwara apparently does not want to go into the horror of the child abuse that Higashida has perpetrated; avoiding further discussion, she quite abruptly states that Japan's defeat caused Tamio's death. This simple solution is soothing to both Higashida and Fujiwara. For Higashida, her self-blame is displaced by the blame of the nation; for Fujiwara, the conclusion allows her to accept Higashida's malicious behavior and thus to reconcile with Higashida. Shortly thereafter, she again cuts short Higashida's complaints about fellow repatriates' hesitation in donating money for her son; instead, she chooses to acknowledge the beautiful side of all members of the group. Fujiwara's responses frame the entire sequence of events both as another victimization narrative and as a narrative about the goodness of human nature.

Several reasons contribute to the author's choice. First, within the context of repatriation and the text of the novel, moral judgement is simplified in the mindset of a repatriating mother: those who help her take care of her children are good; those who do harm to her children are bad. The situation leaves no room for scrutinizing the moral ambiguity and complications associated with ending a child's life. In the case of Tamio's death, what Higashida has done to her stepson is as shocking to Fujiwara as it is to others. Nevertheless, after Higashida helps her to take care of her children, she feels compelled to reconcile with Higashida. This requires that she accept what Higashida did to her stepson in the first place; making "Japan's defeat" the culprit provides a solution and deflects the need for further reflection.

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<sup>47</sup> For example, see Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976).

The story of Sato and the old man abandoning Fujiwara's children indicates a different form of simplification. Their irresponsible behavior appears unacceptably evil to Fujiwara. Sato eventually shows remorse and tries to alter Fujiwara's harsh condemnation by lending her money. The old man, who does not apologize, is characterized as the wickedest character in the novel. He appears several times, and each time involves a conflict with Fujiwara. After she realizes that he has abandoned her child, the worst quarrel of all bursts out between the two. Here, the binary of good and evil is clearly set up according to whether one helps or abandons the protagonist's children. In other words, no further reflection is to be made upon the notions of good and evil, victims and perpetrators, or guilt and responsibility through the case of the horrible crime committed under extreme circumstances. After all, philosophical speculation would not be productive in a circumstance in which the formidable task of daily survival has already exhausted everyone.

The postwar social context may provide a second reason that contributes to the author's choice to frame the events as she does. When the novel was published in 1949, things like *kogoroshi* in repatriation could rarely be fully discussed. Because the temporal distance from the empire, the war, and the repatriation was still very short, it is quite difficult for authors of early repatriation literature to comprehend their sufferings beyond the framework of Japan's immediate defeat. In addition, inasmuch as Fujiwara hopes to start a new life in postwar Japan by writing about her repatriation experience, a narrative of victimization with a bright and hopeful conclusion would serve her purpose best. As we have discussed, a narrative of the sufferings in repatriation resulting from Japan's defeat would ensure that repatriates were represented as victims of war. Establishing this identity would have been crucial to their reintegration into postwar Japanese society.

For both the repatriate Fujiwara and the writer Fujiwara, what is truly hard to deal with is Sakiyama's sacrifice of her baby and her own contemplation of sacrificing her baby. Both episodes are relatively brief, compared to other stories about the victimization of children; in both episodes, moral judgement and social criticism are suspended. However, as the following section will show, Fujiwara has never forgotten the feeling of being a mother who has considered sacrificing her child.

In 1949, Fujiwara's novel was adapted into a film of the same title. In the film, episodes of *kogoroshi* are completely omitted. Rather, her story becomes an archetypal narrative of the great power of mother love that transcends all difficulties in repatriation. During the repatriation, Fujiwara, the protagonist, has never considered abandoning the baby girl. Another baby has died, and the mother cries dramatically in front of her baby's grave. This scene reminds us of Sakiyama in the novel, who asks Fujiwara the difficult question regarding which child is more important and later apologizes to her baby in front of its grave. However, in the film, the baby simply dies suddenly, and the mother says no words from beginning to end. More surprisingly, in the film, Fujiwara's eldest son is not her biological son but her stepson, and yet she treats him as well as her other children, including carrying him across a turbulent river at the risk of her own life. It is still a story of the relationship between stepmother and stepson, but it is no longer about the persecution of a stepson and the uncertainty of mother love. Rather, it is adapted into a celebration of the generosity of mother love. Even more, Fujiwara in the film explains to her friends that she takes good care of all three children because they are "all poor" in repatriation. The suggestion is that the adverse conditions of repatriation, rather than complicating the notion of mother love, further consolidate it. As a result, the film skirts the thorny issue concerning the victimization of children in repatriation. Instead, it is precisely through repatriation that true mother love is revealed.

In mass media in late 1940s and early 1950s, reports of *kogoroshi* in repatriation treat the

event in a similar way to what is seen in Fujiwara's novel. In general, although it was a time when repatriates kept coming back to Japan, the mass media were not eager to cover the topic compared with other forms of hardship experienced by the repatriates during and after their return. In the limited number of reports from major newspapers that address the issue, sensational and extreme forms of filicide are the focus. Nevertheless, these reports show a sympathetic attitude towards the parents, ascribing their wrongdoing to the tragedy of defeat and repatriation.

The earliest example, "The Repentant Double Suicide of a Repatriate Couple," appeared in 1947.<sup>48</sup> The story concerns a male returnee who has choked to death his sick wife in a hospital for repatriates in Japan and committed suicide afterwards. The husband was motivated by the guilt he felt for having murdered his five children during the repatriation from Manchuria. According to the man's will, "I was repatriated from Manchuria last August. On the way, I thought too much and killed my five children. I want to settle my inhuman behavior with death." The report concludes that "it is a repatriation tragedy that calls for sympathy." Guilt and the will for self-punishment are expressed from the perspective of the perpetrator, while the report shows understanding towards the perpetrator, casting him as a victim of the "repatriation tragedy." In particular, although the man murdered his wife, the event is framed as a "double suicide" in the title. In Japanese tradition, many "double suicides" take the form of the man killing the woman first and then killing himself.<sup>49</sup> Using this frame highlights the man's identity as a victim rather than as a filicide/uxoricide/suicide.

Another report in 1953, "Killing Two Children by Poison at the End of the War: Refused to Return out of Self-Reproach," presents a more fleshed-out story. A woman refused to be repatriated

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<sup>48</sup> "Hikiage fūfu zange no shinjū," *Yomiuri shinbun*, May 10, 1947.

<sup>49</sup> See Satō Kiyohiko, *Nippon shinjūkō* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 1998).

from Manchuria and remained there for eight years. In 1953, she sent her parents a letter explaining her decision. During repatriation, her group leader distributed poison to her and ordered that she kill all her young children and the elderly. She obeyed with tears and only took the eldest child with her. Later, both her husband and her one remaining child died. She felt “sinful,” so she decided to stay with “the ghosts of my beloved children.” The report then quotes her father’s long speech that it was not her fault but the fault of the war, and that he would wait for her to return to her hometown where she would forget everything that happened in the past. In the report, we again see the pattern of remorse over filicide during repatriation being understood and forgiven by people in Japan.

In short, in early repatriation literature and media reports, although stories about the victimization of children in repatriation from Manchuria are exposed to readers, the complexity is truncated to allow it to fit the victimization narrative of repatriation in general. The true horror and the disturbing ambiguity of the issue are offset by sympathetic narratives of Japanese defeat and perpetrator guilt—mostly in cases of filicide; or by indignant and categorical moral criticism of the perpetrator—mostly in cases of children murdered by strangers. In other words, these early representations of the trauma of repatriation either circumscribe it within the framework of war abnormality or explain it through a binary discourse of morality. Both treatments prevent the event from being thoroughly worked through in postwar times and prefigure the further public dissociation from it in the 1970s.

### **Dissociation and Reterritorialization: *Kogoroshi* in Repatriation and in Postwar Japan**

In this section, I will investigate how mass media in the 1970s sensationalized contemporary incidents of filicide as a significant social issue, while consciously or unconsciously dissociating

them from filicide that took place during Manchurian repatriation. This dissociation indicates an effort to sever the postwar nation-state from the prewar and wartime empire as well as its postwar aftermath; it also represents the need of the nation-state to reestablish itself as a peaceful economic body catching up with developed countries at full speed. The dissociation was necessary because the postwar emergence was, in many senses, nothing but a new round of national territorialization in which the spatial expansion in the previous round collapsed and reemerged into the expansion of national economic power. In the process, new regulations of social relations that endorsed the new national identity were imposed upon individuals within the domestic space, and society became less and less compromising towards behavior that challenged notions of idealized motherhood and female reproduction. Here, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of territorialization is illuminating. For them, territorialization is not merely a spatial concept. They use it to describe, among other things, the mechanism of how certain types of ruling power capture their subjects by structuring certain types of social relations and exchanges that facilitate their rule.<sup>50</sup> Thinking from the broader notion of territorialization, those on the margins of both the geographical and the metaphorical territory of a ruling power can be seen as frontier beings and may share a similar perspective and have similar critical power.

The social discourse over *kogoroshi* in postwar Japan was constantly changing from the early postwar years to the 1970s. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Japan was still struggling with postwar poverty, mass murders at children's welfare institutions and the common practice of trafficking children were what attracted the media's attention.<sup>51</sup> From the 1960s onward, however,

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<sup>50</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 222–31.

<sup>51</sup> Kodomo No Niji Jōhō Kenshū Sentā, *Gyakutai no enjohō ni kansuru bunken kenkyū: Heisei 15nendo kenkyū hōkokusho, dai ichi pō 1970 nendai made, Sengo nihon shakai no kodomo no kikiteki jōkyō to iu shiten kara no shinri shakaiteki bunseki* (Yokohama: Yokohama Hakubōkai Kodomo No Niji Jōhō Kenshū Sentā, 2004), 1.

filicide for reasons other than poverty emerged as a social concern. The backdrop is that as Japan entered the track of high-speed economic development and consequent urbanization, family values and children's rights were emphasized both in government policies and by the mass media.<sup>52</sup> Newspaper reports on filicide started to proliferate roughly in 1968 and exploded in 1973 and 1974. In 1973, several major newspapers covered the issue at a frequency of one report per three days, on average.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, the focus shifted from filicide in general to maternal infanticide and to the more fundamental anxiety about motherhood (*bosei*). In the reports, the pattern of identifying mothers as perpetrators and children as victims is established.<sup>54</sup>

In fact, the increase of social concern over *kogoroshi* in the 1970s has no correlation—or reverse correlation, more precisely—with the actual change in the number of infanticides and child murders in contemporary society. Statistics show that the percentage of all forms of *kogoroshi* in Japan steadily decreased in the postwar period. In other words, “the child crisis” in the 1970s was more of a media event than a real event. Nevertheless, the government responded to the social concern. In 1973, the Ministry of Welfare launched a survey on “the issue of infanticide that has become the focus of social concern recently.”<sup>55</sup>

However, as far as I can find, during the entire decade when society was highly concerned

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<sup>52</sup> For example, in 1963, the Ministry of Welfare published “The White Paper on Children’s Welfare” (*Jidō fukushi hakusho*) and a free textbook titled “Children Are in a Dangerous Situation” (*komodo wa kikiteki jōkyō*). In 1964, The Children’s Bureau of the Ministry of Welfare was renamed “the Children and Family’s Bureau.” See *Kodomo No Niji Jōhō Kenshū Sentā, Gyakutai no enjohō ni kansuru bunken kenkyū: Heisei 15nendo kenkyū hōkokusho, dai ichi pō 1970 nendai made, Sengo nihon shakai no kodomo no kikiteki jōkyō to iu shiten kara no shinri shakaiteki bunseki*, 1; 21.

<sup>53</sup> Tama Yasuko, *Boseiai to iu seido: kogoroshi to chūzetsu no poritikusu* (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 2001), 36.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 71–96. For a thorough list of major cases concerning *kogoroshi* and persecution from 1945 to 1975, see *Kodomo No Niji Jōhō Kenshū Sentā, “Gyakutai no enjohō ni kansuru bunken kenkyū: Heisei 15nendo kenkyū hōkokusho, dai ichi pō 1970nendai made, Sengo nihon shakai no kodomo no kikiteki jōkyō to iu shiten kara no shinri shakaiteki bunseki,”* 21–2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 34

with the behavior of parents—especially mothers’ irresponsible disposal of children—seldom has anyone related this concern to its historical precedent in repatriation, except for one article written by Fujiwara Tei. One might think this was simply because most Japanese people were unaware of what had really happened to mothers and children during repatriation from Manchuria. Fujiwara Tei’s participation in the discussion suggests otherwise.

In October 1969, *Asahi Shimbun*, a major newspaper in Japan, published a special column on filicide. The column consists of an article on a single case of infanticide by a father, a collection of briefings on a series of cases of parent infanticide that had been released by the police, and two writers’ comments on the issue. The motivations for infanticide revealed in this column include “a drunk father losing his sanity,” “a mother’s dissatisfaction with her baby’s slow eating,” “a woman’s lover being annoyed by her baby,” “a mother feeling shame for having too many children,” and so on. The year 1969 falls between two major discourses concerning *kogoroshi* in postwar Japan. At the time, the victimization of children due to poverty was no longer a prominent topic in the media; at the same time, infanticide was not yet exclusively tied to the notion of motherhood.

The same column also features two comments written by two established writers. The first response is by Nada Inada, who criticizes the tendency to treat children as parents’ private property for leading to parents’ irresponsible disposal of their children. The comments by the second writer, Fujiwara Tei, are as follows:

I think we should see it [*kogoroshi*] as a product of the time that has gone mad. Right after the end of the war, when I was repatriated from outside Japan, I observed parents killing their children in front of my eyes, but that was also an abnormal situation. Materially speaking, there has been no time as abundant as now, but the stimulation of desire is so excessive that the sense of hunger brought by insatiability can be even stronger than in prewar times. Behaviors like *kogoroshi* are deeply rooted in insane trends of society. Besides, a more direct reason would be that people forget about the purpose of having children and go for sex.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Fujiwara Tei et al., “Tsuyoi Shibutsuka ishiki; Seidake ni nozomu keikō,” *Asahi Shimbun*, Oct. 24, 1969.

Fujiwara seems to take on a repatriate's perspective, as she believes there is something in common between filicide in wartime and postwar time. What she grasps is the feeling of hunger, whether physical or spiritual. She does not mention this hunger theory at all in her novel *The Shooting Star Is Still Alive*, yet it is clear that she has never forgotten the horrible feeling of that moment of the postwar years. In this way, a shared feeling connects the two contexts of filicide.

But the connection ceases here. In Fujiwara's comments, she makes it clear that in repatriation, hunger was a physical experience; in contrast, in contemporary society, hunger is a psychological state caused by "excessive stimulation of desire." The implication is that Japan in 1969 is sufficiently prosperous that economic straits can no longer excuse parents who kill children. Rather, the problem has to be accounted for by insatiable desire. Following Fujiwara's logic, perceptions of economic difference between repatriation conditions and postwar society make *kogoroshi* in the past irrelevant to anything that is happening in present society.

However, abundant studies have shown that in the early 1970s, Japanese people were not as affluent as most Japanese were led to believe. In the 1960s, the rocketing GDP as well as a variety of social and political discourses about Japan's economic recovery created the myth of Japanese affluence. In 1970, a nationwide survey shows that 90% of Japanese people believed their standards of living fell in the "middle" range, a range that is widely considered analogous to the Western notion of "middle class." Contrary to that perception, a sociological study of the actual living standard of the Tokyo population estimates that 20.5% of Tokyo individuals were living below the official poverty line. Studies also show that the exaggeration of national and individual wealth in the period of economic growth led to social neglect of the poor.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Koji Taira, "Dialectics of Economic Growth, National Power, and Distributive Struggles," in *Postwar Japan as*

Indeed, in the reports of cases of filicide published in the same column as Fujiwara Tei's comments, there is no mention of the economic conditions of the parents who killed their children. Rather, reasons like "a women's lover is annoyed by her baby [who is not his]" subtly associates her infanticide with extramarital sexual desire; that of "a mother being annoyed by her baby eating too slowly" portrays an extremely impatient and selfish mother. This does not mean that the parents have no economic issues, but simply means that those issues are not acknowledged. In fact, up to the year 2000, "economic hardship" is identified as the first reason for domestic persecution of children in Japan.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, Fujiwara's distinction between *kogoroshi* in repatriation and in postwar society, or between two types of hunger, in effect contributes to the social construction of the illusion of postwar affluence.

Regrettably, when the editor assigned a title to Fujiwara's comments, it severed even the thinnest connection between past and present. The editor's title for the two writers' comments is "Strong Privatization Consciousness; The Tendency to Desire Sex Only" ("Tsuyoi Shibutsuka ishiki; Seidake ni nozomu keikō" 強い私物化意識: 性だけに望む傾向). In this title, the second half represents Fujiwara's views. The key words in her comments, repatriation and hunger, are nowhere to be found—we almost suspect that the editor has read only her last sentence: "Besides, a more direct reason would be that people forget about the purpose of having children and go for sex." More likely, the editor cannot imagine or does not consider the possibility that readers would find any relationship between filicidal mothers dealing with repatriation and women in Japan in 1969 convincing or appealing. The title, as a last stroke, completely dissociates past tragedy from contemporary Japanese society.

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*History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 167–86.

<sup>58</sup> Hiroi Tazuko, "Kakukazokuka wa katei no kyōiku kinō o teika sasetaka," *Kuōtarii seikatsu fukushi kenkyū* 57 (2006): 9.

There are many ways to draw connections between the two cases of *kogoroshi*, all of which may help illuminate both cases. First of all, Fujiwara's "hunger theory" is more insightful than it appears at first glance. The relation between mothers' hunger and filicidal behavior, especially infanticide, has been well discussed by anthropologists. For example, Nancy Scheper-Hughes has observed that in Brazil, a feeling of what she calls "hunger madness" is thought to drive mothers to kill their children. She argues that "the phenomenology of hunger in the Northeast [of Brazil] must form the backdrop of any discussion of child death [and] mother love." Here she mainly refers to the biological hunger for food, though she is aware that the body and the mind that experience hunger are culturally inscribed.<sup>59</sup> In 1971, the iconic Japanese radical feminist Tanaka Mitsu published an essay on the contemporary issue of maternal infanticide in Japan. In this article, Tanaka metaphorically attributes the crime to mothers' hunger. She explains that "the hunger of not being alive" can drive a mother to stake everything on the child but doing so may not satisfy her need to feel alive. If her hunger is still not alleviated by her stake in the child, she may "put her hands around the child's neck" to stop the endless hunger cycle.<sup>60</sup>

Underlying hunger theories is the problem of the mother's overidentification with the child. This problem applies to mothers' victimization of their children in both repatriation and in postwar Japan. In other words, when a mother murders her child out of "hunger madness," she consciously or unconsciously associates her child with her own hunger. As Tanaka Mitsu argues, it is not that women want to treat their children as disposable private property; rather the way in which women are assigned the social role of reproduction deprives them of their own independent lives. As a

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<sup>59</sup> Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 129.

<sup>60</sup> Tanaka Mitsu, "Ondoro, ondoro, ona ga kodomo o koroshiteku, ondoro, odoron, ona ga kodomo o koroshiteku," in *Inochi no onnatachi e: torimidashi ūman ribu-ron* (Tōkyō: Tahata Shoten Shinsha, 1972), 318.

result, they are compelled to identify with their children more than with themselves. Confined by such social expectations, a woman may vent all her resentment on her children—the objects that are closest to her but also that she experiences as having drained her vitality.<sup>61</sup> In the more extreme case of mother-child double suicide, a pattern that is often seen in mother filicide in Japan, women consider their own lives and their children's as one and the same thing—terminating one requires terminating the other. To account for this overidentification, Tanaka Mitsu points to gendered labor distribution, which is common in most modern societies. The 1940s and the 1970s were periods when the expansion of imperial and national power called for social discourse that emphasized and idealized motherhood; with this idealization, the identification between mother and child became even more intensified.

Moving to other similarities, as we have discussed, even the economic and social conditions of the two filicide cases were not as different as Fujiwara and most contemporary readers believed. In the postwar case, economic hardship and social pressure were still major factors. On the other hand, as we have seen in fiction and memoirs, it is not so easy to explain away filicide in repatriation cases as merely due to the abnormality of war. Rather, whether in Higashida's persecution of her stepson Tamio or in Izutsu's plan to commit double suicide, the fundamental understanding of motherhood and mother-child relationships in Japan and in general was a contributing factor. Furthermore, in both cases, for those who killed, a tripled identity as victim, perpetrator, and *felo-de-se* was at work. All these factors suggest that although repatriation was a more desperate and chaotic circumstance than that of postwar Japanese society, the crisis of children in the former was but an intensifying and magnifying mirror of the latter. After all, as the anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom points out, “what people tolerate in peace shapes what they will

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

tolerate in war.”<sup>62</sup>

Unfortunately, this continuity between the past and the present is rendered invisible in cultural representation. In early repatriation literature and news reports, people who kill children could be the children’s mothers, their fathers, or strangers; as for the mothers, they are often forced by another authority to carry out the acts and are afflicted with guilt as a result. In news coverage about *kogoroshi* in the 1970s, however, perpetrators are mostly parents, especially mothers, who are portrayed as murdering out of their own will or weakness with little feeling of remorse. It is as if the victimization model, configured to steer the nation away from the imperial past, and the demonization model, established to confirm the postwar prosperity, are relegated to completely different spheres.

This disconnection is unfortunate, but there are reasons that explain it. The two models have to be dissociated to allow a new round of reterritorialization to occur and work to its full effect—this time in the name of an economically vital nation. The new round of reterritorialization entails the construction of a myth of national power by political and media powers. The mobilization of people, especially women, through this myth of national power is not very different from the mobilization that operated in the past through the illusion of imperial power. In 1964, when Prime Minister Satō Eisaku made a public appeal for Japanese women to bear more children based on labor shortages, women’s groups immediately noticed the echo back to the rhetoric of the wartime eugenic policies.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, in the 1970s, when Japanese mass media made filicide a social issue and moralized it as the loss of motherhood, two messages were broadcast: first, by denying that poverty may still have been an important factor involved in the violence, media messages

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<sup>62</sup> Carolyn Nordstrom, *Girls and Warzones* (Uppsala, Sweden: Life & Peace Institute, 1997), 1.

<sup>63</sup> Sandra Buckley, “Altered States: The Body Politics of ‘Being-Woman,’” in *Postwar Japan as History*, 351.

reinforced the myth of postwar affluence; second, by idealizing motherhood as having universal value independent of socioeconomic context, media messages tightened women's identification with reproduction through moral codes. Both messages work towards mobilizing biopower for the expansion of national and, in particular, economic power.

For an ambitious postwar nation-state, past disaster was nothing but an ominous curse. *Kogoroshi* in repatriation was essentially a destructive result brought by the previous round of imperial territorialization, during which the empire actively exported women and encouraged them to give birth to children in a geographical expanse beyond its recognized borders. The children's tragedy in repatriation marked the total bankruptcy of this earlier ambition. Thus, it had to be blocked from the progression of the latest reterritorialization cycle. Members of the postwar nation-state could not be reminded of the past failure and were given the impression that today's new ambition was entirely different from past ambitions and would not fail.

In this national economic territorialization, those who were socially poor and women who behaved against social expectations for motherhood were identified with a new frontier that was created and marginalized in order to maintain the identity and value of the center. Individuals in both these groups consequently gained power to criticize the center; their critical power was even greater when they stood at the intersection of the two categories. Social margins are, more often than not, correlated. As we have discussed, the postwar fever for and myth of economic growth led to the neglect of the poor, changes in reproduction policy, and the stigmatization of mothers who killed or abandoned their children, all at the same time. As this new form of territorialization took hold, a whole set of social relations and behavior that embodied national power were imposed on individuals; this imposition sacrificed full consideration of the rights and conditions of the groups that it marginalized. Mothers who murdered their children were typically poor; being

impoverished and refusing to be mothers, they embodied two social margins in one body. Their destructive behaviors epitomized, in an extreme form, the violence and paradox embedded in the process. Viewed from the perspective of Tanaka Mitsu's more radical and revolutionary framework, mother filicide represents the resistance and revenge "of the womb" against socially oppressive power.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, in mass media representations of the 1970s, filicidal mothers were dissociated from historical and social conditions. They were dismissed as immoral and abnormal and deprived of any critical power.

### **Re-association and Reflection: Abortion in Repatriation and in Postwar Japan**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new form of *kogoroshi* associated with repatriation emerged: the abortion of women repatriates' unwanted babies that they carried after being raped by foreigners during repatriation. In other words, *kogoroshi* was used to eliminate the unwanted transnational blood associated with Japan's imperial history from the victimized women's bodies and therefore from the postwar Japanese land. Post-repatriation abortion was apparently a traumatic experience for all parties involved, but no literature or media mentioned it explicitly when it happened. Accordingly, women and their aborted children were sacrificed and then silenced for a smooth transition from the imperial tolerance of transnationality to the national emphasis on the purity of the Japanese blood. However, texts about repatriates' abortions emerged in a cluster in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as if competing to uncover this uncomfortable history. Because such articles were in part inspired by the social discourse on abortion in general in the

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<sup>64</sup> Tanaka Mitsu, *Inochi no onnatachi e: torimidashi ūman ribu-ron*, 196. See also Setsu Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 25–6.

1970s in Japan, they can be seen as a reflection on history from a contemporary perspective. This encounter between the past and the present is in many ways problematic, but it nevertheless suggests the critical power that a reflection on the historical frontier transnationality may have borne in postwar Japanese national society.

According to Tama Yasuko, abortion and *kogoroshi* were two major social discussions concerning motherhood in the 1970s. They have different origins, but were eventually placed in the same category. Abortion became an issue roughly in 1949. In order to cope with postwar poverty, the government promulgated the Eugenic Protection Law (*yusei hogo hō* 優生保護法), in which abortion for “economic reasons” or to “avoid children out of marriage” was legalized. Consequently, the abortion rate started to increase in 1951 and peaked in 1955. In the mass media of the time, messages that fewer children would lead to happier family life and a stronger nation often appeared. From then on, religious and political groups constantly criticized the legalization of abortion. In the 1960s, as Japan has gradually overcome its postwar poverty and started to encounter labor shortages in its high-speed economic development, criticism of abortion became even more intense. In the early 1970s, the government seriously considered restraining abortion due to changing social conditions. An official proposal to revise the Eugenic Protection Law to criminalize abortion for economic reasons was under discussion. In the end, the proposal did not become law, but social debates continued throughout the 1970s.<sup>65</sup>

Entering the 1970s, the mass media started to frame abortion as a particular form of filicide. This framing eventually led to the merging of the two originally separate social discussions under the single framework of “the loss of motherhood” (*bosei no sōshitsu* 母性の消失). This merging was possible because both social phenomena were moralized in public discussion in the late 1960s

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<sup>65</sup> Tama Yasuko, *Boseiai to iu seido: kogoroshi to chūzetsu no poritikusu*, 107–45.

and 1970s. Earlier, the abortion discussion had been more about eugenic regulations; that of child murder and persecution had been about children welfare. Both discussions were primarily concerned with how national policies should respond to changing social realities. In the 1970s, however, many newspapers collated reports on abortion and filicide on one page and highlighted the key word of motherhood in the comments. In other words, abortion and filicide were seen as a continuity that reflected the mothers' indifference to children's (and fetuses') lives and rights.<sup>66</sup>

The integration of the two categories continued throughout the 1970s.

In 1979, the journalist Kamitsubo Takashi (上坪隆 1935–1997) produced a documentary about the victimization of women and children during repatriation. Shortly afterward, he published a photographic book, *Songs of the Aborted Children: Records of Repatriation Orphans and Violated Women* (*Mizuko no fu: hikiage koji to okasareta onnatachi no kiroku: Shōwa shi no kiroku* 水子の譜: 引揚孤児と犯された女たちの記録昭和史の記録), based on the documentary.<sup>67</sup> Kamitsubo was repatriated from Manchuria in 1946 as an eleven-year-old boy. In the mid-1970s, he investigated the history of repatriating orphans and pregnant women from Korea and Manchuria. During his investigation, a doctor he interviewed told him about the abortions he performed at Hakata, one of the major repatriation ports, in the late 1940s. He concluded his exploration in the documentary and the book.<sup>68</sup>

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, “Orphans at Shōfukuryō,” depicts the pathetic life of orphans in the repatriation orphanage Shōfukuryō. The second part, “Songs of the Aborted Children” [mizuko, lit. water children], tells the stories of women who were raped by

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 147–69.

<sup>67</sup> Kamitsubo Takashi, *Mizuko no fu: hikiage koji to okasareta onnatachi no kiroku: Shōwa shi no kiroku* (Tokyo: Gendaishi Shuppankai Hatsubai Tokuma Shoten, 1979).

<sup>68</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 117.

foreign men during repatriation, became pregnant, and received abortions at repatriation ports in Japan. The stories are based on the author's interviews with women survivors, their families, and former health staff who performed abortions at a repatriates' sanatorium in the city of Futsukaichi. The author's detailed reconstruction of the procedure of intact dilation and extraction includes some sensational language that is extremely disturbing. For example, one former surgeon recalls in vivid detail how he and his colleagues performed a head-piercing operation for a fetus of more than eight months, an operation that causes the immediate death of the baby. The purpose is said to "protect the sick mother and to mute the baby from crying." The description is presented in the form of a direct quote by the surgeon. The vividness of the direct quote renders the whole process all the more unbearable.<sup>69</sup>

Even more shocking, though, are several photos included in both the documentary and the book, taken by the photographer Iiyama Tatsuo. Iiyama was an established photographer in postwar Japan, well-known for a series of photos that portrayed repatriates from Manchuria and Korea. After he was repatriated from Korea, Iiyama sneaked back into Manchuria to photograph repatriating Japanese women and children. He also took photographs of his doctor friends caring for the returned orphans and women at a repatriation port in Japan. Some are of doctors performing abortions. He published many of his repatriation-related photographs, but not those of abortion procedures. In the late 1970s, Iiyama allowed Kamitsubo to use the unpublished photos in his own work. Kamitsubo included three of them in his book. Among them, two depict a woman lying on an operation table with her legs spread apart while several doctors and nurses are performing an abortion. One shows two bloody and deformed fetuses delivered after labor induction and disposed of in oval metal containers. Each metal container, with a well-developed fetus in it, resembles a

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<sup>69</sup> Kamitsubo Takashi, *Mizuko no fu: hikiage koji to okasareta onnatachi no kiroku: Shōwa shi no kiroku*, 195–6.

pregnant womb, except that the womb in this scene is made of cold metal and the fetus it holds is dead. This last photo is placed on top of the doctor's description of the head-piercing operation.

Although Kamitsubo makes no mention of the contemporary social discussion of abortion in his book, it is likely that the discussion informed his own treatment of repatriation abortion as a form of *kogoroshi*. In other words, his research was made possible only through a reconnection between the past and the present. The structure of the book, a coupling of stories of dying children and aborted babies, closely resembles the integration of the two categories of *kogoroshi* and abortion in the media space. The author treats the two types of tragedy as continuous. Moreover, at the end of the second part of the book about abortion, he quotes a nurse as saying that if a mixed-race baby was not aborted but was delivered as normal, the hospital would end its life by injection.<sup>70</sup> Here, infanticide and abortion are framed as two remedies to the same problem—getting rid of mixed-race babies. Finally, the aforementioned description of the surgery clearly shows that the author hopes to emphasize the murderous violence involved in abortion operations, which echoes the media's changing approach to abortion in the 1970s. Kamitsubo's way of framing repatriation abortion was unprecedented. In the past, the issue of repatriation abortion had rarely been discussed in the public sphere. According to Watt, in 1953, a major magazine published an article that depicted the screening and abortions for women returnees as a humane solution to an awful but perhaps unavoidable situation, the violence of war.<sup>71</sup> This perspective finds its place in certain interviews quoted in Kamitsubo's book,<sup>72</sup> but the overall framework of the book goes farther to focus on the process of abortion itself as another form of violence.

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<sup>70</sup> Kamitsubo Takashi, *Mizuko no fu: hikiage koji to okasareta onnatachi no kiroku: Shōwa shi no kiroku*, 237.

<sup>71</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 116.

<sup>72</sup> Kamitsubo Takashi, *Mizuko no fu: hikiage koji to okasareta onnatachi no kiroku: Shōwa shi no kiroku*, 186–7.

Defining repatriation abortion as *kogoroshi* enhances the critical power of Kamitsubo's project in several ways. First, in terms of history, the connection deepens our understanding of the violence involved in the process of Japan's (de)territorialization. On a most obvious level, it inspires the author to make the criticism that the ideology of imperial expansion turns its people into "water children." This metaphor is built upon his perception of abortion as essentially a form of fatal violence and in turn sustains the broader criticism of imperialism and militarism that he intends. In general, Kamitsubo attempts to place the tragedy of repatriated women and children in the context of the violence that the empire and its militaries inflict upon civilians. In his documentary, he inserts a few pieces of evidence about the actions of Japanese military men during the 1937 Nanjing Atrocity.<sup>73</sup> Kamitsubo's father was an officer in Kanto Army in Manchuria, so his experience of military violence may have been more intimate than usual.<sup>74</sup>

More specifically, the author's emphasis on the victimization of women and (aborted) children during abortion highlights an important dimension of Japan's deterritorialization from empire to nation: the effort to rebuild racial purity by force. When Japan was an empire, the purity of the Japanese race was compromised to some degree in order to promote racial assimilation and integration in the colonies.<sup>75</sup> For example, colonial governments in both Korea and Taiwan encouraged interracial marriage between the Japanese and the local people.<sup>76</sup> In Japanese

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>74</sup> "Imamo sugu sensō no kizu: Minshū no kiroku kizande okaneba."

<sup>75</sup> Of course, at the same time, the imperial government also needed to highlight certain types of racial differences, so as to maintain the hierarchy between the colonizers and the colonized. For a case study of "discriminatory assimilation" in colonial Taiwan, see Leo Ching, *Becoming Japanese: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 89–132. For the case of colonial Korea, see Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> See Kimberly Kono, *Romance, Family, and Nation in Japanese Colonial Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 75–118.

Manchukuo, although interracial marriage among civilians was never formally promoted, the Japanese government arranged a symbolic interracial marriage between the Japanese royal family in the metropole and the Manchu royal family in Manchukuo.<sup>77</sup> However, because the empire was reduced to a nation in a humiliating manner, concern over racial purity suddenly touched the nerves of people in domestic Japan. Right after the war and into the 1950s, the anxiety that women returnees would bring venereal disease and mixed-race children to Japan and thus threaten “the purity of the Japanese blood” was expressed both in public media and by individuals in power. This anxiety formed the backdrop to the government’s decision to make abortion operations available to the women, despite the fact that abortion had yet to be formally legalized at the time.<sup>78</sup> Thus, during the imperial period Japanese people were encouraged to marry Korean, Chinese, and Taiwanese people in the colonies. The context of repatriation contrasted with this expectation. Women returnees were expected to abort babies with non-Japanese blood, and it was alleged that they carried such babies only due to having been raped.

We might think that most of the unwanted pregnancies among Japanese women were associated with the Soviet soldiers who invaded Manchuria and North Korea towards the end of the war, as this view was typical of the discourse circulated in postwar Japan.<sup>79</sup> A record of patients quoted in Kamitsubo’s book suggests otherwise. The record was made in 1946 by a doctor who worked at the Fukukachi Sanatorium. It notes that among forty-seven women who carried unwanted babies, twenty-eight had been violated by Koreans, eight by Soviet Russians, four by

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<sup>77</sup> In 1937, a marriage arrangement was made between the Japanese royal Lady Hiro Saga and the Manchu Prince Pujie, brother of the Manchukuo Emperor Piyi.

<sup>78</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 112–4; Kozy Kazuko Amemiya, “The Road to Pro-Choice Ideology in Japan: A Social History of the Contest between the State and Individuals over Abortion” (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 1993), 161–4.

<sup>79</sup> Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*, 112–4.

Chinese, three by Americans, one by a Taiwanese, and one by a Filipino. The record also explains that the number reflects the situation in 1946, when most returnees were from the Korean Peninsula; it goes on to speculate that things might change when official repatriation from Manchuria is launched on a large scale.<sup>80</sup> As is seen, despite the Soviet invasion in North Korea, rape by local men was the source of most mixed-race pregnancies among Japanese women who were given abortions. This fact indicates possible sentiments of revenge among former colonial males, who might have sought to reclaim their dominance over former colonizers by domesticating the physical bodies of their female compatriots. At the same time, it implies that when domestic Japanese worried that the mixed-race children would threaten the “purity of the Japanese blood,” most of the targeted children had blood that mixed Japanese bloodlines with the bloodlines of one or more of its former imperial subjects. Back in the heyday of the empire, mixed-race children of this kind were the result of interracial marriage and thus the symbol of imperial consolidation. When the empire was diminished to a nation, however, these same children were the ominous signs of defeat, humiliation, and contamination—an evil that had to be expelled by force.

This anxiety about the Japanese race had been openly articulated in domestic Japan ever since the end of the war, but it was not until Kamitsubo published his book that its violent potential was fully revealed. As previously discussed, in the 1940s and 1950s, if the abortion of mixed-race babies was mentioned in the mass media, the main story was that a solution had been provided to the pathetic women who had been violated by foreign men during repatriation. In this discourse, sexual violation was framed as a violence of war, while abortion was glorified as a heroic remedy to the aftermath of the violence. Kamitsubo, by approaching repatriation abortion as infanticide, highlighted the similarly disturbing violence entailed in abortion itself. The killing element in

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<sup>80</sup> Kamitsubo Takashi, *Mizuko no fu: hikiage koji to okasareta onnatachi no kiroku: Shōwa shi no kiroku*, 189–90.

repatriation abortion propels us to ask: if it was the foreign men who impregnated the women in the first place, who, except for the women themselves, made the women think that the only proper solution to the babies was to terminate their lives? Just as a collective mechanism that links the female body with national dominance was at work behind individual rapists, another discourse that defines national integrity by the purity of the blood constitutes the subtext of the pregnant women's choice. The "water children" bespeak the irreducible incongruity between Japan's self-conceptualization as an empire and as a postwar nation in terms of blood and people it needed to come to terms with in the process of deterritorialization. We might well say that the obsession with the abortion of mixed-race children in postwar Japan reveals the fragility of the alleged racial consolidation in the imperial period—fragile because it never challenged the fundamental idea of differentiating people by blood in the first place.

In addition to shedding new light on history, Kamitsubo's research also, intentionally or coincidentally, participated in the contemporary discussion of abortion in a productive way. His documentary, broadcast in Kyushu on June 28, 1978, generated a good deal of press in the local papers.<sup>81</sup> In August 1978, three months after the broadcast of the documentary, a physician who had worked at the Fukukachi Sanatorium published a memoir about his experience in the *Journal of the Alumni Association of Kyushu University*. In 1979, in an article titled "Those Who Dedicated Themselves to the Establishment of the Eugenic Protection Law behind the Scene" (Yuseihogoho seiritsu no kage no kōrōsha 優生保護法成立の影の功労者), the abortion operations for women returnees were again mentioned as part of the history that eventually propelled the establishment of the Eugenic Protection Law that legalized abortion in 1949.<sup>82</sup> The same year, Kamitsubo

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Kozy Kazuko Amemiya, "The Road to Pro-Choice Ideology in Japan: A Social History of the Contest between the State and Individuals over Abortion," 162.

published his book. Finally, in 1980, *Tokyo Newspaper* published an essay series titled “New Human Conditions” (*Shin Ningen no Jōken* 新人間の条件) throughout the entire month of January. The series presents a thorough overview of the Japanese people’s changing perspective on family and reproduction from the prewar time to the present day. In this series, the history of repatriates’ abortions was again evoked to account for the relatively early legalization of abortion in 1949 in Japan compared to other countries in the world.<sup>83</sup>

We are not entirely sure whether articles published following Kamitsubo’s documentary and book were influenced by him. In any case, in retrospect, Kamitsubo’s works were part of an active social debate that attempted to connect the contemporary issue of abortion to the disturbing history of repatriation. In the 1970s, a time when abortion was increasingly demonized as a universal evil involving murder, Kamitsubo and other authors’ interventions from a historical perspective help contextualize the issue. To be sure, none of the authors deny the violent dimension involved in abortion in general and in repatriation abortion in particular; on the contrary, the critical power of Kamitsubo’s project is in part derived from the acknowledgement of this dimension. Moreover, their stands on abortion are ambivalent. Kamitsubo is apparently sympathetic to both the women and the health staff, but he represents abortion as absolutely horrific and unbearable. The 1979 article “Those Who Dedicated Themselves to the Establishment of the Eugenic Protection Law behind the Scene” was written to celebrate the law that legalized abortion. The 1980 “New Human Conditions” series, in contrast, claims that the abuse of abortion and other means of family control in postwar Japan were problematic because they undermined the “sacred nature” and “spiritual value” of family.<sup>84</sup> Ambivalent as they are, the book and the articles historicize the violence of

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<sup>83</sup> “Shin Ningen no Jōken 6,” *Tokyo Shinbun*, January 7, 1980. The whole series was published from January 1 to January 31.

<sup>84</sup> “Shin Ningen no Jōken 1,” *Tokyo Shinbun*, January 1, 1980.

abortion; they unanimously locate the responsibility in the larger social environment instead of casting blame on individual women who choose to abort. In doing so, these authors effectively challenge the mainstream discourse on abortion of the time that simplified the issue through an out-of-context moralization.

Although nearly a decade apart, these authors join hands with postwar radical feminists such as Tanaka Mitsu (田中美津 1943–), who straightforwardly criticized the moralization and demonization of abortion in the early 1970s from a different social and historical perspective. Tanaka Mitsu, like Kamitsubo, emphasizes the continuity between abortion and infanticide, arguing that it is paradoxical to legalize abortion while criminalizing infanticide, which also ends a baby's life only several months later.<sup>85</sup> She also points out that while the government was discussing the proposal to reform the Eugenics Protection Law to restrict abortion as a solution to labor shortages, at the same time it also passed legislation that would restrict immigration. The logic behind this apparent contradiction is that this would ensure that labor shortages would be replenished only by Japanese laborers. Here, again, the regulation of abortion and anxiety over blood are interconnected. She then links both issues back to their counterpart in the imperial period, namely the criminalization of abortion to promote female reproduction and the differentiation of and discrimination against people by race and blood.<sup>86</sup> By revealing the paradoxes embedded in the eugenics system, Tanaka Mitsu denounces state control of women's reproduction in any form. This is of course a much more radical stance than that of Kamitsubo. However, juxtaposing Kamitsubo and Tanaka Mitsu shows that a thorough working-through of the trauma of Japan's past

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<sup>85</sup> Tanaka Mitsu, “Chūzetsu wa kitoku no kenri ka” (1972), in Tanaka Mitsu, *Doko ni iyō to riburian: Tanaka Mitsu hyōgenshū* (Tōkyō: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1983), 101–2. For a general overview of the position of Tanaka Mitsu and other radical feminists in the public discussion of abortion, see Setsu Shimagetsu, *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Postwar Japan*, 87–91.

<sup>86</sup> Setsu Shimagetsu, *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Postwar Japan*, 89.

deteritorialization from the transnational frontier and a social critique of the process of (re)territorialization within postwar Japan have many insights to offer each other.

Taking a cross-historical perspective requires crossing frontiers; that is, the encounter between the past and the present in Kamitsubo's project can be seen as having taken place between two groups of frontier people. Women who received abortions during or after repatriation were from Manchuria and Korea, the former imperial frontiers. They were marginalized in postwar society and then largely forgotten. Women who had abortions for economic reasons in the 1970s, too, were marginalized and stigmatized in the public media—even though their right to have abortions was protected by law. Both groups occupy the space of a social frontier that is often denied and dismissed by the mainstream social discourse in favor of the construction and expansion of a represented reality desired by the empire or the nation. One frontier is manifested in the form of a geographic transnationality; the other is presented as a group of socially marginalized people within the national realm. When frontiers collide, they reveal and confirm each other. The connection between abortion in repatriation and in postwar Japan reveals the former in the latter, and refers the latter to the former. Moreover, the frontier encounter almost always generates critical power, as it is often on the frontier that the contingency and paradox of the dominant ideology are manifested.

Kamitsubo's project, thought-provoking as it is, is not without limitations. For example, without the buttress of a clear statement of position towards abortion and a powerful critical framework, his sensational description of the procedures of abortion operations may well be recuperated by the discourse of moralization. In 1985, writer Takeda Shigetarō published a book titled *Forty Years of Silence: Records of Abortion Forced upon the Women Repatriates*. The book draws heavily upon the historical materials revealed in Kamitsubo's book, and yet its main purpose

is to denounce abortion from a moral perspective. In the conclusion, the author exclaims, “they are the fetuses to be delivered as human tomorrow, but are eliminated arbitrarily in the same humans’ hands, even in the hands of the parents that have produced them. This is a picture of hell that only humans can draw.”<sup>87</sup> Kamitsubo does not make a universal criticism of abortion in his own book, but Takeda’s paraphrase of Kamitsubo’s account fits perfectly into his own moralizing statement.

Also, in his book, Kamitsubo portrays almost all Japanese individuals as innocent victims of an impersonal imperial system. Repatriated women and children and their family members in Japan were absolute victims; health staff had to overcome many difficulties so as to make the abortion operations available to the pathetic women; those who raped the women and caused their unwanted pregnancies were all foreigners—Russian, Chinese, Korean, and so on. The victimization narrative not only simplifies the ways individuals participate in history, but also reinforces the postwar stereotype of repatriates as absolute victims and disconnects them from the larger population in Japan.

## Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with literary deterritorialization through a close examination of *kogoroshi* in Japanese repatriation from Manchuria and its remembrance and forgetting in postwar Japan. *Kogoroshi* stands for the inevitable self-destructive violence that results when outward expansion is reversed into inward compression by force. I argue that such violence is often an intensified manifestation of contradictions and paradoxes embedded in the entire enterprise of national/imperial territorialization. The implosion is tragic and cannibalistic, but it is in the

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<sup>87</sup> Takeda Shigetarō, *Chinmoku no yonjūnen: hikiage josei kyōsei chūzetsu no kiroku* (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1985), 195.

moment of collapse that the peril of the imperial machine and the role each individual plays in it are rendered in sharpened scenes.

Unfortunately, in postwar Japan, the trauma of *kogoroshi* in repatriation has never been fully worked through. It was mentioned in repatriation literature and newspaper reports in the 1940s and 1950s, but its critical significance was skirted. In the late 1960s to early 1970s, when the issue of filicide became a public concern in the mass media, *kogoroshi* in repatriation was considered irrelevant. This occurred because the postwar discussion of filicide was conducted in a way that contributed to the myth-making that portrayed Japan as an economically affluent postwar nation, distinctly different from either the imperial Japan or the defeated Japan. In effect, however, the creation of the myth was nothing but a new round of domestic reterritorialization that in many ways enlisted the same types of power that had driven the previous round of imperial reterritorialization on the transnational frontier. Finally, in the late 1970s, as the issue of abortion was increasingly framed as infanticide in the public sphere, this new perspective inspired several authors to revisit the history of abortion of mixed-race babies carried by women returnees from Manchuria and Korea right after the war. The connection between the two outcries about abortion is productive because it relates marginalized women and the violence imposed on them during three times—during the imperial expansion, the intermediate withdrawal, and the national resurgence—to each other. In this moment of critical connection, frontier perspectives in different senses converge and develop into a critical stance towards all three historical processes.

## Conclusion

This dissertation studies how modern Chinese, Korean, and Japanese literature engaged with contemporaneous territorial contestation over the frontier of Manchuria. During the historical process in which military and political powers fought to close the open frontier through wars and revolutions, men and women of letters also sought to carve out a national space in the transnational environment through literary writing. In frontier literature, transnationality and nationality were always closely entwined. In some cases, elements of transnationality were treated as the abject other to be utterly excluded from a frontier narrative. This treatment is evident in the first half of the Chinese writer Xiao Hong's novella *The Field of Life and Death*. In other cases, they were explicitly denounced, as in the Korean writer Kim Tong-in's short story "The Red Hills." Yet elsewhere a transnational connectivity was evoked to reinforce a national claim over the frontier. Two good examples of this treatment are the Manchukuo Chinese writer Gu Ding's experiment with a hybrid language that mixes vernacular Chinese with Japanese and the Manchukuo Korean writers' efforts to claim an extra-territorial cultural territory for the Korean people. In postwar Japanese repatriation literature, the Japanese withdrawal from the transnational frontier was primarily treated as an implosion within the Japanese community. Within the context of the postwar nation-state, this narrative fit in well. Finally, national competition over the frontier also enlisted translation, which by definition entails transnational encounter.

This entanglement between a heightened awareness of transnational reality on the frontier and a repetitive emphasis on national belonging made the frontier writers' border-crossing writing critical and conformist at the same time. Because their writing largely fell in the Japanese colonial

period, a national territorialization from the perspective of the colonized people implies anticolonial resistance. More fundamentally, in their writing we also find moments of doubt in which frontier authors question the national order as the absolute and superior category used to differentiate people. Such moments can be manifested in the form of a gendered or a minority perspective that is not fully compatible with a nationalist discourse, as in Xiao Hong's and Duanmu Hongliang's work, or in the form of what I call the "frontier subjectivity" that is found in Gu Ding's case. And yet, in a period marked by heated national rivalry, the critical power of frontier literature often consumes itself and dissolves. As my dissertation shows, this happens when the texts are charged with motivation to strengthen the national demarcation of the frontier and to keep it absolute. Therefore, I argue that we need to take caution in celebrating border-crossing writing unconditionally as a transcendence of border and order; rather, we should keep in mind that, depending on the broader political climate, such writing can reinforce the b/order as much as it can subvert it.

The year 1949 marked the formal closure of the Manchurian frontier for the newly established People's Republic of China. More than half a century has passed since then. And yet, if we think of the past territorialization of the frontier as a historical trauma, the trauma still persists today. Those who have inherited the turbulent history of national contestation in the once open frontier still need to deal with traces of the past, including memories, physical displacements, mental challenges, and so on. Among them, some choose literature or literary studies as their form of engagement. Their work brings us an opportunity to observe a retrospective perspective on past frontier literature and history and to reconsider them in a contemporary light. The polarized national demarcation on the frontier finds a refracted manifestation in their post-frontier life and has decisively influenced the way they interact with people from other nations, ethnicities, and

regions. In their first-person accounts, therefore, we witness the recurrence of past trauma in contemporary politics as well as the possibility for awakening and healing. In the following I will discuss two cases to illustrate my point: the Taiwanese scholar-writer Qi Bangyuan (齊邦媛, 1924-) and the Japanese scholar-writer Ōkubo Akio (大久保明男, 1968–). They were both born in Manchuria, although at a distance of more than forty years, and the past frontier rivalry left traces on both of them.

In 2009, Qi Bangyuan published the memoir-novel *The Torrents River* (*Jiliuhe* 巨流河, 2009), in which she recalled her father's and her own life-changing journeys from Manchuria to Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> Qi Bangyuan was born in Shenyang in 1924 and lived in Manchuria until 1930. The title of her memoir-novel refers to the Liao River west of Shenyang. Anyone who wants to travel from Shenyang to China Proper must cross the Liao River. For Qi Bangyuan and her family, crossing the Liao River indicates a lifelong exile from their hometown. Qi Bangyuan's father Qi Shiying (齊世英, 1899-1987) joined Guo Songling's rebellion against Zhang Zuolin in 1925, a major event in modern Chinese history that we discussed in Chapter One. Qi Shiying joined Guo in the hope that they would overthrow the Zhang family, stop their endless and pointless military expansion, and thus bring a better future to Manchuria and to modern China. But the Guo army was crushed when it was just about to cross the Liao River and enter Shenyang, where the Zhang family was located. In consequence, Qi Shiying fled to China Proper and later joined the KMT. Five years later, Qi Bangyuan left Manchuria for Nanjing with her mother to join her father, but soon after their reunion, the Mukden Incident broke out and Manchuria suddenly became a land beyond their reach. In the 1930s and the 1940s, she and her family were pushed further and further from

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<sup>1</sup> Qi Bangyuan, *Jiliuhe*, Taipei: Yuanjian tianxia wenhua chuban, 2009.

Manchuria due to the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the subsequent Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), until they reached Taiwan in the late 1940s. Today Qi Bangyuan still lives in Taiwan, where she has established herself as an expert on English literature and a pioneer of the study of Taiwanese literature. In other words, after leaving her hometown at the age of six, Qi Bangyuan was never able to return to Manchuria until her very late years.

Qi Bangyuan stands for a case this dissertation has barely mentioned, that of Taiwanese authors. Taiwan became a Japanese colony in 1895, making it the first Japanese colony in East Asia. After the Japanese established Manchukuo in Manchuria, many Taiwanese people, then Japanese colonial subjects, went to Manchuria to seek new opportunities. The majority of them were repatriated to Taiwan after 1945. Later, following the defeat of the KMT in the Chinese Civil War and its consequent retreat from mainland China to Taiwan, party members originating from Manchuria and their families ended up migrating from the northern frontier to the southern island and spending the rest of their lives there. In both circumstances, Manchuria often signified a loss of home without redemption. Taiwanese people who moved to Manchuria during the colonial period, although enjoying limited economic and political privilege as Japanese imperial subjects, experienced discrimination both as secondary citizens (compared to the Japanese) in the Japanese colonial hierarchy and as suspicious traitors in the Chinese people's eyes. This experience is best represented in the work of Taiwanese writer Zhong Lihe (鐘理和, 1915-1960), who moved to Manchuria in 1938 and started writing literature there. Those associated with the KMT, in contrast, were forced to leave their homeland for good shortly after the Chinese recovery of the land in 1945. Their personal departure from Manchuria, mixed with the Party's loss of all of mainland China, was a painful experience that was hard to overcome. This is precisely Qi Bangyuan's case.

In Qi Bangyuan's memoir, we witness how her exile from Manchuria was later transformed

into a strong identification with Taiwan and Taiwanese literature. In her novel, she parallels “the Torrents River” (lit. huge flow river) with “the Mute Sea” (哑口海, lit. mute mouth sea), a small gulf at the very southern end of Taiwan Island. The novel ends with a scene where Qi Bangyuan, revisiting Dalian in Manchuria, sits on the beach and imagines the sea water flowing into the Mute Sea in Taiwan. She pairs the two place names not only for a play on words nor simply as a way to symbolically bracket her life’s journey. More significantly, Manchuria and Taiwan, the two geographical frontiers in modern East Asia, evoke strikingly similar feelings in her. Both are associated with a strong sense of homelessness, of a homeland that has never fully belonged to her and that always reminds her of a collective territorial loss. Taiwanese literature, a literary interface to address and process this pain, has become her spiritual home. This can be seen from her summary of modern Taiwanese literature in her preface to *An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Literature: Taiwan, 1949-1974*,

...Writers in Taiwan, having left the past behind for an entirely new environment, picked up the broken thread and started weaving new patterns into the multicolored tapestry of Chinese literature....Together, these works produced in Taiwen since 1949 present a candid record of a people facing the challenge of a dazzling series of social and political changes....Several of the pieces included here give a vivid picture of this process – through bewilderment, nostalgia, and then by heroic determination to suffer the severance from a cherished but irretrievable past in hope of a much better future.<sup>2</sup>

At the bank of the Torrents River, Qi Zhenying and his colleagues rose up, indeed like a torrential river, against the authority they deemed unjust, but the result was her father’s lifelong exile from his homeland. By the Mute Sea, however, Qi Bangyuan is able to give voice to the literature of her new home, which had been long muted in the international community. As David Wang concludes, “I believe the subtle interactions between the two places [of Manchuria and Taiwan] and the huge

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<sup>2</sup> Chi Pang-yuan et al., eds., *An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Literature: Taiwan, 1949-1974* (Taipei: National Institute for Compilation and Translation, 1975), IV–V.

historical melancholy they contain is the source of the energy we see in the book *The Torrents River*.<sup>3</sup> Qi Bangyuan's cross-frontier encounter provided her an empathetic perspective on Taiwanese people of different backgrounds and their cultures and literatures.

At the same time, however, she seems unwilling to reconcile with the powers that deterritorialized her from Manchuria. In other words, the national or political division that demarcated the frontier in the past remains in her in the present. In the novel, she does not hide her harsh attitude when dealing with either the Japanese intruders or the CCP. She remembers how, when the US Army started the air raid over Tokyo in February 1945, she and her classmates "felt a complicated joy while reading this news of revenge."<sup>4</sup> She also recalls that when she first arrived in Taiwan, she often saw Japanese people, waiting to be repatriated, kneel down on the street to sell their belongings. She admitted that "they are not the people to pay back the blood debts," but still she could not feel any sympathy for them.<sup>5</sup> Her attitude towards the CCP and its reign in mainland China was even more dismissive. If her doubt regarding the ideological blueprint that the Communist Party promised was due to her intellectual reasoning, then the consistently negative comments on the Communist Party throughout the book indicate a disturbed heart. It was the war between the two parties that finally took over her homeland and pushed her away from it indefinitely. In Qi Bangyuan's case, the past national contestation over the frontier empowered her to understand the people and culture of a different frontier; yet it was nearly impossible for her to work through the historical trauma and seek true reconciliation with the past frontier rivals.

We will now turn to the second case, that of the Japanese scholar and writer Ōkubo Akio.

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<sup>3</sup> Wang Dewei, "Ruci beishang, ruci yuyue, ruci dute: Qi Bangyuan xiansheng yu *Juliuhe*," in Qi Bangyuan, *Juliuhe* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2010), 377.

<sup>4</sup> Qi Bangyuan, *Juliuhe* (Taipei: Yuanjian tianxia wenhua chuban, 2009), 194.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 299.

Ōkubo belongs to what we normally know as the second generation of war orphans (*zanryū koji* 残留孤児)—orphans who were left unattended in China in the chaos of the postwar repatriation.<sup>6</sup> Ōkubo's father went to Manchuria at the age of thirteen; two years later, Japan surrendered and Manchukuo collapsed. As a teenager, he was left in China and later married a Chinese woman. Ōkubo was born in 1968. In 1972, after the PRC and Japan normalized their relationship, an arrangement to bring war orphans and their descendants back to Japan was initiated. This new wave of repatriation peaked in the 1980s and triggered many public discussions in Japan. As a result, Ōkubo and his whole family returned to Japan in 1985. While in Japan, Ōkubo was lucky enough to get into a Japanese college to study literature—something that was rare among his peers from China. During his university years, he was highly sensitive to the identity crisis confronting him and his community. He wrote several articles to criticize the way the returnees were treated in Japanese society. These articles point out that in Japan at that time, returnees were expected to become fully Japanese. This meant having complete command of the language as well as thinking in the same way as a Japanese native. Those who could not manage such a transformation suffered discrimination from other Japanese people.<sup>7</sup> In one article, Ōkubo argues that “instead of asking them to be assimilated as Japanese, one should recognize and respect their ‘Chinese parts’ and

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<sup>6</sup> Here I use “Japanese descendants from China” instead of “second/third generations of Japanese war orphans,” to echo Ōkubo’s criticism of the latter term. In an article titled “Zanryū koji koshō ha ‘nikkei chūgokujin’ ni” (残留孤児呼称は「日系中国人」に), he proposes that young returnees from China should be called “Japanese Chinese” (*nikkei chūgokujin*, lit. Chinese people who are Japanese descendants) instead of the ““second/third generations of Japanese war orphans”” (*Zanryū koji*, lit. orphans who remained [in China]). He argues that first, the “war orphans” did not choose to stay in China of their own will; rather, they were victims of Japan’s imperial expansion and they stayed because they could not manage to return in the postwar chaos. Second, many of them were cared for by local Chinese as dear as their own parents, and so calling them “orphans” demonstrates an insulting disregard for their Chinese parents. See Ōkubo Akio, “Zanryū koji koshō ha ‘nikkei chūgokujin’ ni,” *Asahi Shimbun*, August 12, 1997, morning edition. For more background information about war orphans, see Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), 167-89.

<sup>7</sup> These articles include “Wabiru omoi no zanryū koji nise,” *Asahi Shimbun*, February 27, 1989; “Futan ni kurushimu zanryū koji nise,” *Asahi Shimbun*, June 21, 1996; “Zanryū koji koshō ha ‘nikkei chūgokujin’ ni,” *Asahi Shimbun*, August 12, 1997, morning edition.

accept these parts based on the principle of mutualism and coexistence.”<sup>8</sup> In another article, he discusses a sensational social event involving a youth from China. Incapable of handling pressures and expectations at home and from society, he stabbed his mother and attempted suicide. Ōkubo empathizes with the murderer and calls for attention to the difficult situation surrounding young returnees.<sup>9</sup>

In 1996, Ōkubo and his colleagues launched the coterie literary magazine *The Northern Star* (*Hokushin* 北辰) as a place for the young returnees in Japan to address and exchange their common experience by means of literature.<sup>10</sup> In 1999, *The Northern Star* published a feature titled “Special Feature of Creative Writing in Chinese-Japanese Hybrid Language” (*nitchū kongō sōsaku tokushū* 日中混合語創作特集).<sup>11</sup> It includes Ōkubo’s short story “The Small Window of Bulasili Beiernaier” (“Bulasili beiernaier de xiaochuang” 布拉斯丽·贝尔耐而的小窗, 1999). In it, Ōkubo portrays a young returnee named Akio who attends Japanese-language school while washing dishes at a restaurant in downtown Tokyo to make a living.<sup>12</sup> The protagonist shares the same name as the author. The story depicts a series of discriminatory experiences that Akio undergoes at the restaurant and in other aspects of his social life. In a subplot, the story also tells how Akio’s father went to Manchuria during the colonial years, how he chose to stay in Manchuria after 1945, and how Akio was bullied because of his Japanese background while growing up in Manchuria. Apparently, the trauma caused by the territorialization on the frontier has lingered in Akio’s life in China. The climax of the story arrives when Akio stabs the restaurant’s chef

<sup>8</sup> “Zanryū koji koshō ha ‘nikkei chūgokujin’ ni.”

<sup>9</sup> “Futan ni kurushimu zanryū koji nise.”

<sup>10</sup> *Hokushin* 1 (1996.7): 1-3.

<sup>11</sup> *Hokushin* 5 (1999.5): 20-28.

<sup>12</sup> Dong Xiaoming, “Bulasili beiernaier de xiaochuang,” *Hokushin* 5 (1999.5): 22–28.

Kobayashi, who had been incessantly shouting at him with filthy words. The author's concern with social pressure that proves unbearable to new Chinese returnees echoes his earlier articles.

The story contains both Chinese and Japanese sentences and paragraphs. The integration of two languages makes the story legible only to a bilingual reader. Moreover, the narrator is highly aware of the linguistic dilemma he is confronting as he employs the hybrid language to articulate his experience. In the following English translation of the paragraph, words and sentences in italics are rendered in Japanese in the original text, while the rest are rendered in Chinese:

Noon turns the kitchen of the French restaurant into the battlefields of the July Revolution. When the Goddess of Liberty, with her bare, busty breasts standing tall and proud, holds the tricolor flag up high to lead warriors into a battle charge through the streets of Paris, *Sami tripped and stumped, slapping a whole plate of Spaghetti on waiter Hashizume's head. In front of the high-pressure gas stove top where fire flares up high, chefs wave frying pans frenetically even when their own eyebrows are burning; waiters hurry about, bumping into and cursing each other, carrying lunch menus around in quick succession. Everyone was like ants in a heated pot.* (like ants in a heated pot – isn't it an age-old Chinese expression How jarring it is to insert the phrase literally into Japanese This again proves that your Japanese is a pidgin with a harsh Chinese overtone You would never be able to write the kind of fluent Japanese satisfying to the senses as the native-born Japanese can even if you spent a whole life time trying How can you still entertain the wild thought of forcing your way into the Japanese language community?)

中午的法国餐厅厨房就是法兰西七月革命的战场。当自由的女神高举三色旗赤裸着她那丰满而高傲的胸脯，指挥着勇士们冲锋在巴黎街巷里的时候，さミ一跤跌倒，顺势把一整盘スパゲティ扣在了ウェーターはハシヅメ的头上。炎を高く噴きあげる高圧ガスコンロの前で、シェフたちが眉毛を焦がしながら鍋をせわしく振るい、ぶつかり合い、罵り合いながら駆け回るウェーターたちがランチメニューを次々と運んでいく。誰もが熱した鍋のなかのアリのようだ（如热锅里的蚂蚁——老掉牙的汉语表现啊日语照搬过来多么别扭呀这又证明你的日语是生硬的中国式日语你花一辈子时间也写不出来土生土长日本人那样流利而感觉化的日语外来的你还妄想打入日本语共同体吗？）。

This paragraph depicts an accident during the busy lunch period at the restaurant and involves the protagonist Akio's colleague, another young returnee named Sami. When comparing the restaurant kitchen to the scene of a revolution, the narrator is more comfortable using Chinese. But when it

comes to describing concrete objects and people's behavior, he shifts to Japanese. Finally, when expressing the inner feelings of the character working in the kitchen, he evokes a Chinese expression in Japanese: an ant in a hot pot. In the parenthesis, however, the narrator considers this usage of Japanese an indicator of failure. This parenthetical notation indicates that the narrator can never express his feeling fully in Japanese. One thing to note is that the way he uses the phrase takes on a meaning that is different even from its normal meaning in Chinese. In Chinese, the phrase "an ant in a hot pot" is most commonly used to describe anxiety, that is, someone is too anxious to stay still. But in this passage, the phrase regains its literal reference: the character in the story is indeed surrounded by hot pots in the kitchen, indeed feels extremely hot, and is indeed as busy as an ant.

In this way, in the story as a whole, Japanese and Chinese become a single set of codes that can be combined in multiple ways according to the narrator's hybrid and unique linguistic sensitivity. And yet it is precisely this fluidity that frustrates the narrator, as it declares the impossibility of his becoming truly Japanese. Beyond the perspective of the narrator, the implied author apparently takes a critical stance towards the pressure to assimilate that the returnees were under. Ōkubo's linguistic experiment may have been inspired by his own domestic experience. In an article titled "The Chinese-Japanese Hybrid Language in My Home" ("Datsupijin toshiteno kyokai gengo – wagaya no nicchūkongōgo" 脱ピジンとしての境界言語—我が家の中日混語", 1998), he discusses how his family members, especially his mother, started to use a pidgin language for domestic communication. He points out that behind this pidgin language lies his and his mother's resistance to the pressure of Japanese linguistic assimilation, and that this highly personalized linguistic reconfiguration brings him a sense of joy associated with freedom and

creativity.<sup>13</sup>

Ōkubo's linguistic experiment is essentially different from those of Gu Ding and other Manchukuo Chinese writers. Typically, Manchukuo Chinese writers only incorporate Japanese vocabulary and grammar into vernacular Chinese; they seldom use Japanese letters directly in their writing. Their purpose, as I argued in Chapter Two, was primarily to enrich the Chinese language and to promote Chinese literature in colonial Manchukuo. Chinese readers might find the language of Manchukuo Chinese writers awkward, but they would have no problem understanding it. Ōkubo's experiment, in contrast, is truly bilingual, and only a bilingual reader can comprehend it. Instead of making a land and a people territorial, the author wishes to embrace the hybridity, the Chinese traces left in the returnees' inner world, and the incompleteness of their Japanese assimilation. Ōkubo therefore considers both the hybrid language and the returnee community in general from the perspective of "border-crossing" (*ekkyō 越境*).<sup>14</sup>

Ōkubo is now a leading scholar of Manchukuo literature in Japan. His personal experience and perspective enter his academic research as well. In a research article titled "The Linguistic Environment of Manchukuo Chinese Writers and Their Use of Language in Literary Texts" ("Chūgokugo sakka no gogenkankyō to bungaku tekusuto ni okeru gengoshiyō" 中国語作家の語言環境と文学テクストにおける語言使用, 2010), he notes that Manchukuo Chinese writers use Japanese vocabulary and grammar as well as local dialects in their Chinese writing. He analyzes this hybrid language as a realistic reflection of the sociolinguistic constitution of the frontier at the time.<sup>15</sup> His understanding of this linguistic environment, however, is mediated by

<sup>13</sup> Ōkubo Akio, "Datsupijin toshiteno kyokai gengo – wagaya no nicchūkongōgo," *Tōhō* 212 (October 1998): 18-20.

<sup>14</sup> For example, see Ōkubo Akio, "Datsupijin toshiteno kyokai gengo – wagaya no nicchūkongōgo," 18; "Aidentiti kuraishisu o koete," in *Chūgoku kikokusha no seikatsu sekai*, edited by Araragi Shinzō (Tokyo: Korosha, 2000), 325.

<sup>15</sup> Ōkubo Akio, "Manshūkoku Chūgokugo sakka no gengo kankyō to bungaku tekusuto ni okeru gengo shiyō," in

his own linguistic experience. In the conclusion of his essay “Border Language beyond Pidgin: The Chinese-Japanese Hybrid Language in My Home,” he associates the pidgin language used in his home with the hybrid linguistic environment in colonial Manchuria.<sup>16</sup> His experience of the two languages within the intimate domestic space allows him to put more emphasis on the coexistence of multiple cultures on the historical frontier than on the contestation among them. In a different research project, he examines Manchukuo Chinese materials that introduced and translated Peninsula and Manchukuo Korean literature for Chinese readers on the frontier.<sup>17</sup> In general, his research seems to suggest that behind or beyond the intention of territorialization, frontier literature actually serves as the central locale where different threads of languages and cultures coexist, commute, and exchange.

But as I have argued in this dissertation, exchanges and connections among different cultures in a contested frontier have often been enlisted for the purpose of territorialization, and therefore the potential critical and constructive power of such a conversation has been largely offset. One may impose new meanings on the past and appropriate the past for new possibilities in the future from a retrospective perspective, and perhaps through the mediation of new experience gained in the new historical circumstances. This is meaningful because history is always told from the present perspective and is considered an important source of reference and inspiration for confronting present challenges. And yet, as we have seen in Qi Bangyuan’s case, for people who have actually experienced wars and divisions but have not been given an opportunity to fully work through their memories, a conscious embrace of “border-crossing” may not be as easy as it seems.

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*Teikoku shugi to bungaku*, ed. Tokui Ō et al. (Tōkyō: Kenbun shuppan, 2010), 202–35.

<sup>16</sup> Ōkubo Akio, “Datsupijin toshitenō kyōkai gengo – wagaya no nicchūkongōgo”, *Tōhō* 212 (1998.10), 20.

<sup>17</sup> Ōkubo Akio, “Manshūkoku ni okeru chōsen bunkei ni kansuru kousatsu: Chūgoku shinbun zasshi kara no ichibetsu,” in the *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Colonialism and Literature, November 1-2, 2013*, Taejōn, Korea, 143–52.

Between crossing and reinforcing the border, frontier literature has left us much to ponder.

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