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Collision of Modern Desires: Nationalism and Female Sexuality in Colonial Korea

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In colonial Korea, diverse discourses were produced and collided in the public sphere, representing different kinds of desires in the levels of nation, status, and gender. Especially, it is notable that the private issues such as love affairs, marriage and sexuality were widely raised in the newspapers, popular magazines and literary works published in 1910-1930s. Through the analysis of these materials, this paper tries to look into the aspects of discursive representation of the collision of modern desires in colonial Korea by revealing the relationship between gendered nationalism and female sexuality and the distortion of female sexuality under colonial social conditions.

First of all, I pay attention to the construction of modern self through the realization of sexual subject in the discourses by *new woman* and compare it with the gendered nationalism that reconstructs and controls female sexuality in the formation of a nation. This intends to reveal the conflicting structure between male and female intellectuals in the period of modernization, who can not be unified in one nationalistic voice, being placed in the same situation as the colonized but of different material and mental base. Second, I examine the image of *modern girl* in 1930s, which is overlapped with the image of *new woman* in 1910-1920s, showing the process how the female desire was frustrated and distorted in the system of colonial capitalism. Especially, I pursue the proliferation of pleasure in public areas by the mechanism of using female sexuality and the vague location of the *modern girl* who is the mediation of pleasure business but the subject of self-enjoyment of modern culture.

Actually, the image of the *modern girl*, as a variant of *new woman*, was an ambivalent object of criticism and fascination in colonial Korea. However, the negative image of the *modern girl* as material vanity and sexual corruption has been repeatedly represented in the discourse of male intellectuals with a critical and nationalistic view. This paper tries to reveal this composite image of the *modern girl* representing a contradictory female sexuality as a complex product of colonial modernity that consists

of colonialism, capitalism, and modern patriarchy.

Keywords: Modern Desire, Love and Marriage, Female Sexuality, Nationalism, Colonial Modernity

1. Introduction

It is said that ‘nation,’ being called ‘imagined community’, was a historical product of Western Europe in the process of growing capitalism and imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century, while the colonized countries in the third world like Korea in the early twentieth century needed ‘nation’ to resist against imperialism.¹ Primordially, Korea has been a homogeneous nation for over five thousand years, which causes a strong sense of nationalism based on the similarity of lineage, language, and culture as well as territory. These ethnic traits were used as political resources to recover a national identity from Japan in colonial Korea.²

Meanwhile, the Korean discourses on nation as counter discourse to Japanese colonialism sought for a formation of ‘modern self’, following the model of the western modern nation. The modern self in colonial Korea is presented as a complex construction of two phases: first it is an aspect of individual as a rational and autonomous subject made by the western modern Enlightenment and second, is that of social being, as a leading member of the national community to overcome the colonized condition. In this process of constructing the modern self, the bourgeois intellectual class who got a chance to be educated in a western system emerged as new political subjects and Korean women began to make their voices heard in the public sphere from their marginalized status.

The point this study questions is the discovery of ‘individual’ and the emergence of plural subjects in the colonial situation. The discov-

1. For more about nationalism, see Hans Kohn ([1961]1981) and Eric Hobsbawm (1987).
2. Korean nationalism during the Japanese occupation is not a fixed entity based on the objective grounds, but can be defined as one of the ideological movements to acquire the independence country by expressing ethnic solidarity or constructing national identity. See A. D. Smith (1971: 65), Michael Robinson([1988]1990: 28) and Lim Chi-hyŏn (1999: 7).

ery of the individual as a modern identity seemed to be a strange but fascinating phenomenon the society had never experienced before. It brought about the outer expression of human desires which had been restricted under the system of Confucian decorum (禮). Especially, the discovery of love and sexuality was the most conspicuous affair and one crucial indication of modernity in colonial Korea.³ However, it is presumed that plural subjects from the discovery of the individual were incompatible with one unified public voice from social discourses on 'nation.' Especially, the formation of the modern self is asymmetrically achieved according to sexual difference. This study pays attention to the conflicting aspects of the binary opposition such as 'individual' and 'nation (society),' 'men' and 'women' in the hierarchy of discourses in colonial Korea. Many written materials prove that in colonial period, female sexuality was the object managed by the dominant discourse, such as nationalism in which female sexuality was the object of admiration but repression, and criticism yet utilization, in many cases.⁴ This study will look into the collision of desires between men and women around the narratives of love and sexuality while revealing the intervention of 'gendered nationalism' into the formation of the modern self in women.⁵ To carry out this task, I am going to examine popular magazines published in the 1920-30's as main texts, including the analysis of some literary texts like contemporary novels.

3. The existing studies that present sexuality, love, and marriage in colonial Korea as an expression of modernity are Kwon Hŭi-yŏng (1998), Kim Keong-il (2001) and Kim Tong-shik (2001). The study that examines the views of love and marriage of new women in colonial period from the perspective of women emancipation is Shin Yŏng-suk (1986).
4. The discourses on nation in the colonial period show an ambivalent attitude toward female sexuality in the case of prostitutes. In many lyrics of enlightenment songs in the 1910's, there were deep-rooted aversions to prostitutes on the one hand, but the mobilization of prostitutes to make the most of them in enlightenment movement on the other. See Ko Mi-suk (2001: 125).
5. For the discussion of the gendered nationalism in Korea, see Elaine Kim and Chung-moo Choi (1998) and for the relationship between nationalism and feminism, see Chung Hyun-back (1999).

2. Formation of Modern Self and Narratives on Love

The discourses on love, sexuality and marriage were explosively produced in 1910-1930's in colonial Korea, which implies that the experience of love was an important moment to rediscover oneself in the process of transplanting the western modernity in Korea. Especially, it is notable that the people began to see the experience of love with sexual liberation as universal desire of the individual (Kim Keong-il 2000: 49). The expressions such as "a love affair is ideal for the complete union of the body and soul between man and woman," or "the meaning of human existence lies in love affairs" (Yun Kŭn 1922: 42-44), "true love is blind," and "an individual is absolutely individual" (Paeksŏng sang'in 1934: 100) reflect the value of individual desires in the private sphere, shown through the conceptualization of love. The public spaces such as schools and new transportation vehicles appeared as private places where young male and female students could meet by chance and fall in love.⁶ The signs of modern love dispersed in the school, street in the city, train, cafe, and bar, which were all signifiers of western civilization, delivering the advent of a new way of life into everyday life.

The remarkable thing in the discourses on love is the affirmation of sexual satisfaction as well as affective pleasure (Yun Kŭn 1922: 41-43) as universal desire. Though discourses on modern love are differently characterized on the basis of the ideological tendency,⁷ the arguments on love in this period are directly dealing with sexual desire accompanied by love, that had not been allowed to be spoken of in public, and new marriages combined with love affairs. Regardless of the ideological or sexual differences, most scenarios of modern love constructed at that time agreed that the experience of love by his or her own choice

6. The school, train, and newspaper in the 1910s were the public networks that acted as a new kind of matchmaker for young lovers. See Kim Tong-shik (2001: 314).

7. Kim Keong-il classifies the characteristics of discourses on sexuality and love in colonial Korea in three ways according to the ideological color: radicalism, liberalism, and socialism. By him, the radicals like *new woman* had a tendency of emphasizing the freedom of sex and unconditional love, while the liberals tried to see sexuality as means for the great cause, such as marriage, nation, and society. The socialists also embraced sexuality into the ideological purpose of class emancipation. See Kim Keong-il (2001: 48-61).

was essential to marriage, and so it was thought that traditionally arranged marriages should be abolished. As a result, a love affair is given as the first condition for marriage (Chu Yo-sŏp 1924: 15-16). The popular saying, 'marriage without a love affair is only prostitution' show how influential the idealistic views on love and marriage were in that period.

However, there is basic friction between male and female intellectuals around the discourses on love and marriage as well as sexuality. The most radical views on love were derived from *new woman*.⁸ The important issue in the discourses on love by *new woman* is especially the self-recognition of women as sexual subjects. They even find the ground of individual existence through the realization of love. One of the representative *new woman* with a radical view, Kim Myŏng-sun, states that ideal love is the union of two different individuals and through the individual love, the self can extend the true love to the society or nation (Kim Myŏng-sun 1924: 78-81 and 1925: 59-60). More argumentative statements by *new woman* were about chastity. Because women have been sexual objects controlled by patriarchal power in forms of de-sexualization or sexual exploitation for a long time, the emancipation of body and sexuality from the traditional subordination was the most fundamental factor in the self-recovery to *new women*. According to Kim Il-yŏp, chastity is something that can be created and reborn just in the process of love, it is not a given entity (Kim Il-yŏp 1927). Na Hye-sŏk also states that chastity is not a morality or law but a taste, which can be chosen by free will (Na Hye-sŏk 1935: 432). The definitions on chastity by Kim Il-yŏp and Na Hye-sŏk showing the new construction of sexuality inspired by love were a sensational declaration against the conventional ideas about female sexuality. They dreamed of romantic plots in which they would be equal subjects to men in love relationships and finally they would achieve a happy mar-

8. The category of *new woman* in colonial Korea is very argumentative, but *new woman* in this paper means a group of women who were influenced from modern consciousness through modern education and were active in public spheres. However, it seems that not all *new woman* had a feministic view. The modern consciousness a few *new woman* had can be largely divided into two kinds: liberal individualism and socialism. For more detailed definitions for *new woman* in colonial Korea, see Ch'oe Suk-kyŏng, Yi Pae-yong, Shin Yŏng-suk, An Yŏn-sŏn (1993: 26-27).

riage with an ideal partner. Furthermore, Na Hye-sŏk manifested the necessity of self-realization of women after marriage and challenged the falsehood of the marriage system by questioning the mystified motherhood after childbirth (Na Hye-sŏk 1923: 217-234). Furthermore, Na Hye-sŏk presented very revolutionary and concrete marriage models, such as the plan for 'marriage by partnership' which made much of the couple's life rather than rearing children, 'experimental marriage' which was a kind of contract marriage during the temporary period, and 'birth control in marriage' (Na Hye-sŏk 1930: 54). The core pathos of women's desire raised in *new women's* discourses on love, marriage, and sexuality was the discovery of the individual through the experience of love and the realization of sexual subjectivity, which in the end would reach marriage allowing the self — cultivation of women. On the other hand, this kind of love and marriage was criticized as the product of the individualism of the bourgeois class by another group of *new woman* of a socialistic perspective, who sought for the contribution to social progression by putting free love affairs in the private area (Kim Ok-yŏp 1931: 6-10). Regardless of the ideological color, the *new woman* groups were trying to acquire the equal rights in love and marriage and to achieve a right position in public area.

However, the discourses on love by women collided with real conditions of life. First of all, their revolutionary views on love and women's identity were totally frustrated, being faced with the limits of entire social system, such as the conventional institution of men's early marriage, and their poor economic condition. Actually, the idealistic blueprint of love led many *new women* to improper unions with married men, to become concubines, or to live in bigamy because there were few single men that could fulfill the qualifications necessary to be idealistic partners at that time — except married men (Samch'ŏng Tong-in 1921: 48-55). The continuous production of concubines in that society where the feudal status system as origin of the concubine institution had been abolished seems to be an ironical social phenomenon. Or many women who failed in union through love affairs⁹ were degraded to be unlicensed prostitutes due to their serious economic problems, which could be explained as being a social punishment for the loss of virginity (Chang Yŏng-sun 1933: 81-85). The production of concubines

and new kinds of prostitutes show the contradictory results from the discord between women's desire for modern love and the pre-modern state in reality (Yi Pae-yong 1999: 221-226).¹⁰

However, more serious collisions on discourses were derived from the male intellectuals who had different and negative views on *new woman's* radical viewpoints. How different were the discourses of love and sexuality by male intellectuals in colonial Korea? Likewise the group of *new woman*, the conceptualization of modern love and new marriage was an important step to the formation of modern self in case of male intellectuals, though they were directed in a different way. However, some male intellectuals directly revealed their hostility against the ideas and life styles of *new women* and especially criticized the expression of sexual desire by *new woman*.¹¹ For the deep understanding of the fundamental difference on love between male and female intellectuals and the relationship between the modern desires of *new women* and gendered nationalism, we need to look into the works of Yi Kwang-su (1892-1950), who was one of the most influential thinkers and writers throughout the discourses on nation and enlightenment in the 1910s.

Yi Kwang-su (1918: 325-328) asserts that all traditional inheritances such as inequalities in status and sex should be eliminated, encourag-

9. The extreme case was the lover's suicide, one stream of which can be explained as originating in Japanese society. See Hwang Shin-dök (1930: 52-53).

10. However, some of the *new women* who were concubines tried to distinguish themselves from the concubine of the past as a negative product of the feudal status system and instead named themselves 'the second wife', which they presented as an inevitable social product of poor conditioned reality (Chŏn Hui-bok: 1933, 2-5). The concept of 'the second wife' was very questionable but was an attempt to justify the social position of concubines and to be freed from ethical criticism prevalent in society.

11. The most extreme clashes between male intellectuals and *new woman* are the cases of Kim Ki-jin and Kim Tong-in, who were important novelists and thinkers in colonial Korea. Kim Ki-jin disclosed the private life of Kim Myŏng-sun in public, blaming for her sexual license and eugenic defect due to being the daughter of a kisaeng (Kim Ki-jin, 1924: 49). In addition, Kim Tong-in negatively fictionalized the story of *new woman*, modeling the real *new woman*, Kim Myŏng-sun with Na Hye-sök and Kim Won-ju (Kim Tong-in 1939). The insolent attack against Kim Myŏng-sun by Kim Ki-jin and the distorted characterization for three *new women* in a novel by Kim Tong-in reflected a strong hatred for the liberal life of *new woman* and their sexual dissoluteness. It seems that there was a large discord between the realization of sexual subjectivity presented in women's positions and sexual license seen in men's positions.

ing the popularization of modern education. Also, he emphasizes the importance of love as an expression of human nature and the need to construct a more advanced marriage system (Yi Kwang-su 1917: 53). He delivers his views on modern love, which is an ideal state of 'combination between soul and body,' based on the discovery of human sensibilities (53-54). 'A more evolved form of love,' he suggests, is the balancing state between 'the attraction of ardent passion' and 'the beauty of intelligent spirit' (56). However, his view on modern love gives priority to decent mental communication over sexual satisfaction, projecting moral value into the concept of love. The mention that 'the relationship of man and woman without spiritual union is like prostitution or an illicit connection' (378-379) shows that he strove for the composition of love based on mental correspondence embracing an erotic passion.¹² It seems that the construction of the ethics of love was more important to male intellectuals who already possessed sexual subjectivity, while *new women* preferentially tried to recover the sexual autonomy, of which the women had been deprived, in the discourses on love and marriage.

For all he affirms that 'a love affair is the biggest happiness of the individual' (54), he does not establish the original value of love in the marriage system. To him, love is the only a pre-stage for marriage and his main interest is on the composition of the bourgeois class family. The conditions of marriage, he suggests, are as follows: sound health for reproduction, eugenic superiority to guarantee intelligent quality, education, economic independence, and a more evolved form of love affair. Furthermore, he redefines women's chastity as the element that should be controlled for the development of the nation, though he does permit the remarriage of women (54-61). In this process of constructing the marriage norm of the modern bourgeois class, love is established as the condition of marriage and the erotic human desire is restricted by the ethics of family.

Mujŏng (heartless, 無情) by Yi Kwang-su ([1917]1992), which is known as the first modern novel in Korea, shows the process in which he conceptualizes a new love and his view on marriage, and especially

12. This kind of love is similar to the 'romantic love' as a product of bourgeois culture in Western Europe since the late eighteenth century (Anthony Giddens [1992]1996: 77-80).

revealing is the representation of woman images, such as *kisaeng* or *new woman*. This novel takes a form of love triangle story that consists of three characters, one male protagonist Hyŏng-shik who is an educated intellectual and High school English teacher, and two female protagonists Yŏng-ch'e and Sŏn-hyŏng. The social status of the two women characters is quite different: Yŏng-ch'e, the past fiancée of Hyŏng-shik appears with the status of *kisaeng* (traditional female entertainer), though she was originally from *yangban* (the nobility) family, and Sŏn-hyŏng is a *new woman* graduated from a women's high school and is from a rising bourgeois class. The main conflict of narrative is from the agony of Hyŏng-shik who is placed to choose one between two women as a bride. In this work, the writer frequently exposes the interests on natural attraction between man and woman and the true value of love through the eye of Hyŏng-shik beyond the social conventions of the day (Yi Kwang-su [1917]1992: 46, 92, 94, 97, 183, 184). In spite of his observation and recognition of universal human nature through a rational thinking system, Hyŏng-shik cannot go beyond his traditional view of women. He defines women according to their virginity, dividing two women into a lewd woman and a chaste woman (47, 140, and 143). As a result, he drops the heroine Yŏng-ch'e as a candidate for his bride because she is charged as an unfaithful woman, a *kisaeng*. The obsession of Hyŏng-shik on women's virginity continuously makes him suspicious of Yŏng-ch'e's purity. In the end, Yŏng-ch'e becomes the victim of rape by some villains, which functions as the crucial moment Hyŏng-shik deserts her. It is presumed that by making Yŏng-ch'e a scapegoat, Yi Kwang-su tried to eliminate the conventional inheritance of *kisaeng* as a pre-modern prostitute. After all, Hyŏng-shik chooses Sŏn-hyŏng as his bride because she satisfies the qualifications for marriage Yi Kwang-su devised, such as modern education, the support of economic property and social position from her parents, and virginity. The image of *new woman* in Yi Kwang-su's work is the desexualized intellectual woman who is fit to be chosen as a member of one's family.

Several times, the image of Yŏng-ch'e who has a bleeding face with a reproachful look appears before Hyŏng-shik in his nightmare or delusion (143). This kind of grotesque image reflects the grudge of Yŏng-ch'e who was rejected by Hyŏng-shik by reason of her damaged virgin-

ity. In addition, this image has something to do with the symptom of resistance against the repression of femininity, which can be understood as the unconscious meaning within the text. However, leaving out this subversive image of Yŏng-ch'e as the repressed fragment of human desire, the progression of the plot follows the logic of reason and nation. The narrative on love is transferred into the narrative on family and nation and at last, the voice of 'the other' becomes silenced. In the conclusion of this work, the writer made all the characters go abroad to study in Japan and America to become leading intellectuals who would contribute to the enlightenment movement and national prosperity. Consequently, the love affair in the private sphere becomes absorbed into the nationalistic obligation in the public sphere. As to Yi Kwang-su, a love affair is the supplement to attain a good family, and the family is the medium to reproduce the members of the nation. Paradoxically, the marriage ideology of bourgeois intellectuals like Yi Kwang-su becomes another arranged marriage in the name of the nation, though it criticizes the absurdity of traditionally arranged marriages. In this project of nationalism by Yi Kwang-su, female sexuality and modern love are utterly readjusted and desexualized.¹³

3. Proliferation of Pleasure and Colonial Capitalism

Love and sexuality as crucial issues or materials in the journals, magazines, even novels in colonial period were not confined to the interest of the elite intellectual class, but even spread to the daily life of the masses. With the declarations of sexual liberation by radical discourses on love, the cultural signs with sexual connotations were widely proliferated. Especially, one group of people named *modern girl* and *modern boy* who distinguished themselves from the others through the external features such as western hair-styles, fashion and accessories,

13. According to George L. Mosse, there was a structural homogeneity between the model of the nation and the model of the bourgeois middle class. The bourgeois middle class idealized men through their identification with nation and constructed themselves as ethical subjects. Based on the ethics, they control women and their erotic passion and embraced them in nationalism. See George L. Mosse (1985: 1-22).

and gesture were leading the new cultural tendency in the cafe (western style of bar from Japan) or theater of the city, pursuing both physical pleasure and materialistic desire (Yu Kwang-yŏl 1927: 112-113).¹⁴ Most male intellectuals with a critical view on the colonial reality and a nationalistic consciousness criticized their life as a deformed result of Korean modernism from America without the materialistic base or mental condition (Lim In-saeng 1930: 140). The socialist intellectuals criticized them as being the decadent products of the petit bourgeois class in a capitalistic culture (Ch'oe Hak-song 1927: 118-120) and even compared *modern girl* to the prostitute and *modern boy* to the idle son of the propertied class (Pak Yŏng-hŭi 1927: 114-115).

However, the indulgence on the materialistic world and the spread of libidinal currents into everyday life need to be more closely analyzed as the inevitable characteristics of modern capitalism associated with female sexuality (Rita Felski 1998: 23-27), before the direct ideological and moralistic criticism. In addition, it is significant that the libidinal and materialistic desires at that time have something with the fascinating signs of the 'new thing' in colonial Korea. People devaluated the *modern girl* an uncritical follower of the western modernity, while being attracted by their sensational style and the signs of new desires. Therefore, the existence of the *modern girl* and the *modern boy* becomes an indicator that reveals a multi-layered structure of pleasure in colonial Korea as another aspect of colonial modernity.

At this moment, the *new woman* who functioned as the cultural sign representing a radical woman with a modern consciousness in the early days, 1910-1920s is overlapped and replaced with the image of the *modern girl* in the 1930s who ran after the latest fashion according to western tastes in negative connotations. That is, it can be said that there are two sides of women's desires in the images of *new woman* and *modern girl* in colonial Korea; the *new woman* represents the fighting spirit who expresses her rights in private life such as love and

14. One of main issues in the magazines and newspapers of the 1930s was about the definition of *modern girl* and *modern boy*. Some people argued that true 'modern' man and woman should have a modern consciousness, such as status equality, including sex equality and social criticism. The characteristics of their appearance and external style were criticized in terms of vanity and extravagance. See Yu Kwang-yŏl (1927: 112-113), Sŏng Sŏ-in (1927: 117-118).

sexuality as well as in public life, the *modern girl* as a variant of *new woman* is the split subject who reveals the frustrated and distorted desire of women, following the superficial western culture. In the center of this pleasure-loving urban culture, there was the *modern girl* who consisted of diverse status women, such as *kisaeng*, waitresses in café, actresses and other career women including the educated *new woman* (Pak P'al-yang 1927: 116; Söng Sö-in 1927: 117-118). And the *modern girl* in the 1930s shows the complex aspects of a woman as both the subject of individual pleasure and the object of the capitalistic system that uses the female body as commercial tool. For instance, in the case of cafe waitresses in the 1930s, various kinds of women gathered such as female students, *kisaeng*, actresses and even ordinary girl from rich family (Nok'ankyöng 1932: 32-37). It seems that the waitresses chose sexual service as a profession by their voluntary choice, not by compulsory power. However, in most cases they were losers, being placed in the pressing position to sell their erotic services for their survival. Many women became waitresses to make money in a depressed colonial economic system after the failure of love affairs (Kim Chöng-suk 1932: 20).

Here, the composite images of waitresses become an issue. Were the waitresses in cafés just the mediation for the production and consumption of pleasure? They are suspected of having been unlicensed prostitutes outside the cafés at that time, selling their erotic services in the café.¹⁵ However, at the cafe tables, a waitress met diverse customers, who were bourgeois male intellectuals such as journalists and teachers, unemployed writers called 'room pen',¹⁶ and other salaried classes in the city, and had a chance to have love affairs with them, experiencing the new urban culture (Paek Nak-jun 1932; Nokankyöng 1932: 32-37). According to their confessions, they were waiting for the idealistic lover or future husband among the customers in the cafe (Kim Dong-hwan 1936: 160). The café was the place for the waitress to realize modern

15. The prostitution of *kisaeng* in *yorijip* (the traditional cuisine) and waitress in café was legally forbidden but virtually *kisaeng* and waitress seemed to sell their sexes (Son Chöng-mok 1988: 305-307).

16. By Ch'oe Chöng-hüi, one female writer in colonial period, *room pen* is presumed to be an 'unemployed wanderer', 'decadent bourgeois,' the 'loser' who failed in business, opium eater, the person who was addicted to *mah-jong*, the man who was cheated by *kisaeng*. See Ch'oe Chöng-hüi (1932: 518).

love as well as to sell erotic services, or their body as a labor (Kim Dong-hwan 1936: 162). Some intelligent waitress even manifested their modern consciousness as working- women in public (Kang Chŏng-hŭi 1932: 21). The various sides of a waitress as a prostitute, a refined entertainer, a new career woman, and as an active subject of love represent the complex structure of a woman's desires, which were produced from the distortion of modern love in reality and the utilization of female sexuality by modern capitalism in colonial Korea.¹⁷

The prevalence of cafés suggests that libidinal desire in modern society was distributed into the daily life by means of such a commercial route.¹⁸ It is remarkable that the important change of sexual norms in the 1930's was derived from the change in economic structure. Especially, the fact that the value of a women's chastity is reduced to a materialistic value and economic depression instigates the prevalence of eroticism (Kim Ok-yŏp 1931: 10-13) shows the close relationship between the individual pleasure and colonial capitalism and between sexuality and the power system. The concept of sexual service as labor and the priority of capital values over ethical values discovered in the waitresses are seen as new phenomena that emerged in colonial Korea. Rita Felski referred the paradoxical union between the Eros and artificiality of women as the typical image of 'femininized modernity.'¹⁹ In the sexualized modernity mediated by *modern girl* in colonial Korea, there is no distinct border between a love affair and prostitution, or pleasure and labor. It is the distorted face of modern desire that was ideally pursued by the early *new women* and the complex historical product of colonial modernity consisting of western modernization by

17. Yu Sŏn-yŏng interprets this culture indulged on sensual pleasure and materials as the superficiality of modernity produced in a colonial system where Korean could not be the autonomous subject to accept the western culture under the regulation of Japanese colonialism. See Yu Sŏn-yŏng (2000: 233-238).
18. According to Son Chŏng-mok, in the 1930s, due to the prevalence of bars like yorijip or cafe, the unlicensed prostitution by *kisaeng* and waitress was more increased, while the licensed prostitution was being retreated. In 1935-1938, the prostitution was at the height of the demand. See Son Chŏng-mok (1988: 305-314).
19. Rita Felski questions the ambiguous and multi-dimensional desires of modernity by disclosing the neglected feminine psychology and suppressed female sexuality according to the rationality of modern reason through the case of the prostitute or actress who experienced the capitalistic modernity. See Rita Felski (1995).

the intermediation of Japanese colonial policy and capitalistic system utilizing the female sexuality.

Meanwhile, such a split image of the *modern girl* representing a crack in colonial culture has usually been criticized as the corruption of women themselves as well as the delusion of modernity. Yŏm Sang-sŏp (1897-1963), the representative intellectual male writer who tried to introspect the inside of modern self and reach a synthetic understanding about the reality of nation gives one example of how the *modern girl* image in relation with love and sexuality was represented through the eyes of male intellectuals with a male-dominant nationalistic view.

“Kamsanggwa kidae (Sentiments and Expectations)” by Yŏm Sang-sŏp (1925) shows his view on love and attitude toward female sexuality. First of all, the remarks about the free love of *new women* such as ‘the famished one in love,’ ‘love mania,’ and ‘sexual bacteria’ hold negative connotations (Yŏm Sang-sŏp 1925: 3). He is representing the *new woman* as a harmful existence that disturbs the social order. Especially, he indicates that the realization of women’s liberation through love affairs is too idealistic to be achieved in real life, and without an economic base, any love affair must be frustrated in the end (4-5). His recognition of the relationship between a love affair and the materialistic condition, or sexuality and capitalism, seems to penetrate the fallacies of the idealistic view of *new woman* and the colonial situation. However, behind his critical realism, there is located a strong male dominant thinking system to otherize the voice of women. For example, he described love as ‘the desire for Nothing (無)’ or ‘the quest for perfection’ (6-8), which look like the conceptions of Romanticism. He adds that the value of love can be achieved in ‘the experience of self-recovery through the other’. At this point, his definition of love seems like a narcissistic love that is indifferent to the existence of the other. There is no room for the other in his love, only the experience of union of body and soul that leads to the reaffirmation of individuality. The subject of love in Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s definition presupposes the autonomous ‘male’ subject as the representative of universal human nature. In this kind of conceptualization, the establishment of an abstract and rational subject reveals the despotism of modern thinking that silences the unconscious and irrationality of desire in the authority

of reason and negates the emotional state and body as the signifiers of femininity.

The male-dominant thinking system discovered in his conceptualization of love is concretely shown in the representation of female images in his novels. While the images of *kisaeng* and *new woman*, or concepts of love and sexuality, in Yi Kwang-su's novel are the construct of his abstract idea like nationalism, love, sexuality, women and nation, in Yŏm Sang-sŏp's novel they are the signs that are true to the actual life and concrete history. In his novel, *Saranggwa chŏe* (Love and Sin, [1927]1987), he repeats describing the two different female images such the chaste woman and the lewd woman, which are the product of the double standard on women from the old patriarchal view.

The figure adored as a symbol of a chaste woman by the main protagonist, Yi Hae-ch'un, from the nobility class is Chi Sun-yŏng who is a graceful and cultured nurse (Yŏm Sang-sŏp [1927]1987: 359). However, the mystification of the purity and dignity in one woman needs a counterpart for comparison. Another female character, Chŏng Maria, is a typical *new woman* with a short hair-style in the western fashion majoring in the western music in America. However, she appears as a symbol of the lewd woman with the frivolous and vain images and the incarnation of vice to interfere with the pure relationship between Yi Hae-ch'un and Chi Sŏn-yŏng (110, 116, 191, and 220). In Yŏm Sang-sŏp's novel, there is no meaning in differentiating the social status between *kisaeng* and the *new woman* and revealing the conflicts between the pre-modern and the modern like in Yi Kwang-su. His main focus is consistently on the punishment of a licentious woman with vanity, which reflects the dualistic division of women and the signs of misogyny.

With the help of an American missionary and government officials, Chŏng Maria went to America to be a vocalist and she become a *new woman* with the reputation as a successful career woman. However, she is represented as a woman with materialistic greed, vanity and sexual debauchery in the work. In part, the male protagonist, Yi Hae-ch'un, reveals his disrupted desire, by being lured by Chŏng Maria's physical attraction, while disdaining her voluptuousness (235 and 245). Nonetheless, the writer makes her a vicious woman who at last com-

mitted murder after being deserted by Yi Hae-ch'un. This kind of negative image of the *new woman* is based on the deep-rooted aversion of woman's sexuality and femininity. In addition, the criticism of her materialistic greed and sexual corruption is overlapped with his criticism of colonial capitalism and Americanism. So, the materialistic vanity of Chŏng Maria is analogous to the corruption of colonial capitalism and the sexual and moral corruption of her falsehood and superficiality of western modernity. The image of the *modern girl* in Yŏm Sang-sŏp's novel becomes the representative of social vice that should be removed, seen from the perspective of a critical nationalist.

The consistent theme of Yŏm Sang-sŏp's work is the conflict between the individual with pure passion and critical consciousness and the corrupted society. However, the autonomous subject with progressive vision is the male intellectual's voice, while the female intellectual is negated as inferior, immature, and corrupted in character. In *Saranggwa chŏe* (Love and Sin), Yŏm Sang-sŏp shows the ethical choice of the intellectual in the poor state of the colonial situation, while the motif of love affair as the mediation of self-recovery is nullified in the social consciousness of nationalistic resistance and the criticism of reality. In the process, female sexuality is judged and punished as a sin by the conservative patriarchal mechanism.

4. Conclusion

Colonial Korea was dominated by the public voice that tried to overcome the colonized state in the name of the nation throughout the whole period. However, that society was full of internal clashes of diverse desires and dynamic experiences in the process of introducing western modernity via Japan. Especially, the realm of love and pleasure permeated into the everyday life, and created a new way of life. In the chaotic center of new culture were placed the desires of women and female sexuality. In a contradictory history where the counter discourse for overcoming imperialism imitated the dominant discourse of colonialism, and the nationalistic discourses in pursuit of the formation of an autonomous individual repressed the desire of individual,

women's sexuality was another ironical object to be used by colonial capitalism, but to be controlled and transformed by the patriarchal power. In particular, the modern patriarchy inherent in the discourses on nation in the early twentieth century tried to control the desires of women by intervening the formation of the female subject as the modern self. This gendered nationalism subordinated women's identity to the narratives on family and nation and otherized the female sexuality into the marginal area of modernity. The modern self as an autonomous individual and a member at the level of nation was arranged only for the male subject in colonial Korea.

Meanwhile, the frustration of women's desires in the 1930's reality, amidst the complex of colonial modernity, produced a distorted image of women like the *modern girl* who was the representative of women's vanity and sexual corruption. The women who tried to rediscover themselves as the subjects of modern love with sexual subjectivity were frustrated by the limits of social conditions and were degraded to concubines, waitresses or prostitutes by the absence of a materialistic base, which became the grounds for criticism and punishment by society. However, the image of women in the vague border of moral corruption and self-subjectivity or criticism and fascination and the effusion of pleasure through the women's body can be interpreted as a new sphere the colonial society introduced and exploited. In addition, the frustration of women's love affairs and sexuality should be deeply understood as the historical product of the collision of the diverse desires from the discourse of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy, which can explain the contradiction of colonial modernity.

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