

**Articles**



[www.kci.go.kr](http://www.kci.go.kr)

Volume 23 Number 2  
December 2020  
The Review of Korean Studies

Article

# “Speaking Women” and Performativity in Dialogic Texts in Colonial Korea

Ji Young SHIN



www.kci.go.kr

*The Review of Korean Studies* Volume 23 Number 2 (December 2020): 87-125

doi: 10.25024/review.2020.23.2.87

©2020 by the Academy of Korean Studies. All rights reserved.

## Positioning “Speaking Women” in Colonial Korea

The process whereby the Korean women under Japanese colonial rule come to acquire the right to speak and participate in the public sphere is usually described with the image of women rejecting the so-called *sseugaechima*, a hooded dress in which women were required to veil themselves in pre-modern times. Taking off the hooded dress symbolized being educated and participating on an equal footing with men in the modern public sphere. However, becoming a “woman who speaks”—and has the right to voice her opinion in public—cannot simply be reduced to the problem of taking off the hooded dress, achieving equal status to men, or being recognized for their participation in the modern public sphere. The significance of each problem varies depending on how the category “women” is discursively and materially constituted in different times.

In certain cases, for example, putting on the hooded dress was necessary for women to speak in public in the first place. One *Dongnip sinmun* editorial on November 24, 1898, criticized the duality of a woman speaker who takes off the hooded dress during her speech but puts it back on and rides in a hand wagon—symbols of the “old customs”—as she leaves the forum:

[...] Some 20 influential married women in the community [...] were to take part in a communal meeting [...] the meeting even had to be adjourned when the outdated customs that had been around for hundreds of years were called on to change. *The woman in her hooded dress left in her hand-carried wagon. So, what was in her mind when she decided to provide information, show her face at men’s meetings, participate and even deliver a speech, and attend the meeting as representative [with her hooded dress off] only to reverse back to the old customs on her way back home in an empty, quiet alley...*<sup>1</sup> (emphasis mine)

Although the editorial valorizes consistency as the necessary condition for being a modernized woman speaker breaking free from the outdated social norms, it

does not take too much effort to postulate that the woman in question had to wear the hooded dress to make it to the public forum in the first place. In other words, the very condition under which women were allowed to participate in the public sphere was limited, and therefore the “speaking women” could disrupt the existing family ideology and patriarchy in words only.

Moreover, the implication of hooded dress, along with its discursive and material positioning, has changed over time. A comic strip appeared in *Dong-A ilbo* on June 11, 1924, with the following caption: “They used to cover everything but the eyes. Now all they cover is the eyes.”<sup>2</sup> Although the piece intended to satirize the growing generation gap among women, it also portrays the New Women of the 1920s in “long shirts, short skirts, and shoulder dress,” in addition to “black skirts, parasol, handbags, and pleated skirts” that were popular among students at Ewha hakdang, or Ewha Womans School (Gim 2009, 293). Whereas the New Women broke free from the hooded dress in the 1920s, the set of garments characterized by the *Dong-A ilbo* comic strip came to constitute a new form of veil.

According to Chandra T. Mohanty, “veil” is attached with different meanings depending on the cultural and ideological context (2003, 34). Metaphorically, the hooded dress also corresponds to Mohanty’s notion of veil, since it represented a complex set of interlocking contexts surrounding the Korean women, which ranged from modern capitalism, imperialism, colonialism to nation-state, patriarchy, and gender ideology. In this respect, the function of hooded dress was replaced by what characterized the New Woman of the 1920s and the new family ideology of the 1930s which took figures such as “*hyeonmoyangcheo*” (wise mother and good wife) and of *jubu* (housewife) as ideal womanhood.

For women of middle-class or higher, equal participation in the public sphere was only possible insofar as they remained within the discourse of “the new family” that exemplified “inclusive exclusion”—that is, as *jubu* or “professional women” whose professions were considered traditionally “feminine.” On the other hand, the forms of reproductive and affective work with which lower class women were engaged included those of housemaids, hostesses, and female industrial workers. Internal conflicts and hierarchization

\* This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2019S1A5A8038385).

1. “Nonseol” [Editorial], *Dongnip sinmun*, November 24, 1898, 1. All translations from the Korean in this manuscript are my own unless otherwise noted.

2. “Donga manpeong: Singu-daejo—Jeon aeneun nun man naenoteoni jigeum eun nun man garinungun” [Donga Political Cartoon: The New-Old Comparison], *Dong-A ilbo*, June 11, 1924, p.1.

among these two—rather broad—class categories of women interlocked in a complicated way in the colonial setting. In the male-oriented public sphere, the position of “speaking woman,” which was always subjected to male judgment, became ever so precarious. The identity of speaking woman, New Woman, or *yeohaksaeng* (“schoolgirl”) was never fixed in the first place, as they were all constructed externally based on a certain set of behaviors and looks, which always risked the danger of being conflated with that of housemaids, *gisaengs* (courtesan-entertainers), and hostesses on a whim (Gwon 2003, 32–47).

An exemplary case is Gwon Aera, a woman speaker who returned from Shanghai to Seoul and gave a public speech at the Joseon Central Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in July 1927, which drew an enthusiastic response from the audience. When the police came and interrupted her speech, Gwon began singing “Gaeseong nanbonga,” a traditional Korean folk song. Although her initial performance moved the audience, some of the crowd began denigrating her for behaving like a courtesan-entertainer as soon as Gwon continued with “Gogocheonbyeon,” a popular verse sung by *pansori* singers, which she learned from a courtesan-entertainer cellmate during her time in prison.<sup>3</sup> Such denouncement was undeserved, since her cellmate was independence activist Gim Hyanghwa.<sup>4</sup> The incident revealed how the position of speaking woman was easily made unstable as it was subject to male judgment that capriciously shifted from recognizing Gwon as public speaker to treating her with condescension as courtesan-entertainer.

The account of Gwon is not an incident from some distant past. As the counter-activities against misogynistic hate speech and the Korean #MeToo movements demonstrate, the material and discursive grounds on which women can voice themselves safely in public have not been secured even to this date. This paper will inquire into the source of difficulty in securing the public sites of enunciation for women and other minorities by examining the discursive position and performativity of the historically constructed notion of speaking woman. I also seek to envision “the commons” from a feminist perspective

through performativity of speaking women in the 1930s, as well as cases in which women became involved with one another, owing to the particular nature of women’s non-paid work—such as reproductive and affective labor—in spite of their difference in class and ethnicity (Federici 2012, 142–44).

In the 1930s, female labor, both within and outside of domestic space, was incorporated into the colonialist and capitalist system of exploitation. It was also when *The New Family* (*Singajeong*) came out—a publication that ran from January 1933 to August 1936, totaling 45 issues, a number of which featured edited and transcribed roundtable discussions that women had participated in or led. Considering how the industrial sphere in the 1930s began to incorporate and circulate attributes such as emotion, love, affection, and care, which were traditionally considered private and not at all economic activities, *The New Family* hints at how systems of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy interlock with one another (Seo 2011, 28). Particularly, a close examination of the way in which these roundtable discussions in *The New Family* were edited provides a glimpse into the presence of the women speakers and their rhetorical strategies. Furthermore, in the roundtable discussions, there are passing mentions of working class women such as housemaids and hostesses, whose positions and rhetorical strategies are further revealed in writings by housemaids that appeared in the June issue of *The New Family* in 1936 as well as writings by hostesses in *The Voice of Women* (*Yeoseong* 女聲), a publication that was founded in April 1934 and was run by hostesses.

The second section of this paper examines the ways in which women were granted the right to speak but at the same time were relegated to the roles of housewife or professional women that lay outside of “the (new) family”—and therefore had their right to speak very limited. Nevertheless, their precarious position turned out to be latent with the potential for appropriation and transformation of the modern, male-oriented public. In the third section, I attempt to demonstrate how women became involved with one another through non-paid female labor in the sphere of intimacy—such as reproductive and affective labor—in spite of the division among women along the racial or class lines. I also inquire into how the working class women are made visible as they were being referred to in the roundtable discussions by middle- or upper class housewives and how the working class women “speak” in their writings. Despite social categories such as class, race, and ethnicity that divide women, I identify the way they cross paths and become involved with one another

3. “Dokja: Gaeseong Songak in, and Gija: Jongno daedoin” [Reader from Gaeseong and Reporter from Jongno]; “Gwon Aera yeosa ui choegeun saeghwal—Gaeseong nanbong ga ro jangani ilsisoran: dokjawa gija” [Reader and Reporter: Recent Updates on Ms. Gwon Aera—Raising Commotion with “Gaeseong nanbonga”], *Dong-A ilbo*, December 11, 1925.

4. On details surrounding Gwon’s speech, see Shin 2012, especially Chapter 3.

through reproductive and affective labor as the condition of possibility for the feminist commons.

In the conclusion section, I briefly address the problem of cultural racism and cultural colonialism by examining the cases in which the middle-class Korean women criticized men based on the womanhood modeled around (white) women in the West and proclaimed the inferiority of the Korean families comparing them to those of Japan. It is also manifest when the hostesses sought to legitimize their labor based on the discussion of sex work in the context of Western capitalism. Although I do not engage with them fully, I leave them open for further study.

### The Two Sides of the Right to Speak within the New Family: Permission and Restriction

#### *“The Speaking Women” within the Discourse of “the New Family” in the 1930s*

Whereas women speakers had to appear as students or New Women in the 1920s, the figure of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife, which was based on “the new family” ideology, has replaced them in the 1930s. The women who had studied abroad in Japan or the U.S. began to discuss terms like “the new family,” “sweet home,” and “ideal family.” The notion of the new family is proximate to the bourgeois nuclear family where a woman plays a central role in governing the family instead of husband (*bu* 夫), and hence the term *jubu*—meaning “housewife” (Gim 2009, 350). This is to say that “the new family” pivoted on “the incorporation of the ideal womanhood of the West,” rather than keen acknowledgement and situational knowledge of the reality of Korean women at the time. At the same time, it was much less a “full-scale women’s liberation movement” than part and parcel of the modernization movement led by men that sought to “modernize the family structure” (No 2005, 55).

Therefore, although women appeared in roundtable discussions and began to voice themselves in public in the 1930s, their voice was allowed only partially as housewives within the discursive space of the new family ideology. Particularly, the roundtable discussions featured in *The New Family* revealed the transition from the social and liberal discourse of the “New Woman,” which

was widespread in the immediate aftermath of the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement, to the discourse of wise-mother-and-good-wife that pivoted on the notion of family. The series of social changes in the 1930s was also manifest in the fact that women’s magazines and general magazines were published in pairs on the theme of family.

The pairing of general magazine and women’s magazine existed prior to the 1930s, as seen in the case of *Hakjigwang* with *Sinyeoja* (*The New Woman*) and *Gaebyeok* with *Sinyeoseong* (*The New Women*). What differentiated the 1930s from the previous decades was the theme of family that became central to the paired magazines. *Dong-A ilbo* began publishing *Sindonga* in November 1931 and *The New Family* in January 1933, both of which featured articles pertaining to not only “women’s issues” but also the topic of family. Likewise, *Chosun ilbo* published the first issue of *Sonyeon* (*The Young Men*) in April 1937 and *Yunyeon* (*Childhood*) in September 1937, and together with *Jogwang* and *Yoseong* (*The Women*), these publications constituted a set that resembled family structure.<sup>5</sup> The binaries of men/women and the new Woman/old woman were reconfigured into the intrafamilial/extrafamilial binary, which implied that modernist liberalism, gender equality, and national and social enlightenment became subsumed under the new family ideology. In the 1930s, the new family was no longer a space antagonistic to the New Women or reserved exclusively for the old women, as it provided grounds for public activities for the figure of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife, which set the definition of the New Women.

What seems remarkable is the process in which The New Family was made an independent publication from being *Sindonga*’s “Women” section and “Wife” section that were later relabeled “Family.” The founding issue of *Sindonga* featured articles on issues of family, relationship, and marriage before creating a section devoted to women’s issues in its second issue.<sup>6</sup> This section consistently featured roundtable discussions and articles pertaining to family.<sup>7</sup> The layout

5. In the case of *Eorini* (*Children*), which was founded in March 1923 by the publisher of *Gaebyeok*, the theme of family was not central as much as it was in the 1930s.

6. For example, see Gim 1931; Choe 1931.

7. The “Women’s Section” in the December 1931 issue of *Sindonga* featured articles such as “Hyeondaeyeoseongui budongseong” [The Instability of Today’s Women], “Gajeongeseo sahoero (Hyeondaeyeok nora)” [From Family to Society: Nora the Modernist], “Bak Indeok yeosai ihoneul pangyeolham” [Judging the Case of Mrs. Bak Indeok’s Divorce], “Sinbulgwa nau gajeong” [My Family and the Buddhist

was restructured into a special issue on the “Wife” section in August 1932, and creation of the “Women” section and “Wife” section in the September and the October issues. In the November issue, the section was relabeled “Family,” along with an advertisement for new publication *The New Family*, which was to be published in January of the following year. The advertising slogan read, “*Sindonga’s* sister publication, a rising star in the magazine industry, with great content and fresh insight,” and announced that it was to be published in celebration of the first anniversary of *Sindonga*, with the following statement:

*We find it very unfortunate that there is yet to be a magazine for the Korean family, which is why we have decided to publish this magazine. Needless to say, family is the building unit of society [...] It is our hope that all Korean people, men and women of all ages, subscribe and read The New Family, which will assist the foundation of a new nation.*<sup>8</sup> (emphasis mine)

The statement testified to the fact that *The New Family* was dedicated not to women in general but to family as a building block of the new Korea. In the mission statement of *The New Family*, Song Jinu (1933, 2) claimed that “if our ideal is none other than to build a new, enlightened society, then our task is to build a new, enlightened family.”

The emphasis on the functions of family coincided precisely with the rise of modern industry and system of labor in colonial Korea beginning in the 1930s, which testifies to the fact that capitalism relies heavily on women’s unpaid labor. Federici (2012, 17; 33) argues that under capitalism housework is rendered an act of love, which women, instead of resisting, pursue as the best thing in life, and that “family is essentially the institutionalization of [women’s] unwaged labor, of [women’s] wageless dependence on men and, consequently, the institutionalization of an unequal division of power that has disciplined [women].” The women from the 1930s’ roundtable discussions were housewives on whom unwaged housework was imposed and whose right to speak was not only granted but also limited by the virtue of their very status as housewife. In other words, the simultaneous permission of and restriction on women’s voice

were precipitated by the emphasis on the new family which, in Federici’s words, amounts precisely to the institutionalization of women’s unwaged labor.

The figure of housewife, which was considered central to the new family, was assigned with the most important responsibilities to the family, with “the wise-mother-and-good-wife” as its ideal.

When discussing family, it is inevitable that we target the figure of housewife. [...] If a family is made new, enlightened, organized, and prosperous, then its joy extends to not only just one individual or family but to the Korean society and the Korean people [...] *The New Family* was brought to the world in recognition of the importance of family. (Song 1933, 3)

The above mission statement recognized the role of housewife pivotal to the happiness of the Korean people “who do not have true family life.” While the “new family” ideology of wise-mother-and-good-wife in the 1930s differed from the motherhood ideology in early modern era that aimed to “contribute to the development of one’s country, nation, and society,” they shared the same logic that drew a parallel between family, society, and nation (Gim 2009, 317). As seen in the case of “The New Family Song,” the discourse of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife manifested in the form of an enlightenment campaign for the people whose nation was lost (Byeon and Hyeon 1936, 7-9). *The New Family* targeted specifically women who lacked literacy in Chinese writing, with its goal to equip women with “a common sense pertaining to actual family issues, along with the types of knowledge essential for housewives, such as children’s education and pedagogical methods,” as well as “general knowledge in various fields.” In one article requesting reader contributions, the editor urged their readers to submit writings that will prove helpful for housekeeping such as a housekeeping book, “entirely in Korean.” Another editorial likewise stated that the publication would seek to “feature as many actual issues and tips for housekeeping as possible.”<sup>10</sup>

The role of housewife, therefore, was to retrieve the lost nation, provide

Faith, “Gajeongsopum—osipjeon” [Family Goods: Fifty Pennies], “Gajeongsopum—Naiui huimanghaneun singajeong” [Reflections on Family: My Ideal New Family], “Yeoingunsang” [The Portrait of Women], etc.

8. “Gwanggo: Singajeong” [Ads of The New Family], *Sindonga*, November 1932, p. 148.

9. “Tugo hwanyeong” [Reader’s Contribution Welcome], *Singajeong*, January 1933, p. 79. Such a request is also repeated in “Sago” [A Thought], *Singajeong*, December 1933, p. 25.

10. “Pyeonjip yeomuk” [Editorial], *Singajeong*, January 1933, p. 189. However, the roundtable discussions in later issues testify to the fact that these articles were not so helpful for actual housekeeping.

care for her worker-husband, and raise children (Hong 2010, 318). The figure of housewife in colonial Korea was no exception to Federici’s criticism that the housewife was created “to service the male worker physically, emotionally, and sexually [...] patch up his ego when it is crushed by the work and the social relations” (Federici 2012, 17). What particularly demands attention is the simultaneous and expansive nature of the permission and restriction granted to and imposed on women’s right to speak. While women could not fully exercise their right to speak from the position of housewife, neither did the position of professional woman guarantee the full right to speak—even though their work seemed to have enabled their social participation—as many of the professional women were engaged in extended forms of reproductive and affective labor. The case was similar even when women made it to the professions that were usually dominated by men. For instance, women doctors were confined to the fields of obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics, and women athletes to tennis and skating.

Furthermore, a number of social factors encouraged women who received modern education to become housewives, as evidenced in public meetings that sought to position women graduates as future housewives and frequent appearance of housewives’ memoirs of their school days in magazines.<sup>11</sup> *Dong-A ilbo* organized a social meeting for women graduates (“Yeojajeonmun jeongdo joreopsaeng yeonhap ganchinhoe”) on February 2, 1934, where 130 soon-to-be-graduate women and 141 women graduates gathered. The organizers stated that the objective of this meeting was to “unify the new Korean women in the workforce” and welcome them.<sup>12</sup> One article in *The New Family* described the participants of this meeting as “the new workforce and fellow comrades who are taking their first step into society with 10 years of knowledge under their belt” and that “on their way back, snowflakes that symbolize their purity fell gently onto their heads,” bestowing on them an image of professional woman as well as that of innocent housewife.<sup>13</sup>

11. See, for example, “Geuriun hakchangsidae” [The Good Old School Days], *Singajeong*, April 1934, pp. 68-76.

12. “Yeojajeonmun jeongdo joreopsaeng yeonhap ganchinhoe” [Joint Social Meeting for Women Graduates]. *Singajeong*, March 1934, pp. 14-20. The participating graduates were from Ewha Womans Professional School, Gyeongseong School of Education, Jungang School of Education, Ewha School of Education, Women’s Medical Training Center, Professional School of Dentistry, and Hyeopseong Women’s School of Theology.

13. *Ibid.* 15-16; 20.

Although the figure of professional woman, unlike the figure of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife was positioned within the domestic sphere, the range of fields in which they worked was limited to the one that were considered “feminine” or “more suitable for women.” At the same time, they complemented each other in a way that limited women’s public sphere to the space allowed by the discourse of the new family.

***The Right to Speak within the New Family and the Co-occurrence of Permission and Restriction: Housewife/Wise-Mother-and-Good-Wife, Professional Woman, and Pioneer of “Family Reform”***

The roundtable discussions that were featured in *The New Family* revealed three types of identities—of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife, professional woman/celebrity, and pioneer of “family reform”—ascribed to or adopted by women to obtain their right to speak. The right to speak granted to each of the three positions is also accompanied by the following three forms of restriction: (1) they were not given a chance to speak about subjects that are not family-related; (2) their social status and the content of their speech were subject to male judgment; and (3) they were objectified as informants. The performativity of speaking woman reflects how the private sphere hinging on “the new family” became incorporated into non-paid female labor under capitalism in the 1930s. This incorporation in turn reveals how the colonial modernity or the colonial capitalism manifested in everyday life.

In the roundtable discussion titled “Married Women’s Roundtable Discussion” (Gajeongbun jwadamhoe), the participants’ position was fixed to that of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife, and their content of speech was limited to their family life. Within this limited sphere, the participants occasionally criticized their husbands for bad punctuality, which posed difficulties to housekeeping. However, their main target in this regard was “the elderly,” especially older women, as Byeon Yeong-ae complained, “if we were to keep them from too many visits for the sake of better housekeeping, then the elderly will immediately call us out for being arrogant (laughs).”<sup>14</sup>

14. “Gajeong bun jwadamhoe” [Married Women’s Roundtable Discussion], *Singajeong*, January 1933, p. 72.

At the “Mothers’ Tea-Table Discussion” (Eomma chadamhoe), with the subtitle “Mothers who gathered for a talk,” every participant was introduced as a wife of someone. The subjects of their discussion ranged from “difference between son and daughter, criticism of women’s education, punctuality of breastfeeding, educational environment, and children of the world and the Korean children to the necessity of kindergarten education,” all of which pertained to their role as mother or housewife. The participants in this discussion blamed the older generation for perpetuating gender discrimination. For example, Choe Igwon stated, “Kids are being fed with the idea that men rule the house, which will have a tremendous impact on women once they grow up,” to which Ju Seong-eun replied, “Those oldies are better off gone (everyone laughs).” Here, what needs to be closely examined is the way criticisms were raised against the older generation, which was based on the Japanese and Western models of family. For instance, Im Hyojeong worried that Korean children were “so frail they seem as if they are about to fall,” and Ju also lamented that the Korean children weren’t as active as American and other foreign children who were often seen hopping around and playing with ball at a zoo or public park.<sup>15</sup>

At the roundtable discussions where these women were able to secure the right to speak as housewives, the content of their speech was limited to the topic of family. Furthermore, rather than identifying gender inequality as the source of the problem, they blamed the old women’s outmoded beliefs for impeding the “family reform,” which exacerbated the generational conflict among women. What seems remarkable is that their criticism of the old women was based on the Japanese and Western models of family, which reveals how patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism interlocked with one another in the 1930s.

The roundtable discussions led by professional women and “celebrities” (*seuta*) coincided with the rise of journalism and publishing industry in the early and mid-1930s. Women with a certain degree of stardom in the press began to appear and frequented roundtable discussions, interviews, and surveys (Gim 2004, 321). While *Three Thousand Li* (*Samcheolli*) featured actresses, singers, wives of renowned figures, and women who were studying abroad, the professional women who participated in the roundtable discussions featured

in *The New Family* were mostly doctors and athletes, whose high level of education was often highlighted.<sup>16</sup> The figure of professional woman was often conflated with the figure of housewife/wise mother and good wife in the scheme of The New Family roundtable discussions. Such a scheme reflects the fact that these roundtable discussions were under the direct influence of the new family ideology. Nevertheless, the professional women who participated in the “Women Doctors’ Roundtable Discussion” shared stories of Gim Baese and Heo Yeongsuk, the two early-Korean women doctors, and their own accounts of having been mistaken for being a nurse or midwife, and discussed the perception of women doctors, need for women doctors’ organization, and their future prospects in Korea.<sup>17</sup>

In such discussions, their ideal point of reference was the Japanese or Western society. When pointing out the absence of women doctors’ organization in Korea, Gil Jeonghui mentioned Japan’s Nyeouiho (Women Doctors’ Association), remarked that there were at least half as many women doctors as men doctors in Japan, and claimed that the Japanese women doctors had made big strides in medical research, for which they were well recognized in public. Although she criticized racial discrimination when sharing her experience of having been treated poorly for being a non-white doctor on her house call at a white family, this experience didn’t change the way these women looked up to Western and Japanese women doctors as their role models.<sup>18</sup>

As they discussed gender equality to a certain extent, near the end of the discussion, some of them addressed the form of discrimination where professional women were confined to the fields that were considered “feminine” or reserved for women only. To Yi Eunsang’s question, “Is there a form of illness that require treatment from women doctors specifically?” one of the participants

16. See, for example, the following roundtable discussions: “Yeoryu samhaksajwadamhoe” [The Three Women Scholars’ Roundtable Discussion], *Samcheolli*, April 1932; “Yeobaeu jwadamhoe” [Actresses’ Roundtable Discussion], *Samcheolli*, May 1932; “Ingi gasu jwadamhoe” [Popular Musicians’ Roundtable Discussion], *Samcheolli*, January 1936; “Yeogochulsinin interi gisaeng yeou yeogeup jwadamhoe” [Roundtable Discussion of Courtesan-entertainers, Actresses, and Hostesses Who Are Also High School Graduate-intellectuals], *Samcheolli*, April 1936; “Oeguk daehak chulsin yeoryu haksajwadamhoe” [Roundtable Discussion of Women Scholars Who Studied Abroad], *Samchollli*, April 1932; and “Bubu jwadamhoe” [Husband-Wife Roundtable Discussion], *Samchollli*, December 1935.

17. “Yeouisa jwadamhoe” [Women Doctors’ Roundtable Discussion], *Singajeong*, November 1934.

18. *Ibid.* 37; 39.

15. “Eomma chadamhoe” [Mothers’ Tea-Table Discussion], *Singajeong*, May 1934, pp. 113-23.



responded by pointing out those having to do with gynecology, obstetrics, and pediatrics, which can be understood as an attempt to confine the role of women doctors to the medical fields pertaining to "family."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the women athletes in the "Celebrity Athletes' Roundtable Discussion" (Ingiseonsu jwadamhoe) testified to the fact that their looks and attire were constantly subject to external judgment—male gaze. Seo Myeonghak recalled how she was called "fatty," while Choe Dongju reflected, "When women athletes get tanned as they train in the sun, people call us "*kkamdungi*" (darkies) (everyone laughs). I'm pretty certain that this has to do with the fact that we're women."<sup>20</sup>

These women have always been subject to male gaze, and their role confined to the fields related to family or femininity. In "The Roundtable Discussion on Physical Exercise for Women" (Yeoja cheyungmunje jwadamhoe) where the participants discussed the topic of physical exercise for housewives and women in the industrial workforce, one of them claimed, "These women need to engage in dance or other physical exercises that would enhance feminine curvature. Take a look at high school students these days who do heavy exercise with no moderation, and they all have wide calves."<sup>21</sup>

Another interesting set of roundtable discussions was the one where the participating women were considered the pioneers of "family reform" (*gajeonggaeryang*). Men also participated in this type of roundtable discussion, whose purpose often lay in enlightening people on the topic of family, with the structure and norms of the Western family as yardstick. The women in the aforementioned "The Roundtable Discussion on Physical Exercise for Women" often spoke as "the pioneers of public enlightenment campaign," which implied interlocking categories of family, society, and nation. The opening of the roundtable discussion was adorned with Western proverbs, followed by the statement that "The problem of physical exercise is crucially linked to our nation and society."<sup>22</sup> One of the participants insisted on the need for

"systematic and conscious exercise" on the grounds of the following statement: "Whereas women's everyday affair amounted to physical exercise in the past, things are now different with the division of labor that people simply use and wear readymade products these days."<sup>23</sup> Near the end of the discussion, another participant urged, "We all should do regular exercise, for ten minutes every day," which divulges its ideological investment.<sup>24</sup>

In this type of roundtable discussion, whereas women acquire the right to speak as the pioneers or experts in the family matter, their role is also limited to being men's informant. "The Roundtable Discussion on Housing Problems" is the case in point, where the participating women were reduced to advisory figures for the male architect. During the discussion, they merely provide information on family affairs as in the following remark by Gim Myebi: "More so than the location of bedroom or living room, the kitchen floor being so low is the most inconvenient." Meanwhile, when criticizing the older generation of women or women in general who were unwilling to accept such changes, the female participants like Son Jeonggyu often assumed an elitist attitude: "The problem with laywomen is that they are too tied to the old customs."<sup>25</sup> The granting of the right to speak for some women also meant that the division among women would exacerbate.

Therefore, the patterns in which women were allowed to speak in roundtable discussions reveal that their right to speak was partial with the limited range of subject matters. The housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife was allowed to speak only on the topic of family; the professional women were subject to male gaze; and the pioneers of "family reform" were confined to the role of informant for male decision makers. The duality of the women's right to speak also reflects the relations of power surrounding women. This is to say that although the women's right to speak seems to be granted acknowledgement within the new family ideology with its ideal womanhood such as the figure of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife or professional women, it actually restricted their speech to the domain of affective and reproductive work, which was essential for maintaining the system of colonial capitalism.

19. Ibid. 43.

20. "Ingiseonsu jwadamhoe" [Celebrity Athletes' Roundtable Discussion], *Singageong*, November 1935, pp. 30-31.

21. "Yeoja cheyukmunje jwadamhoe" [The Roundtable Discussion on Physical Exercise for Women], *Singageong*, September 1933, p. 67.

22. Ibid. 60: "Kellogg: regular exercise is as necessary as regular meals"; "Bacon: One hour of walk extends one's life by one hour"; "Nesfield: One buys things with money. Exercise, which brings about better health, buys life," etc.

23. Ibid. 60-61.

24. Ibid. 68.

25. "Jutaengmunje jwadamhoe" [The Roundtable Discussion on Housing Problems], *Singageong*, January 1936, pp. 60-62.

***The Right to Speak and the Rhetorical Strategies: Empathizing, Retorting, Drawing from Personal Accounts, and Use of Subjunctive Mood***

Although the aforementioned set of restrictions on the women's right to speak was imposed on the positions of housewife/wise-mother-and-good wife, professional woman, and family reform pioneer, the women in *The New Family* roundtable discussions utilized various strategies to bypass them. Although the positions from which they spoke were incorporated to the relations of power at the time and their right to speak confined to "the women's place" whether inside or outside of the sphere of family, the women speakers still managed to criticize or expose the irony of the ruling ideology.

One of such strategies that the women who spoke as housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife employed was by empathizing with other fellow women. These women, as housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife, had to remain aware of the familial relations and take caution as they spoke. For example, when some of the participants criticized the older generation of women who preferred son over daughter, Im Hyoeun eagerly pointed out that the same applied to her own family, even as she expressed concerns over whether her utterance might cause any trouble.<sup>26</sup> These women, who remained hyperconscious of their husband and in-laws' presence, preferred short remarks in which they empathized with each other over extended, direct arguments. When Yi Eunsang, the male host of the roundtable discussion, asked whether women should keep a housemaid, the female participants responded as follows:

Byeon Yeongae: If you don't have to make *gimchi*, make condiments, and do the laundry...

Gim Seonae: Even those who didn't keep a maid in Japan seem to do so here in Joseon.

○ Inshil: Because you'd have to make them do errands or watch over the house when no one's home...

Gim Seonae: Some Japanese families keep housemaids simply because the Korean families do it.

○ Inshil: But they have their food delivered and get door-to-door laundry

service anyway. *Why would they need housemaids in the first place?*

Byeon Yeongae: *Rather than arguing over whether we should do away with keeping housemaids or not, we need to change the way we live. Then housemaids will naturally disappear...*<sup>27</sup> (emphasis mine)

These women were drawing the conclusion that abolishing housemaid would not be possible without comprehensive reform of the Korean family system by empathizing with each other's circumstances. In regard to sensitive topics such as concubinage, they also employed retorts and rhetorical questions, which allowed them to collectively raise criticism in oblique manner.

Im Jeonghyeok: It'd be upsetting, but it's probably better to put up with it.

Byeon Yeongae: *So are you going to keep quiet and tolerate even if that happens to you?* (laughter) *No matter what, I don't think I can be cool-headed about it, can I?*

Jo Yeongsuk: In the past, wives couldn't say a word about their husbands having concubines, with whom they had to get along like sisters. But *there's no way that it's going to happen these days, is there?* Not that it's up to women to decide, but *if a man has problems with his wife, then there's no other way for a woman to deal with it than divorce [...]*

Byeon Yeongae: I suppose that depends on the case [...]. If nothing can fix the problem, then of course they should get a divorce. There'd be no other way, is there?

Jo Yeongsuk: What if they have children?

Byeon Yeongae: The problem wouldn't be that bad in the first place if they cared so much about their children. *Am I wrong?* (laughter)<sup>28</sup> (emphasis mine)

Such a rhetorical strategy allows one, on one hand, to present their argument in a less blunt way and, on the other hand, to collectively express disagreement.

The women who participated in the roundtable discussions as professional women often shared stories of their hardship as professional women, with which other female participants eagerly empathized.

Yu Yeongjun: *In my experience*, it always has to do with the atmosphere [...].

26. "Eomma chadamhoe," 114.

27. "Gajeong buin," 72.

28. Ibid. 75.

They always treat female doctors like nurses.

Jang Mungyeong: *It's really outrageous.*

Yu Yeongjun: You can say that again. Even in school, they'd prioritize male students and give them the edge [...] It's not as if you can file a complaint to the school, and *there is a lot of other things that are depressing.*

Son Chijeong: *How absurd is that?*<sup>29</sup> (emphasis mine)

Furthermore, Yu Yeongjun, one of the early Korean women doctors, provided a vivid account of having been discriminated against by white patients at Ewha, with which other women doctors like Byeon Seokhwa empathized: "What kind of nonsense is that? That makes me angry." Gil Jeonghui also remarked, "That's awful."<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the "Celebrity Athletes' Roundtable Discussions" unfolded as the women athletes shared anecdotes about their difficulties, to which other participants added theirs. The professional women spoke anecdotally about being confined to a narrow field of activity and subject to the society's (male) gaze, which put forth the illegitimacy of the discriminations they experienced in oblique manner—in the form of personal accounts and empathizing.

The participants of the roundtable discussions on improving family life and engaging in literary activities were often mixed-gender. The case in point is found where the female participants assumed the dual role of "family reform" pioneer and informant for men, which implied an ironic coexistence of the position from which these women spoke as autonomous subjects and the position subordinated to male decision makers. It was through retorts that these women, in such an unstable position, criticized the male participants' occasional ignorance.

Ju Yoseob (male): Concerning the women's advisory association, is there anything you can say of its authority?

Gim Isu: I believe there's nothing of the sort.

Lee Sangeun (male): It's unfortunate that something so crucial is lacking.

Gim Yeongae: *Is there any men's association with such authority?* (everyone laughs bitterly)

Hwang Shindeok: *You should just put an end to the thought that women are inferior to men* (everyone laughs)<sup>31</sup>

Ju Yoseob (male): I think it's very easy for women to become writers in Joseon.

Choe Jeonghi: *Is that right?* Every time I hear something like that, I get the urge to raise objections. I've heard people discuss Mo Yunsuk on the pretext that "she's a woman". *Does that mean women can become a writer without any qualification?* [...]

Ju Yoseob (male): I'm just looking forward to the kind of work that cannot be written by a man. So far, all the novels written by women could have been written by men and there hasn't been anything new.

Choe Jeonghi: *Are you saying that there are such subject matters reserved exclusively for women writers?*<sup>32</sup> (emphasis mine)

The context of the above discussion concerns the prejudice against women writers at the time, which posited that their writing was antagonistic to the class struggle and in service of the "bourgeois taste," and that they made their way into the literary establishment easily by taking advantage of their media stardom (Gim 2004, 330; 333-34). At some points, the female participants employed retorts and empathizing simultaneously, which showed some overlap with those who spoke as housewives in different roundtable discussions.

Jin Gyeongseon: Korean men like to show off so much [...] *They probably think it's embarrassing to help out at home* (everyone laughs).

Choe Uigyeong: *We the New Women should really go about revolutionizing our homes! How about it?*

Gim Insuk: *Shall we get our husbands to work instead?* (laughter)

Yeo Sunok: I object to that. The wife does housekeeping and the husband goes to his work to earn money. How can you ask someone to do housekeeping when he also has to work all day at his job?

Han Gyeongshil: *Then shouldn't women who do the housework be considered as women with jobs? But men never think that way, do they?*

Yeo Sunok: Economically speaking, *is there a type of housework that amounts to more than a housemaid's monthly wage of 3 won?*<sup>33</sup> (everyone laughs) (emphasis mine)

Reflections and Criticisms], *Singajeong*, December 1933, p. 18.

32. Ibid. 20.

33. "Pyeongyangyeoseong jwadamhoe" [The Roundtable Discussion of Women in Pyeongyang], *Singajeong*, June 1934, pp. 177-78.

29. "Yeouisa jwadamhoe," 37.

30. Ibid. 39-40.

31. "Joseonyeoseonggye jwadamhoe—Hoegowa bipyeong" [Korean Women's Roundtable Discussion:

Along with empathizing, retorts functioned as critical introspection of views among the women speakers. The discussion, which tended to recognize the women's reproductive labor as a proper form of labor, was made possible when these women's voices were articulated from the position of both housewife and professional woman, and involved in the problem of housemaids' wage.

Certainly, no fundamental solution was on the horizon as these women's rhetorical strategies were employed under discursive limits and their right to speak being still partial, in addition to being subject to the male gaze. Furthermore, since their arguments were in compliance with the elite women's need of housewives or notion of fidelity, it needs further analysis on how free they were from the mindset of middle- or upper class women who internalized the figure of wise-mother-and-good-wife under the new family ideology. Nevertheless, the rhetorical strategies of empathizing, drawing from personal accounts, and retorting, or a combination of them reveal not only the spectrum of limits imposed on the speaking women in the roundtable discussions but also the performativity of speaking women, which transforms the very limit imposed on them.

## Women's Reproductive Labor and their Involvement: Housemaids and Hostesses

### *Division among Women and Women Being Involved with One Another: Wise-Mother-Good-Wives and Housemaids, Professional Women and Hostesses*

While those who occupied the places of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife and professional woman—almost entirely middle- and upper class women—were able to secure the right to speak under the "new family" discourse, other women who were not granted the same right began to make appearance in the 1930s: housemaids and hostesses. In the 1930s, most of the middle- and upper class women were housewives and professional women, whereas lower class women from the rural area began moving to the urban centers to work as an industrial worker, housemaids or the so-called "domestic assistant," and hostesses under the colonial capitalism (Seo 2011, 2-3). However, the housemaids and hostesses were not acknowledged as "speaking women," and were often

"addressed" by the housewives or the professional women in their roundtable discussion. The more the housewives and professional women attempted to exclude housemaids and hostesses, the more deeply they became involved with each other in the affective and reproductive labor, both within and outside of the sphere of family.

The pattern in which the housewives tried to distinguish themselves from the housemaids even as they became deeply involved with them is made clear in the roundtable discussion featured in the founding issue of *The New Family*, titled "Married Women's Roundtable Discussion." The participants, each of whom was introduced as someone's wife, assumed the position of housewife/wise-mother-and-good-wife and discussed on topics pertaining to reproductive labor, such as "treatment of housemaids, housekeeping scheduling, disciplining children, marital crisis, family leisure, and food." The topic of "treatment of housemaids" in particular is symbolic of the relationship between housewife and housemaid.

Yi: [...] How are our maids treated? Rather, how are we to treat them? Should we address them informally or use honorifics?

Jo Yeongsuk: Traditionally, we would use informal language, but they are the same people as we are, who happen to be working at other people's houses because of financial trouble. I think the right thing to do is to treat them fairly. But as I heard it, *when we treat them with respect, they forget their place.* [...]

Yi: How do you set working hours for your maids? [...]

Jo Yeongsuk: We have 10 people in my family, so the maid has no time to rest. [...] *The working hours are allotted regularly in Western families, but I don't believe that is practical for the Korean family.*[...]

Byeon Yeongae: [...] *How can anyone have a set work schedule for housekeeping?*<sup>34</sup> (emphasis mine)

This passage offers a glimpse of how housewives and housemaids become involved with one another by looking at how the issues pertaining to housemaids such as use of honorifics, working hours, salaries, and time-offs were discussed. Since the nature of housekeeping simply wasn't fit for a fixed work schedule due to changing schedules of each individual family member, no

34. "Gajeong buin," 71-72.

set work schedule for housemaids was possible. This was to say that the range of work, work time, and standard of evaluation were ambiguous, which depended on the personal relationship of the housewife and the housemaid.

The topic of treatment of housemaids has been "a big headache for any family," which was treated in a separate section titled "Special Section on the Housemaid Problem" (Singmomunje teukjimnan) in the June 1936 issue of *The New Family* (B. Bak 1936, 112). The section was based on a survey made up of the following set of questions: "How much salary do you pay for your housemaid?"; "In what manner do you speak to your housemaid?"; "How many days of leave do you give?"; "How do you train your housemaid?"; and "Why do housemaids avoid Korean families?" The following is a response from Lee Gyeongji, a housewife from Gaeseong.

[...] 4. The maid receives training on the first day of work. First of all, I tell the maid in what manner the adults and children in the family will speak to her, and instruct her specifically on in what manner she must speak to different persons in the family [...] Thirdly, I personally teach her how to prepare meals for two to three days [...] Fourthly, when the maid prepares meals for my parents-in-law or my husband, I check them every day and tell her to do things differently if necessary [...]

5. Korean families, first of all, don't pay well, and work tasks are not so clear cut. Thirdly, they often look down on the maids, and fourthly, they are often extended [*cheungcheungsiba*], where too many people in the family would tell the maid different things as to what she should do, which frequently causes problems.<sup>35</sup>

As the above response illustrates, housewives had to work with housemaids in order to instruct them on housekeeping, and they often worked together for the parents and grandparents of the husband. Although the housewives wanted to separate themselves from housemaids by keeping them reminded of their place, the two were deeply involved with one another through the reproductive labor. Furthermore, the term "domestic assistant" covered various types of domestic labor such as cooking, breastfeeding, childcare, and overall housekeeping (Seo

2011, 14-15). In turn, such division of female labor under the new family reveals how housewives and their domestic assistants were inevitably connected through what can be termed "the new domestic labor."

The pattern in which the housewife and waitress—and their affective labor—are simultaneously being separated and connected in sexual exploitation is revealed in many of the women's roundtable discussions in the early and mid-1930s. For instance, at the "Professional Women's Meeting" (Jigeopbun gandamhoe) featured in the April 1933 issue of the *Sinyeoseong* (*The New Women*), professional women such as nurses, department store workers, journalists, hairdressers, and teachers gathered for a talk, and distinguished themselves from hostesses or courtesan-entertainers (*giseang*) by claiming that they don't qualify as professional women. In other words, the housewives and professional women set themselves apart from the old women by adhering to the liberal ideas about sex while trying to distance themselves from the hostesses whose sexual labor was exploited under the capitalist sex industry (Gim 2009, 465).

The housewives and the professional women frequently mentioned and represented hostesses as a threat to the new family, as some of the hostesses at the time were idolized as men's potential open-relationship partners. At the time, moreover, "cafés" were "a place of desire in which to substitute the male libido that was left unsatisfied in marital home." Therefore, the housewives and waitresses pitted themselves against each other. Consider the following passage:

Jo Yeongsuk: *It is customary for the Japanese people to go for a family walk, but all that Korean men are good at messing around with courtesan-entertainers or café-girls.*

ByeonYeongae: [...] *Men are drawn to courtesan-entertainers or café-girls probably because they are bad at socializing.*<sup>36</sup>

Im Hyojeong: Right. Fathers are the problem, which has a tremendous impact! *Such a pity that they only take courtesan-entertainers around, not their wives or children.*<sup>37</sup> (emphasis mine)

As seen in the above passage, hostesses, or "café-girls," seemed to come into

35. "Singmodaeye gwanhan seolmun" [The Survey on the Treatment of Housemaids], *Singajeong*, June 1936, p. 116. The expression *cheungcheungsiba* refers to a situation in which a housewife life with not only her husband's parents but also his grandparents.

36. "Gajeong buin," 76-77.

37. "Eomma chadamhoe," 121.

conflict with the housewives. However, in reality, both were involved with one another, as they were subject to the same exploitation of sexuality under colonial capitalist sex industry.

Yet, as far as capitalist sex industry and exploitation of sexual labor were concerned, the housewives and hostesses were in the same boat, no matter how antagonistic their relation seemed. The hostesses were subjected to sexual exploitation, abuses, and emotional labor, to which housewives, albeit to varying extents, were also subjected. At the "Future Outlook Roundtable Discussion" held in the new year of 1936, where women representatives from all walks of life shared future prospects of their field, Dr. Gil Jeonghui, who represented the medical field, said that women suffer from more diseases than men, as they suffered from "not only diseases that only affect women but also from many venereal diseases," which are "transmitted mostly from men, as there is a pathetically high number of male carriers of venereal diseases" and stressed the urgent need for public enforcement of morality on men.<sup>38</sup>

Although the housewives and professional women attempted to distance themselves from housemaids and hostesses, who were deprived of the means to position themselves or speak as "speaking women," such an attempt only revealed further how they were deeply involved with one another in reproductive and affective labor. This relation of "distance and involvement" in turn divulges the deep connections between modern capitalism, colonialism/imperialism, and exploitation of sex that reinforces the binary of intrafamilial/extrafamilial as well as blurring it.

### *The Housemaids' Rhetorical Strategies: Lowering Oneself, Narrating Life Events, Affective Discharge, Being Spoken*

Unlike the housewives whose right to speak was granted, albeit in a limited form, housemaids were rarely granted the right to speak at a public forum such as The New Family roundtable discussion. Under such circumstances, the housemaids' voice was articulated in a way distinct from that of, for example, housewives.

The figure of housemaid was often "represented" as a source of "trouble" in the roundtable discussions where housewives participated. Im Hyojeong described the situation where "it is difficult to find a good housemaid" as "the main cause of headache for Korean housewives." Even if one found a suitable one, Im lamented that "before long, they would leave and work for a Japanese family" (Im 1936, 114). Bak Bongae remarked that whereas some housemaids are overworked, other housemaids who are treated with respect tended to forget their place because most housemaids "try to work as little as possible and earn as much as they can...due to their misfortunes, financial trouble, and lack of education" (B. Bak 1936, 112).

These remarks reveal, in spite of class distinctions, that both parties were deeply involved in reproductive labor in the sphere of family and the degree of influence of certain behaviors of housemaids on housewives. Under the circumstance where "it was impossible to either build a housemaid training center or hire the educated as housemaids," housemaids and housewives needed each other for the common goal of undertaking reproductive labor as much as they repelled each other (B. Bak 1936, 113). The housemaids were the source of "trouble" or "headache" not because the housewives monopolized the way they were to be represented but because the housemaids were able to take advantage of their reproductive labor to an extent they could exert presence. Regardless of the intention of the housewives at the roundtable discussion, the moment the housemaids were mentioned as "trouble" in regard to undertaking reproductive labor was also the way the figure of housemaid revealed its presence at the roundtable discussion.

The housemaids also appropriated and transformed the public ground in which they were granted no right to speak through their writing. *The New Family's* special issue on "the housemaid problem" featured a writing by a housemaid named Sim Taesun (1936, 128-31) with her name handwritten in the magazine, laying emphasis on the fact that the writing was "non-fiction." Sim's rhetorical strategy in her writing was to lower herself. In the beginning of her writing where she stated that one intellectual at *Dong-A ilbo* asked her to write on the experience of being a housemaid, and that she was not a person of letters, Sim portrayed herself as a humble human being whose motive for writing was external and who did not intend to show off with her own writing (Sim 1936, 128).

38. "Gakgye jeonmang idong jwadamgi" [Roundtable Discussion on the Future Outlook in All Walks of Life], *Singajeong*, January 1936, p.14.

Although Sim's stated intent lay in writing on her experience of being a

housemaid, she wrote mostly about the overall course of her life that unfolded in spite of her will. Born in a poor family, Sim's parents arranged her marriage to a pimp in exchange for money. While enduring abuse from her husband and his pimping, Sim kept on supporting her parents-in-law, until her husband came home with a concubine. After a failed attempt at suicide, Sim left her husband and returned to her parents, where she came to adopt Christianity and began working as housemaid through a pastor. Sim stressed that every single life event she wrote about had happened against or regardless of her will, which reveals the interlocking forms of violence—capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy—imposed on the lower class woman of the colonized place. Although it seemed as if she redeemed herself through her newfound faith in God, her labor—in the family she was born into, in the family she was sold off to, and even at the church where she worked as a housemaid—continued to remain unpaid.

The significance of Sim's anecdotal writing on her life events lies in the role of "rumors" and unidentified source of her emotions. Sim discovered that her parents sold her to a pimp by a rumor that "the hardships of marriage drove the pimp's ex-wife to drown herself, which her parents resented" (Sim 1936, 128). The moment Sim became determined to settle for a divorce was when she heard the rumor that "her husband had written his concubine's name in the family register instead of hers" (ibid. 130). Although these rumors may not have been true, they were determining factors in a number of decisions Sim had made throughout her life. In other words, rumors functioned as the informal commons through which women shared information and spoke.

Sim also wrote about vague emotions she had, for which she blames her own "misfortunes." At the same time, these vague emotions reveal how the new family ideology not only enables the exploitation of lower class women's labor but also becomes internalized in them.

It is true that *I worry over possible mistakes because I am receiving money and I do have responsibility over my duties*, and it's also true that *I can't freely express myself out of fear that I may go against my master's wishes*. [...] *Every time I get the monthly pay in my hands, my eyes fill up with tears. I don't know why, but I don't feel comfortable*. If all goes well at the house, then that's alright. But if someone in the house complains or expresses discomfort, I really just want to run away from there. I feel as if my own bad luck is the source of all other misfortunes around me, so I'm always upset and angry. I'm not told off or anything, but I tend to be cautious of my master's mood. Even when

no one says anything, I feel uncomfortable. And *even though I don't have particular worries, I feel as if I have a heavy burden on my heart*. (Sim 1936, 131; emphasis mine)

Being unable to "unburden one's heart" renders visible the peculiar forms of hardship involved in the affective labor of housemaid. The fact of unpaid labor—that is, not being justly compensated for one's own labor—is expressed through anecdotes such as getting teary eyes or feeling uncomfortable when receiving monthly payment, while the life hardships of housemaid and their exclusion from the ideal form of the new family are evident in Sim's tendency to be cautious of her master's mood, her constant state of being upset and anxious, and her remorse that it is her own "bad luck" that might be spreading and affecting things around her. The housemaids often desired to live up to the ideals of the new family by, for example, attending in the evening courses. However, once they realized what their chances were, they ran away or committed suicide out of desperation. Also, some of them were subject to rape by the man they served as housewife or "affair revenge murder" by the man's wife (Seo 2011, 20).

Since the housemaids were not granted the right to speak, they were often "spoken" by housewives. Even when they were given the limited opportunity to write about themselves, they often lowered themselves, narrated their life events in which they revealed certain affects, or referred to the rumors they heard to articulate their view or emotions in an oblique manner, rather than straightforwardly describe their situation or write complaints. Under certain extreme circumstances, they were able to do so by committing suicide or running away. Although these strategies are marked by passivity, they still manage to divulge the relations of power at work—between patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism—that marginalized and oppressed the housemaids, which urges us to seek ways to hear the subaltern voice outside of the conventional public forum.

### ***The Hostesses' Rhetorical Strategies: Appropriation/Transformation of Discourse, Strategic Humbleness, Narrating Life Events***

Like the housemaids, the degree to which the hostesses were granted the right to speak was far smaller than that of the housewives and professional women. However, starting in the late 1930s, the hostesses took more active and collective

measures to intervene in the public forum from outside to appropriate and transform it, which was possible due to the fact that "their level of education, class, and background varied, ranging from the educated New Women, actresses, daughters of wealthy families to former courtesan-entertainers and socialists" (Seo 2003, 67-68). Contrary to the fact that most housemaids were from the lower class, the hostesses, in whom women from various social strata were included, were able to organize and found their own publication, *The Voice of Women*, in April 1934.

Considering that profiles of the hostesses at each venue and their photos adorned the first few pages of *The Voice of Women*, it is evident that the publication was not free of capitalist exploitation of sex at the time. However, in the founding statement of *The Voice of Women*, editor O Yeongcheol (1934a, 6) criticized the tendency to look down on hostesses as "warriors of obscenity" (*dosaekjeonsa* 桃色戰士) and stressed that they were also rightful members of society, since their "self-inflicted degradation" into "outcast" was not free from their "external circumstances." O (ibid. 6-7) declared the hostess's work as "sacred," for they also struggle for survival, provide for their parents and raise children, which set the tone of *The Voice of Women* as providing certain grounds for hostesses by "condemning and reforming those who went astray while engaging with our society in the spirit of mutualism." O's statement was grounded by an awareness that the work of hostess, insofar as it is a form of struggle for survival, was not different from any other forms of labor under capitalism.

Although more work needs to be done to examine the exact nature of O's relationship to hostesses, it is certain that *The Voice of Women* was part of the larger project that covered magazine, weekly newspaper, publishing in general, and film production. While the only remaining document of *The Voice of Women* is the founding issue, its last few pages also testify to the fact that there was a plan for publishing the second issue. Additionally, there were plans to publish books such as *The Way of the Hostess* (*Yeogeubui gil*), evidence that they had established a film production department, and plans for publishing *The Hostess Weekly* (*Yeogeup jubo*), a weekly newsletter for hostesses that would put together the news of the day in order to encourage cooperation and solidarity among hostesses.<sup>39</sup> There were also suggestions to urge hostesses to send in

investigative reports on the cafés where they worked, and discussions on creating a section for providing counseling service for hostesses.<sup>40</sup> The editor's postscript in the first issue thanked the hostesses "for sending in a great deal of writing that enriched the publication," which "testified to the bright prospects for hostesses," which further hints at the positive response that the publication received from the hostesses at the time.<sup>41</sup>

*The Voice of Women* consisted of not only the writings by men but also nine central pieces of writing by hostesses that ranged from memoirs and essays to poems, which provide a glimpse of their rhetorical style.<sup>42</sup> One of the distinct features that set them apart from other women's magazines at the time was the relatively frequent use of loanwords. These included, for example, *mo-teo* ("motto"), *kampul jusa* ("camphor injection"), *peureon* ("plan"), etc., which stood in sharp contrast to *The New Family*, whose editorial policy was to print purely in Korean letters, as evidenced by Sim Taesun's writing. Such a characteristic originates in the fact that the makeup of hostesses included students and women who received professional education, which could be seen as positioning themselves through appropriation of "erudite language."

The appropriation of discourse was one of the rhetorical strategies employed by the hostesses. An article titled "To the Korean Women: Don't Hesitate to Join the Workforce!" by Baekjangmi at "R Hall," which headlined *The Voice of Women*, was distinguished for its great flow of argument, argumentative coherence, specificity, and vividness of description. As the accompanied illustration depicted a woman in pants and a blouse who had one hand on her waist, gazing defiantly forward, it is also distinguished from the profile photos of hostesses in the previous pages. In her article, Baekjangmi criticized how Korean women were discouraged from having a job and were physically and mentally imprisoned for life in their houses.

A moment of awakening has arrived for Korean women. This has led them to leave their homes, take off the so-called hooded dress [*sseugaechima*] and

April 1934, p. 23.

40. "Dongmuyeo geureul bonaera" [Comrades, Send in Your Writings], *Yeoseong*, April 1934, p. 42.

41. "Pyeongjiphugi" [Postscript], *Yeoseong*, April 1934. The pages of the postscript are unnumbered.

42. For the writings written by men, refer to the following articles: "Baengmaui gyeongjareul chajoseo" [In Pursuit of Gyeongja of Cafe White Horse], *Yeoseong*, April 1934, pp. 38-40; O 1934b, 26-28; Baekgutongin 1934, 54-58; L 1934, 51-52; and L. H. 1934, 43-45.

39. See Seo 2003, 47n30 for the trace of their film production department. In regard to the plans to publish *The Hostess Weekly*, see "Gwanggo—Yeogeupjubo" [Ads of *The Hostess Weekly*], *Yeoseong*,



replace them with skirts, and then do away with skirts and opt for parasols instead. [...] Or *when one sees women dominate jobs as a taipiseuteu [typist], gasollin geol [female gas station worker], weiteuriseu [hostess], or pilot and challenge men, one can't help but feel deeply moved. [...] They probably see us as prostitutes in the street. As a hostess, I also believe that the greater responsibility lies in injecting such ignorant and foolish men with a dose of common sense as though administering a kampul [camphor] shot, and whip them into a state of enlightenment. All women in Korea, wake up! Don't hesitate to join the workforce. Every working woman shall fight and give it all out for the struggle against the authority of men and the tribulations of the hostile society. This will not only contribute to our journey forward, but also provide a source of joy and direction for women tormented by their own vanity and daydreams.* (Baekjangmi 1934, 9-11; emphasis mine)

Baekjangmi conceptualized the figure of hostess as enlightened women with freedom of body and mind by distinguishing hostesses from the old women who were confined to domesticity and also from prostitutes. She also argued that the figure of professional woman was the one to which that hostesses must look up, "a source of joy and direction for women tormented by their own vanity and daydreams," and urged women to "wake up, fight, and join the workforce under 'the *mo-teo* [motto] of complete freedom" (Baekjangmi 1934, 10; 11). Chomi of Paradise Hall (Nakwon hol) also stressed in her article "An Appeal to the World" that "hostesses are also legitimate members of society, since they work and make living accordingly," and linked the labor of hostesses with the international struggle of working class for survival by claiming that the work of hostess "was the only viable way of struggle for survival for the proletariat women" (Chomi 1934, 19).

It is not clear whether the motive behind Baekjangmi and Chomi's argument for the hostess as independent, promising figure was voluntary. However, hostesses at the time did sign a contract with the place they worked and received tips, which distinguished them from prostitutes or courtesan-entertainers who were bound to pimps or call-offices, *gwonbeon* (Seo 2003, 37). Furthermore, the self-affirming discourse of hostess was relatively more radical in nature than the new family discourse where only housewives were granted a limited right to speak by the virtue of their position in the sphere of family.

The second type of rhetorical strategy employed by the hostesses involved strategic humbleness. Although the hostesses who employ this strategy seemed

to passively accept their lot, the subversiveness lay in this very acceptance. For example, Gim Myeongsuk opened her writing by stating that writing on her circumstances may serve as flushing out her own dissatisfaction with herself. While this could provide some consolation for her heart, Gim (1934, 12-14) further stated, "also, one could not say if this would not provide an occasion for laypeople to learn more about the person I am." Baekjangmi (1934, 11) likewise emphasized the humble nature of her writing by stating that the chief motive behind her "jumbled" (*jorieomneun*) writing was the fervent request from the editor.

Adopting a humble attitude enabled the hostesses to amplify the rhetorical effect of their own writing, especially when they retorted the social prejudice against those issuing such prejudice. Baekjangmi (1934, 11) argued that men who saw no difference between prostitutes and hostesses needed to be injected "with a dose of common sense as though administering a *camphor shot*" (emphasis mine) and whipped "into a state of enlightenment." In regard to the public opinion that hostesses are parasites to society, Chomi (1934, 18) criticized that such an opinion originated in "the ignorance of what the actual society is like." In a poem titled "If You are a True Human Being: A Poem," Jeonggang of Café White Horse (*kape baengma*) stressed that men who struggle to make ends meet and those whom the men called "hostess" were actually on equal footing as fellow workers, and advised as a social outcast, "Stop showing off in front of us/ Whom you called worthless/In your own words./Get a surgery/On your crooked eyes/ And your rotten innards/ And fix them up./You will then see in your eyes/ The real world/ You will see straight."<sup>43</sup>

Like housewives and professional women, hostesses also narrated life events as a rhetorical strategy. What distinguished theirs from that of the housewives or professional women was the emphasis on criticism of patriarchal and capitalist society. Although the hostesses exposed external circumstances in which they had no other option than to work as hostesses, which was similar to the way the housemaids narrated theirs, the hostesses' narratives led to criticism of the fiction of the new family ideology.

Baekjangmi reminisced about the time when she worked at a firm, where her boss "called her to his office and straightforwardly insisted, 'marry me,'" and

43. Jeonggang, "Si—Chamdaun inganiramyeon" [If You are a True Human Being: A Poem], *Yeoseong*, April 1934, pp. 31-32.

when she refused, she was made to "quit in an absurd manner." After working at different jobs, Baekjangmi stated that she came to work as a hostess, since none of her previous work "gave her true freedom." The work of hostesses, as Baekjangmi (1934, 10) described, was "above all, free, and great for dominating men who harass us as they like." Sunja (1934, 15-17) of *Café Crown* narrated how she came to work as hostess as follows: she quit school in her second grade because of tuition, and began working as a bus conductor in Seoul, where she also felt the strong urge to quit because she could not stand how "other drivers were talking all the nonsense about relationship," but she was not able to find any viable alternative, including "a housemaid job at a Japanese house." She eventually quit as she was duped into a marriage with an already married man. The marriage did not end well, as she lost her child and was on the verge of committing suicide. It was then that she came to work as hostess. Sunja (1934, 17) heavily criticized the dominant discourse that perpetuated the binaries of the intrafamilial/extrafamilial and professional women/hostesses by claiming that there was no real difference between professional women and hostesses and that "all men live by telling lies." Gim Myeongsuk (1934, 14) criticized the fantasy of open relationships by referring to the death of one hostess who dreamed of open relationships. Chunja (1934, 22-23), who was on her fifth day of working at *Café White Horse* by the time of her writing, confessed that her workplace turned out to be "alright," contrary to the widespread belief that becoming a hostess at a café meant the plight of one's life.

The hostesses, who had never been granted the right to speak at all, worked to establish their own commons and form a voice by appropriating/transforming the dominant discourse, utilizing strategic humbleness to criticize the social prejudice, and narrating their life events. *The Voice of Women* reveals the attempts of hostesses to overcome the mechanisms of capitalist sex industry that perpetuated the binaries of the intrafamilial/extrafamilial and professional women-housewives/hostesses and to establish their common discursive space outside of the existing public forum.

### Multiple Dislocations and Involvements among Women

The women who participated in *The New Family* roundtable discussions were granted the right to speak insofar as they assumed the positions of housewife,

professional women, celebrity athletes, and pioneers of family reform, all of which functioned as yet another veil that simultaneously granted permission and imposed restrictions on them. At the same time, in addition to having their speech confined to the topics pertaining to family, the women were relegated to a limited number of professions reserved for women, reduced to the role of informant for male decision makers, and constantly subject to male gaze. Such precarious positions were often marginalized and fragmented even as they spoke in public.

The women's right to speak in colonial Korea was conditioned by the relations of power that constituted the public. Therefore, the women's struggle to secure their right to speak often led to the reinforcement or restoration of order in the public sphere instead of amounting to an actual resistance. For instance, to overcome their precarious positions the housewives and professional women who participated in the roundtable discussions looked up to the Western or Japanese modernity and established hierarchy among women by distancing themselves from the old women, housemaids, and the working class women.

However, the housewives and professional women's attempts to distinguish themselves from housemaids and hostesses ironically revealed the situations in which they were deeply involved with those from whom they were trying to distance. When the figure of housemaid—typically lower-class women—was addressed as a source of "trouble," the emotion-filled responses from the housewives and professional women revealed how they were deeply involved with one another in reproductive labor. Moreover, the housemaids articulate themselves in the public sphere via unusual means such as "being addressed in someone else's speech," "auto-narratives" in their notes, or suicide and running away.

Likewise, although the figure of hostess was seen as a threat to one's family and therefore something to be terminated, their responses, especially those pertaining to the spread of venereal diseases, demonstrated the way in which all of them—housewives, professional women, and hostesses—were closely connected in the structure characterized by reproductive labor, affective labor, and exploitation of sexual labor. At the same time, the hostesses published their own zines instead of relying on the mainstream outlet, creating a new commons for their own collective voice as well as criticizing the hierarchization among women based on the ideology of the new family.

Therefore, the collective experience of women who were closely connected with one another in spite of difference in occupation or class enabled criticism against patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism, as it was evidenced by the collective enunciation through empathizing and retorting, rumors and affects in the housemaids' narratives of their life events, and the hostesses' attempt to establish a new commons.

What needs to be discussed in depth when examining the ambivalence of performativity of "speaking women" is the conditions of culturally colonized women, which I will not be able to explore fully due to the limited scope of this paper. These women's voice was never free from either the naive admiration of the Western and Japanese modernity or the colonial mentality (Gim 2009, 469-71). For instance, the criticism of Korean patriarchy by the housewives and professional women was based on the standard set by colonial modernity, which perpetuated discrimination against the old women in Korea and exacerbated conflicts among women. To take another example, the participating housewives in one of the roundtable discussions on housing renovation complained that the uneducated housewives or women of the older generation were adamant, tasteless, and ignorant.<sup>44</sup>

Also, there was a clear hierarchy among the women of the empire and the women of the colony. The Korean housemaids tended to prefer Japanese families that resided in Korea over Korean families because the Korean families treated them poorly, did not pay them well, and there was no "promotion" (Yi 1936, 121). Although the availability of such choices may seem like a good opportunity for working class women, it was enabled by the hierarchical relationship between Korean women and the Japanese women residing in Korea. Furthermore, the Korean housewives were also placed alongside the Japanese housemaids who were educated in school for housemaids in Tokyo. Their familiarity with the methods of modern housekeeping was considered "noteworthy even for housewives," for which the graduates from the school for housemaid were preferred as "wife materials" over Korean women (S. Bak 1936, 131).

In a similar vein, the arguments of *The Voice of Women's* writers also came into conflict with those who opposed the licensed prostitution. Go Yeonghwan's

article "What Made Them Do So?" introduced the "The International Alliance for Abolition of Licensed Prostitution" to advocate for abolition of the licensed prostitution in Korea. Go (1934, 59) claimed that "ordinary women would lose the grounds to raise their head and call for equality and recognition of her humanity" as long as the licensed prostitution was in place, which directly opposed the overall tenor of *The Voice of Women*. At the same time, the writers of *The Voice of Women* proudly portrayed the hostesses as enlightened women acting as pioneers of the proletariat movement, and stressed that they must be differentiated from prostitutes as they saw themselves as ordinary workers free from the outmoded customs regarding domesticity. Such hierarchical classification of women makes it difficult to form solidarity among the colonized women, which brings to mind Mohanty's (2003, 22) remark that women are not "characterized as a singular group on the basis of a shared oppression."

Nevertheless, the conditions of solidarity lay precisely in these precarious conditions under which the women spoke as they appropriated and transformed the "veil" or created a whole new "veil" when they were given no veil to begin with. For these conditions engendered either fragmentation or solidarity. Just as Frantz Fanon discussed the historical dynamics of veil during the Algerian Revolution, the Korean women transformed and appropriated the figures of housewife, professional woman, housemaid, and hostess that functioned like the veil, which demonstrated the ways in which women of different class and occupation were involved with one another in reproductive and affective labor, the rhetorical strategies of empathizing and retorting, rumors and affects in the housemaids' narratives of their life events, and attempts by the hostesses to establish a new commons (Fanon 1965, 43; 47).

To envision a new feminist commons, one must continue their effort in hearing and translating the performative enunciations of the women who have been involved with one another in spite of difference in class and familial status even as they were marginalized in the public sphere where their right to speak was restricted and permitted at the same time and fragmented by capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism.

44. "Geonchukmunje jwadamhoe" [The Roundtable Discussion on the Problem of Architecture], *Singajeong*, January 1936, pp. 62-63.

## References

- Baekgutongin. 1934. "Maengmokjeok yeoinsang—sarangiyeo jinsilhame itseura" [The Ideal Image of Woman: Love Lies in Truth]. *Yeoseong* (April): 54-58.
- Baekjangmi. 1934. "Joseonui yeoseongdeura! jujeomalgo jigeop jeonseoneuro!" [To the Korean Women: Don't Hesitate to Join the Workforce!] *Yeoseong* (April): 8-11.
- Bak, Bongae. 1936. "Janyegyoyukgwa singmomunje" [Children's Education and the Housemaid Problem]. *Singajeong* (June): 110-13.
- Bak, Seungho. 1936. "Donggyeongeseo bon hanyeahakgyo" [The Housemaid Schools in Tokyo]. *Singajeong* (June): 131
- Byeon, Yeongro, and Jemyeong Hyeon. 1936. "Singajeong norae—Jeulgeoun naejip sallim" [The New Family Song: Joyful Family Life]. *Singajeong* (January): 7-9.
- Choe, Uisun. 1931. "Sogyeong—Singajeong punggyeong" [Small Scene: The Portrait of the New Family]. *Sindonga* (December).
- Chomi. 1934. "Sesange hosohanda" [An Appeal to the World]. *Yeoseong* (April): 18-19.
- Chunja. 1934. "Kape-ui cheotsogam 'cheongchunui surajang'" [First Impression of Cafés: "Carnage of Youth"]. *Yeoseong* (April): 22-23.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1965. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press.
- Federici, Silvia. 2012. *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- Gim, Dongjin. 1931. "Gyeolnihoneuro bon joseonui jatae" [Marriage and Divorce in Korea]. *Sindonga* (December).
- Gim, Myeongsuk. 1934. "Naega geotgo inneun gireun gasideombulgil" [I am on a Thorny Path]. *Yeoseong* (April): 12-14.
- Gim, Sujin. 2009. *Sinyeoseong, geundaewi gwaing—Singminji joseonui sinnyeoseong damnongwa jendeojeongchi* [The New Women, the Modern Excess: The Discourse of the New Women and Gender Politics in Colonial Korea]. Seoul: Somyeongchulpan.
- Gim, Yangseon. 2004. "Yeoseongjagkareul dulleossan gongjeok damnonui du yangsik" [Two Modes of Public Discourse Surrounding Women Writers]. *Minjongmunhaksa yeongu* [Journal of Korean Literary History] 26: 318-46.
- Go, Yeonghwan. 1934. "Mueosi geudeureul geureoke hayeonna?" [What Made Them Do So?]. *Singajeong* (July): 56-59.
- Gwon, Bodeurae. 2003. *Yeonaewi sidae* [The Age of Romantic Relationship]. Seoul: Hyeonsilmunhwa yeongu.
- Hong, Yanghui. 2010. "Singminjisigi 'hyeonmoyangcheo'rongwa 'modeoniti' munje" ["Modernity" and the Idea of "Wise Mother and Good Wife" in the Colonial Korea]. *Sahakyeongu* [Journal of History] 99: 299-338.
- "Ilmunildapgi: yeogeubui namseonggan—Baengmaui gyeongjareul chajeoseo" [A Hostess's Perspective on Men: An Interview with Gyeongja of Cafe White Horse]. 1934. *Yeoseong* (April).
- Im, Hyojeong. 1936. "Singmo daeu munje" [The Problem of Treating One's Housemaid]. *Singajeong* (June): 114-19.
- Jeonggang. 1934. "Si—Chamdaun inganiramyeon" [If You are a True Human Being: A Poem]. *Yeoseong* (April): 29-32.
- L, Gija. 1934. "Ppyammajin nyeoseok" [The One Who Got Slapped in the Face]. *Yeoseong* (April): 51-53.
- L. H. 1934. "Dosaengnamnyeoreul bangmyeolhaja" [Let Us Exterminate Promiscuous Men and Women]. *Yeoseong* (April): 43-45.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- No, Huijun. 2005: "Singajeong yeongu" [The Study on *The New Family*]. *Inmunhakeongu* [Journal of Humanities] 9: 53-76.
- O, Yeongcheol. 1934a. "Changgansa—Changgane jehaya (seoreul daehaya)" [Mission Statement: In Celebration of Founding the Publication]. *Yeoseong* (April): 6-7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1934b. "Nagwon dongsanui kanaria—taepyeongyangeseo iksaseol" [Canaria of Eden: On Drowning in the Pacific Ocean]. *Yeoseong* (April): 26-28.
- Seo, Jiyeong. 2003: "Singminji sidae kape yeogeup yeongu—Yeogeup jappi yeoseongeul jungsimeuro" [Study on the Cafe-girl during the Colonial Times: On Hostesses' Magazine *The Voice of Women*]. *Hangukyeoseonghak* [Journal of Korean Women's Studies] 19 (3): 31-78
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "Singminji dosi gonggangwa chinmilseongui sangpumhwa" [Urban Space and Commodification of Intimacy in Colonial Korea]. *Peminijeumyeongu* [Journal of Feminist Studies] 11 (1): 1-33.
- Shin, Ji Young. 2012. *Bul/Jaewi sidae* [The Age of Ab/sence]. Seoul:

Somyeongchulpan.

- Sim, Taesoon. 1936. "Ilsingmoui nunmulgyeoun sugi—namuijip sari simnyeon iolsida" [Notes from a Housemaid: 10 Years of Living in Someone Else's House]. *Singajeong* (June): 128-31.
- Song, Jinu. 1933. "Changgansa" [Mission Statement]. *Singajeong* (January): 2-3.
- Sunja. 1934. "Gaengsaengui do" [The Way to the New Life]. *Yeoseong* (April): 15-17.
- Yi, Changgeun. 1936. "Joseongajeonggwa singmomunje" [Korean Family and the Housemaid Problem]. *Singajeong* (June): 120-22.

---

**Ji Young SHIN** (jyshin1881@yonsei.ac.kr) is Assistant Professor at College of Liberal Arts, Yonsei University. Although Shin's research interests range from Modern and contemporary literature of Korea and East Asian history and textual studies to Modern and contemporary East Asian thought, her most recent research focus is on the change and development of Korean and East Asian minority communes circa 1945 through the events of contact and migration as well as East Asian documentary literature. She earned her Ph.D at Yonsei University with her dissertation, "A Study on Modern Korean Speech and the Roundtable Discussion (zadankai)" in 2010, and another Ph.D at Hitotsubashi University with "Against Comparison: Theories of Contact and Colloquial Texts in post-1945 Korea, Taiwan, and Japan" in 2018. Her published work ranges from *The Age of Ab/Sence* (2012) and *The Minority Commune* (2016) to *Postwar Japan and East Asia* (co-authored, 2018). Shin also has published many other articles such as "Envisioning the History of Zainichi Korean Literature: The Polyphony of the Silent Voices" (SAI, Nov. 2019) and "Translational Discursive Spaces in Immediate Post-Liberation Korea: Hearsay, Reportage, and Roundtables," (*The Review of Korean Studies*, June 2018) etc.

## Abstract

The article examines housewives and professional women's roundtable discussions, housemaids' writings, and hostesses' writings featured in the magazines for women in the 1930s, including *Singajeong* (*The New Family*) and *Yeoseong* (*The Voice of Women*), through which I will interrogate the significance and the limits of women's right to speak, and performativity of these women's speech acts and their involvement with one another. In the discursive space of the 1930s' new family, the figure of housewife or professional woman functioned as a form of "veil" to grant women access to the public space. However, in this space, the right to speak was confined to the topic of family or matters that were considered "feminine." Although such simultaneous permission and restriction made their position precarious, these women were able to appropriate and transform these "veils" and deploy various rhetorical strategies to bypass the limits imposed on their right to speak. Although women were divided and hierarchized along the lines of class, ethnicity, and race, it turned out that they were deeply involved with one another in reproductive and affective labor, which hints at the possibility of a new form of commons. The case in point includes the way in which the housemaids and hostesses were "addressed" in the housewives and professional women's roundtable discussions, the role of rumor in housemaids' writing, and the hostesses' attempt at forming a new public forum. Thus, the paper signals the need for listening to and translating the performative speech acts by women who had been involved with one another in spite of their difference in class and position within the sphere of family, even as they were marginalized from the public forums and fragmented by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy.

**Keywords:** the new family (*singajeong*), hooded dress/veil (*sseugaechima*), housewives and professional women's roundtable discussions, housemaids and hostesses' writing, feminist commons