

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Saving Chinese laborers from Sinophobia: Sino-Korean, born-translated literature

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Abstract

This article examines the work of Korean writer Chu Yosöp, originally written in Korean taking the guise of a Korean translation of a Chinese-language story (born-translated literature). Chu's audience was steeped in Sinophobia orchestrated by the colonizing Japanese empire. His unprecedented genre recounts the lesser-known, lived experiences of the Chinese lower class that Korean-language news media failed to report. My analysis of Chu's work demonstrates, first, that the feigned Chinese voices of this genre illuminate transnational Sino-Korean affinities that were forcibly suppressed by colonial policies and discourses. Second, born-translated literature upends and reconfigures the colonial structure of surrogate feeling, in which the colonized emote in the service of the colonizer. Third, Chu's aesthetic strategy of deconstructing colonial affect attends to and redirects evershifting cultural processes, rather than tackling discrete entities, to surmount the active–passive divide. In so doing, his literature seeks to refashion a politico-aesthetic ecosystem encompassing the Sino-Korean clash, rather than confounding specific ideologies. Finally, the aesthetic for the lower-class Chinese people in Chu's born-translated stories is predicated on metaphysical ethics in which antithetical others mutate into inviolable others, and in which the practice of saving others dovetails with transforming ourselves.

Keywords: born-translated literature; ethics of others; processive logic; Sino-Korean linkage; structure of surrogate feeling

Introduction

In September 1924, a Korean-language newspaper *Chosön Daily* (朝鮮日報) published in three installments a sensational article, “A Visit to a Human-Flesh Market” (人肉市場探訪記 1924, p. 3), about alleged Chinese-perpetrated crimes in Korea. The article details hidden places within Chinese-owned shops and restaurants in Inchön Chinatown in which Korean prostitutes, whose fate was to be sold to people in China, were locked in “demon den” (魔窟) conditions. As exemplified in the article, the term “human-flesh market” at the time referred to either the bordello business or the women-trafficking enterprise that served brothel owners or brokers. While recounting the activities of one couple behind the large-scale human trafficking, the news report briefly mentions that the “demon den” was also packed with scores of Chinese laborers. The journalistic account shows that the lives of Chinese manual laborers were no better off than those of underclass Korean prostitutes, implying that no human agency was allowed to migrant Chinese workers. The influx of Chinese laborers into Korea in the early- and mid-1920s exponentially increased for multiple reasons, including Chinese exclusion acts in the West and Japan, East Asia's economic

boom following World War I, the domestic turmoil of Warlord-era China, and a recession in Manchuria among many others.¹

At odds with the image of Chinese laborers as wretched and subaltern, another stereotype also prevailed in the landscape of 1920s Korean-language news media. That stereotype cast migrant Chinese workers as model laborers epitomizing diligence, dexterity, credibility, indomitability, and thrift. In contrast, despised traits such as indolence and indulgence were purported to be inherent in the Korean proletariat, who were chastised for being unable to emulate the desirable qualities of Chinese laborers. Numerous articles of Korean print media ascribed the rampant unemployment in colonized Korea at the time to Korean workers.² This generalized view of laborers pits ethnic Chinese people against ethnic Korean people, imposing the Europe-originated notion of national character on the proletariat, while both groups were, in fact, thrust into the colonial capitalist market. With the mounting Sino-Korean proletarian tension in the 1920s, the labor national-character theory became increasingly hegemonic. Apropos the labor national-character theory, a divide emerged between Korean leftists and colonial journalistic discourses. From the early 1920s, momentum grew around Marxist ideas that prioritized class interest over national interest, while still retaining their strategic links. Conversely, the colonial journalistic discourses subjugated the proletarian class to the national lineage.

Both images of migrant Chinese workers – one as the underclass and the other as model laborers – permeated the daily discourse of 1920s Korea, although the contradictory nature of the two portraits hardly caught the attention of lay Korean readers or critics. In that news-media landscape, migrant laborers, on the one hand, constituted a mere cog in the colonial capitalist machinery, as illustrated in the “Human-Flesh Market” article. Yet, simultaneously, the rival stance posited the proletarian agency of the Chinese people who were deemed exemplary workers and who replaced Koreans in the colonial labor market. At the heart of colonial-era Korean discourses about Chinese migrant laborers lies the antinomy between agency-deprived Chinese laborers and the proletarian agency that is intertwined with the national character. The logical untenability notwithstanding, both stances gained wide currency in 1920s social and political discourses.³

This study brings to light another set of contradictions concerning Chinese laborers brought to light by Korean writer Chu Yosöp (Chu Joseph 1902–1972). Born into a Christian family in

¹With the end of World War I, East Asia underwent an economic boom while Europe dealt with the repercussions of the war. Following Western precedents, Japan allowed Chinese skilled workers to enter the country but blocked Chinese manual laborers’ migration into Japan beginning in 1899, prompting those laborers to migrate to Southeast Asia and Korea instead (McKeown 2011, Ch. 7). Recession in Manchuria and intensified xenophobia in Japan following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake further spurred the flow of Chinese laborers into Korea (“Seoul-Concentrated Unemployment Issue” 1924, p. 2). 1910 was the first year that the number of Chinese people in Korea exceeded the number of Chinese people in Japan. By 1920, the number of Chinese people in Korea had doubled to 23,981. The number nearly doubled again between 1920 and 1925, for a total of 46,196 (Sun and Yang 1991, pp. 165–66). From 1920 to 1927, the number of Chinese laborers working in Korea increased every year, with the exception of 1921 (“A Decrease of Chinese” 1921, p. 2). The total number of Chinese people living in Korea decreased only three times from 1910 to 1930: in 1915, 1919, and 1926, is by 916, 3,306, and 905 people respectively (Sun and Yang 1991, p. 166). Korean-language dailies vigilantly tracked these numbers, noting influxes of 3,000 from Dalian in Northeast China in 1923 (“Thousands of Chinese Laborers” 1923, p. 3), 12,000 from January to March of 1924 (“Twelve Thousand in Three Months” 1924, p. 2), and 20,000 in 1924 (“Chinese People’s Intrusion” 1924, p. 1).

²For more details, see, e.g., the following newspaper articles: “Laborer Wage Comparison” (1922, p. 2); “On Deportation of Chinese Laborers” (1922, p. 1); “Counter-Strategy Against Chinese Laborers” (1923, p. 2); “Status of Chinese Workers” (1923, p. 2); “Thousands of Chinese Laborers” (1923, p. 3); “A Life in Seoul (2)” (1924, p. 2), “Archenemy of [Korean] Laborers” (1924, p. 9); “Chinese People’s Usurpation of Jobs” (1924, p. 1); “Chinese Workers’ Attack” (1924, p. 1); “On Job Finding Difficulty” (1924, p. 1); “Trouble-Causing Chinese Laborers” (1924, p. 2).

³The national character theory, which obfuscates the proletarian issue through the divisive rhetoric on national characters, is found even in the 1922 remarks by Suzuki Bunji (鈴木文治), the leader of the Japanese Federation of Labor (日本労働総同盟) (“To Investigate the Korean Proletarian Issue” 1922, p. 2). This instance suggests the predominance of its view across the ideological spectrum in the Japanese empire’s metropole and colony. For a comparative study on this subject, see Lee (2008).

Pyongyang as a second son of a Presbyterian minister, Chu was influenced by his older brother Chu Yohan (Chu John 1900–1979), who was captivated by the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, studied abroad in China, and later became a revered poet. In the colonial period, it was unexceptional for the Korean elite to study abroad and sojourn in the metropolises of Japan, experiences that endowed them with a cosmopolitan sense of culture and politics. Although an international orientation was the norm among modern Korean literati, Chu Yosöp's life's path, which encompassed Korea, Japan, China, and the US, was even more transnational than those of most Korean intellectuals.

At the age of seventeen, the younger Chu participated in the 1919 March First Movement and was sentenced to ten months in juvenile prison, during which time he wrote his first short story "Prematurely Parted Young Buddy" (이미 떠난 어린 벗) (1920), which was awarded third place in *The Daily's* (每日新報) literary contest. After serving the sentence, he attended Aoyama (青山) Middle School in Tokyo beginning in the fall of 1920, left for China in March 1921, and went to school in Suzhou and Shanghai until 1927. While in Shanghai, Chu, along with a number of high-profile political figures, joined the Rising Men Society (興士團), a Korean political group committed to the national salvation movement.⁴ Upon graduating from Hujiang University in Shanghai, Chu attended Stanford University from 1927 to 1930 and returned to Korea with a BA in education ("Mr. Chu Yosöp Returning Home" 朱耀燮氏還鄉 1930, p. 7). From 1930, he served as chief editor of the general magazine *New East Asia* (新東亞), continuing until the spring of 1934, when he left Seoul for a professorship in English literature at Furen University in Beijing.⁵

In 1925, Chu had three short stories published: "Rickshaw Puller" (April), "Murder" (June), and "Forever-Living Man" (October), all set in contemporary China. The former two appeared in *Dawn* (開闢) and the latter in *New Woman* (新女性), magazines published by the Heavenly Way (天道教)-founded Dawn Society (開闢社).⁶ Each story tells both mundane and dramatic experiences of a Chinese rickshaw man, a Chinese prostitute, and a Chinese railway worker, respectively. All three works are written as though they are the Korean translations of Chinese-language short stories.

⁴Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives shows that the Government-General's police department identified the Rising Men Society's members – including Chu – and closely tracked their activism in Shanghai. Chu was classified an "Insubordinate Korean" (不逞鮮人), and his name appears nine times from 1921 to 1926 on documents authored by the same department (1921, 1925, 1926), as well as the Japanese consulates in Shanghai (1923, 1924) and Manila (1925). The only document whose publication year is unidentified is a monthly report by the military police stationed in Shanghai's French Concession.

⁵Chu was one of a few Korean intellectuals who was able to carve out a transnational space via colonial-to-semicolonial relations, managing to obtain a Chinese naturalization certificate in early 1927. The same year, thanks to the certificate, he obtained a China-issued passport and went to the US to pursue a BA degree from 1927 to 1930. In judicial terms, Koreans living in China were disqualified from naturalization. However, China's Republican administration occasionally issued a naturalization certificate to political exiles, professionals, and study-abroad students from colonized Korea, although the Japanese authorities uniformly revoked these when they were discovered. Chu retained his certificate until 1943 when the Japanese consulate in Beijing confiscated it. He was subsequently tortured for three months and detained for another ten months. From 1927 to 1943, therefore, Chu inhabited a remarkably liminal space in terms of political belonging due to the precarious status of his dual citizenship. Outside of Japanese territories, Chu was recognized as a Chinese citizen. This citizenship, however, was constantly under threat of annulment should the Japanese authorities have discovered it, as they ultimately did in 1943. Chu also revealed in his *Dawn* article that he took a short trip to the Philippines in 1925, prior to naturalization, to partake in an athletics competition under a Chinese name (1925b: [July] 98). In taking that trip, he exploited the semicolonized state's judicial lacunae, as he repeatedly did when crossing national borders for his long-term study (Chu 1959, 1966).

⁶Heavenly Way is a Korean indigenous religion whose origin dates to 1860. With a synthesizing orientation, its founder Ch'oe Chewu integrated Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and other existing immanentist thoughts into his religious philosophy. Heavenly Way's watchword "Man is Heaven" (人乃天) epitomizes its radical egalitarianism that attracted a large swath of Korean people in the late Chosŏn and colonial eras. Through its magazine, such as *Dawn* (開闢), *New Woman* (新女性), *Comet* (彗星), *Otherworld* (別乾坤), *Child* (어린이), *Student* (學生), and *Front Line* (第一線), not only talented devotee-intellectuals of Heavenly Way but also non-devotees communicated their critical thoughts to the reading public. *Dawn* and *New Woman* were pioneers in scrutinizing foreign discourse on modernity, carving out an autotelic space of self-reflective thinking, neither European nor Japanese. For a groundbreaking philosophical study on Heavenly Way, see Lee Kyusŏng (2012, Part I, Ch. 1); for a comprehensive study on *Dawn*, see Ch'oe Su'il (2008).

Characters, settings, references to real-life events, and linguistic aspects of the three stories reflect lived experiences of the Chinese lower class of Chu's contemporaries. The three stories transliterate proper nouns, such as names of characters, streets, food, and landmark buildings, in accordance with their Chinese pronunciations, rather than the Korean ones.⁷ In short, there is nothing Korean about these literary texts other than the fact that they are written in Korean. This set of stories fit, to use Walcott's term, the "born-translated" genre – that is, fictional works "*written as translation*, pretending to take place in a language other than the one in which they have, in fact, been composed" (2015, p. 4; emphasis in original). In his memoir, Chu writes that "Rickshaw Puller" was born out of his fieldwork on rickshaw men's compounds, research that he conducted as a college student at Huijiang University in Shanghai (1966, p. 198). Astounded to witness the dire living conditions of rickshaw men, Chu felt compelled to write a story on the subject. Chu's born-translated stories provide access in rich detail to the thoughts and feelings of the propertyless, perspectives that are mostly not represented in the journalistic accounts or theoretical texts of the time. One of the overarching themes of his stories is the way that the political-economic conditions, not immediately cognizable in everyday experiences, all but dictate every facet of the lower class's life.

The "born-translated" genre merits a closer look to understand how Chu's literature both befits and exceeds the genre categorization although the term itself was coined to theorize a range of novels of our time. In *Born-Translated*, Walkowitz examines an array of contemporary novels in which translation was integral to novel-writing, rather than being secondary or subsequent to it. Fictional works, whose original are also translations, "offers readers partial fluency, approximation, and virtual understanding" in lieu of national, ethnic, and linguistic identification (2015, p. 30). She observes that the practice of writing novels as translations is tied to the condition of distributing works of art in our contemporary era; literature is circulated globally and finds diverse readers across the world. A group of contemporary Anglophone writers, for instance, engage with their multinational audience, rather than their national audience, from the outset of writing novels, employing the born-translated genre to make the presence of non-English words visible and audible and present English as a provincial language. The feigning-foreignness practice anticipates and appeals for translation in other languages. To amplify the transnational reach of born-translated literature, Walcott notes, a translation at times is published before its original; or multiple translations and their original are published almost simultaneously. Furthermore, as seen in the case of Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*, a novel is premiered in its translation, rather than its original. The born-translated genre, in this respect, serves the purpose of neither substantiating the sense of national belonging nor expanding its belonging. With translation built into the form of contemporary novels, this genre productively "keep belonging in play" (2015, p. 25) or creates, as Apter puts it, "deowned literature" (quoted in Walkowitz 2015, p. 29).

The genre characteristics of born-translated category partially explicate the critical qualities of Chu's literature that feigns Chinese authorship. The three stories of 1925 defy the conventional role of modern literature, which is shaping and substantiating nationalism, and undercut the experience of native reading. Similar to contemporary born-translated literature, Chu's works of the 1920s prompt a new perception of communities built on multilingual, transnational literary consciousness. Unlike contemporary cases, however, Chu's practice of translational novel-writing does not assume a global circulation of his works or multiple audiences beyond the Korean peninsula. Here lies the unique trait of Chu's born-translated literature; Chu's stories pretend to be Chinese-authored, not for a global audience, but for his Korean audience. The contra-national storytelling was intended for his national readers. When born-translated literature emerges even with little prospect for being translated into another language to engage with colonized readers of an author's own nationals, this study seeks to show, its aesthetic coalesces with the political and the ethical. The triadic constellation underlying Chu's born-translated stories engenders the puissance of anticolonialism and metaphysical ethics, not intrinsic to the born-translated genre of the world literature era.

⁷Whereas the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese languages share Sinographs, their pronunciations all differ from one another.

In its April issue of *Dawn* in 1925, Chu's non-fictional essay, "Letter from Shanghai," also appeared along with "Rickshaw Puller." Whereas the latter depicts rickshaw men's life as akin to or worse than that of slaves, the former casts a whole different light on the contemporary Chinese proletariat. While studying abroad in Shanghai, Chu observed firsthand the Shanghai laborers' general strikes staged against Japanese factory owners and domestic capitalists. At the height of China's communist movements, from 1925 to early 1927, Chu was present in Shanghai, China's industrial and financial capital.⁸ The new frontier of communist movements was thus far from abstraction to Chu. The essay also notes female students' participation in street demonstrations, touching on the inter-class component of the 1925 strikes. The allied anticapitalist and anticolonial strikes, presaging the colossal May Thirtieth Movement of 1925, epitomize the agency of the Chinese proletariat; the strikes demonstrated that laborers could forsake immediate individual gain for the class interest and force a situation in which capitalists must meet proletarian demands to stem further financial loss. Chu juxtaposed the literary portrayal of the Chinese lower class as the agency-less with his account of Chinese laborers as recalcitrant subjects. This aspect of Chu's writing raises the following questions: Why did Chu retain the contradiction about the Chinese propertyless, rather than resolve it? And what were the aesthetic and theoretical stakes in upholding the antinomy rather than constructing a literary or philosophical synthesis?

Although the immediate audience of Chu's born-translated literature is Korean subscribers to *Dawn* and *New Woman*, his works also reached non-subscribers in Korea, including people who occasionally purchased the magazines or obtained copies through friends, acquaintances, or Heavenly-Way devotees. In either case, Chu's literature about the Chinese lower class engaged a Korean audience whose views of Chinese laborers and the Chinese underclass varied. In the 1920s, news reports on Chinese manual laborers living in Korea primarily shaped the Korean perception of Chinese people, fomented fear of migrant workers, and spawned a sense of xenophobia. Only a handful of Korean-language general magazines, especially *Dawn* and *New East Asia*, evenhandedly followed news on political events and leading figures of Republican-era China. Chu faced a formidable challenge in narrating the Chinese lower class's experiences because his firsthand encounters with them in Shanghai contradicted the mainstream Korean-language accounts about the Chinese proletariat. His daunting task was to convey stories, fictional or non-fictional, about the Chinese poor and propertyless to his Korean audience, engulfed in jingoist Sinophobia.⁹

The tension for Chu's Korean audience around Chinese people working in Korea was exacerbated by a wave of seasonal or migrant laborers.¹⁰ Against the backdrop of this pressing issue, Chu's literature pretended to be Chinese and depicted the lesser-known experiences of the Chinese lower-class living in China. Although Chu's experience in Shanghai prompted him to create born-translated stories, this study seeks to illuminate ways in which the intersection of Korea's Sinophobic environment and the born-translated literature generated an unforeseen cultural potency that defied colonial Sinophobia. My analysis below investigates how the feigned Chinese voice reveals the transnational

⁸In a chapter on 1920's Chinese communism, C. L. R. James writes that from 1925 to early 1927, China's proletarian uprisings raged on an unprecedented scale across metropolises, including Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Wuhan, and set a new world record for the longest laborers' strike. Britain, consequently, lost half of its trade with China and three-fourths of its trade with Hong Kong by 1926 and had to meet Chinese workers' demands to avert further decrease in trade surplus. Despite the revolutionary fervor sweeping the country, Stalin's incompetent leadership, James contends, impeded an outbreak of China's nationwide communist revolution. See James (2017, Ch. 9).

⁹Journalistic accounts both stoked and captured, albeit hyperbolically, the towering Sinophobia of the Korean public. Provocative titles of articles published in *East Asia Daily* and *Chosŏn Daily* from 1923 to 1924 include "Chinese People's Intrusion into Korea" (中國人の侵入), "Chinese People's Usurpation of Jobs" (中國人の職業侵奪), "Trouble-Causing Chinese Laborers" (問題の中國労働者), and "Adversity of Korean Laborers" (朝鮮労働者の悲境 1923).

¹⁰One of the unusual characteristics of Korea-based Chinese workers is their seasonal quality. In winter when the market demand of manual laborers decreased, Chinese workers returned home, exploiting the geographical proximity between Korea and China. While the number of seasonal absentees fluctuated depending on the market situation, statistics from 1924 show that an increasing number of Chinese laborers stayed in Korea, a trend that continued until the end of the 1920s. See "Thousands of Chinese Laborers" (1923, p. 3), "Inchŏn Shipping" (1924, p. 3), and footnote 1.

relations between colonized Korea and semicolonized China that were intimately intertwined but forcibly disconnected in colonial public discourses. The colonial strategies for ruling colonies and semicolonies hinge on forging a hierarchical order among conquered and occupied states to reduce the odds of transnational alliances. This strategy often results in belligerent hostility among colonies, semicolonies, and occupied territories. As Yamamoto's study has documented, the Japanese empire strove to not only distance one colony from another, but also incite antagonism among its colonies (2001, Intro, Ch. 1–5). Born-translated literature, in contrast, pivots to a transnational Sino-Korean nexus, which in turn supersedes the linear-progress paradigm premised on the nation-state as a primal unit of political practice and cultural imagination. Furthermore, Chu's literature upends, what this study calls, the colonial structure of surrogate feeling by surmounting the passive-active divide and concretizing a new ethical front, the logistics of which constitutes a potent anticolonial practice.¹¹

Body

Transnational relations: Sino-Korean linkage

Scenes in Chu's born-translated stories highlight realities that correlated with Chinese workers' migration to the Korean peninsula, and that Korean-language media obscured or overlooked. A few paragraphs into "Rickshaw Puller," the narrator refers to a real-life political situation:

The last train from Nanjing just arrived at the station. Since the rumor that Qi Xieyuan will soon attack Lu Yongxiang has been widely spread, this last train could have been the last means [for a while] to get to Shanghai. So refugees from Suzhou and Kunshan crowd at the station, stampeding out of its gate (1925c, p. 10).

"Rickshaw Puller" is set against the backdrop of the impending 1924 Zhili-Fengtian war. The Beijing-ruling Zhili clique, supported by Anglo-American business interests, battled against the Japanese-backed Fengtian clique based in Manchuria (Waldron 1995, pp. 91–118). The story's vivid, detailed sketch of the Warlord-era turmoil indicates that frequent warfare and the dire poverty of the agrarian population compelled the Chinese lower class to join the ranks of migrant workers in foreign countries. Similarly, "Forever-living Man" refers to another real-life event, the 1923 Lincheng Incident, in which a large-scale banditry pitted itself against the central government.¹² Though the brigand leader Sun Meiyao was assassinated only six months after clinching a deal with the government, the brigand's confrontation of the Chinese state encapsulates the fractured statist power of

¹¹Few studies have theoretically analyzed Chu's colonial-era literature and criticism. Although Ch'oe Haksong's article sheds light on Chu's first short story and several essays of the pre-1945 period, to which earlier studies hardly attended, it takes a biographical approach to interpret themes of Chu's literature. Furthermore, Ch'oe assumes a radical shift in Chu's political thought during his Stanford years, from leftism to apolitical aesthetic. This study, however, argues that Chu's experience of US capitalism, on the contrary, consolidated his endorsement of class struggle and proletarian revolution. Chu's critical essays published from 1928 to 1937 reveal that his left-leaning disposition – not squarely aligned with the communist party line yet sympathetic to the communist cause – persisted throughout the colonial era, as demonstrated in his works in *The New Korea* (新韓民報 1927, 1928a), *Otherworld* (別乾坤 1928b), *New East Asia* (新東亞 1932a, 1932b, 1932c), *Spring Tide* (大潮 1930), *Comet* (彗星 1931), and *Corona* (白光 1937).

¹²The Lincheng Incident began with an attack in the city of Lincheng by Sun Meiyao's bandits on a train with some 300 Chinese people and thirty foreigners on board. The foreigners included John Powell, editor of *China Weekly Review*, and Lucy Aldrich, the daughter of a US senator and sister-in-law of John Rockefeller, Jr. Due to the involvement of these high-profile foreign hostages, the event instantly became an international sensation. At the time of the incident, Sun Meiyao, who had previously served the Shandong warlord's army, was the leader of 3,000 brigands. Sun demanded that the central government incorporate his subordinates into the Shandong-based national army and that he be appointed as a public officer. To this end, Sun's bandits confronted the central government for thirty-seven days, as a result of which all of Sun's demands, including receiving a commission, were met (Billingsley 1988, pp. 193–225; Lary 1985, p. 65). Not long after, however, Sun's mother and two sisters were abducted by local bandits; one sister and Sun's nephew were killed. This tragedy was followed by Sun being assassinated six months after his induction to a new post (Billingsley 1988, p. 197). One crucial reason for the government's slaying of Sun was to forestall other large-scale brigands from attempting to repeat Sun's success.

contemporary China. Finally, “Murder” portrays a protagonist–prostitute’s parents who twice sold off their daughter to a third party to survive famine. Trafficking in one’s own offspring reveals an astounding disintegration of a family, the human community of last resort. Even more startling to its readers is the nonchalant tone of the omniscient narrator who, in the opening paragraphs, relates the account of the two-time child trade as though they were normative social transactions. Despite its partial sovereignty, contemporary China as portrayed in Chu’s works was on the brink of social breakdown. In short, Chu’s stories of 1925 identify China’s political and economic turmoil as the impetus that drove poverty-stricken Chinese people into Korea’s labor market, which was relatively stable in comparison.

Chu’s essay “Letter from Shanghai,” mentioned above, illuminates another facet of the transnational Sino-Korean relations of the mid-1920s. While the Chinese communist fervor unfurled across the country in 1925, the Korean communist movement likewise exponentially grew in the colonized peninsula. Though the Korean Communist Party (hereafter KCP) was established as early as in 1921 in Irkutsk and Shanghai, separately, it was not until 1925 that the KCP was founded within Korea (Tikhonov 2018). Until forced to cease in 1928, communist activism unfolded fiercely and explosively across Korea with palpable ramifications. Factory workers, for instance, resorted to slowdowns and strikes to increase wages and improve working conditions. The number of labor unions also spiked due to the organizing efforts of activists in factories, mines, schools, and other workplaces (Scalapino and Lee 1972; Tikhonov and Lim 2017). Similarly, as Chu writes in “Letter from Shanghai,” 7,000 Chinese laborers in thirteen Japanese-run textile factories in Shanghai began a strike in February 1925 that expanded to an allied strike of 29,000 workers in the city (1925a, p. 51). The dispute initially occurred due to a Japanese supervisor’s impartial treatment of Chinese workers in one factory. Soon though, the Chinese proletariat’s alliance branched out in two directions: first to laborers hired by other Japanese factory owners and later to all other factory workers across Shanghai. The passionate tone of the essay shows that both the scope and speed of proletarian alliance inspired Chu to envisage a radically egalitarian future for the Chinese proletariat against colonial and domestic capitalism. The Chinese communist wave paralleled the Korean communist movement that mobilized laborers, students, and farmers, forming another layer in the Sino-Korean transnational nexus.

The British concession in which “Rickshaw Puller” is set reveals yet another Sino-Korean linkage, which may have been less salient to lay readers than the former two connections. The protagonist Ah-jing, based in the concession area, frequently encounters foreign customers, yet is occasionally underpaid and even beaten up. The story’s backdrop – the International Settlement – enables the appearance of foreign characters, such as a British policeman, a British medical doctor, an Indian guard, and absent-minded Korean sojourners. Though the story concerns a Chinese rickshaw man, the absence of both the Chinese nation and state, paired with the marked British presence, characterizes the story. Ah-jing, an underclass man whose family all perished, suffers the loss of all ties to community and institution, ranging from the nation–state to charity and religion. The extraterritoriality of a large portion of Shanghai, on which Ah-jing’s livelihood hinges, renders his lone death more tragic; to a British administrator, Ah-jing’s body is no more than an object of statistics to be recorded and pigeonholed. Similarly, in the economic terrains of Japan-ruled Korea, residues of extraterritorial power were exerted by Western imperial powers and China and not eradicated until the outbreak of World War II, whereas in political arenas, the sheer coloniality of the Japanese empire determined the contours of everyday and long-term practices (Kawashima 2004; Neff 2006). The transnational Sino-Korean connection that Shanghai’s semicoloniality brings to light is far more intricate than the former two types of connectivity, which thus warrants further contextualization.

Although no Western imperial powers wielded extraterritorial power in Korea following Japan’s annexation of it in 1910, a series of unequal treaties that Korea signed with Western states and China, which date back to the late nineteenth century, lent those countries a substantial diplomatic leverage when negotiating new terms of trade and commerce with Korea-conquered Japan. To avert outright disputes with Western empires, Japan acknowledged Western empires’ precolonial right to mine development and land properties in Korea (Ishikawa 2016; Mills 1916; Yi 1989). The lucrative

mines that US and British entrepreneurs had owned since the late nineteenth century were deemed de facto extraterritorial areas in which Japanese colonial police did not intervene. Furthermore, Japan conceded the rights to perpetual land lease and land ownership to the US, some European countries, and China (Kawashima 2004, Part 3, Ch. 1). Unlike propertied land, perpetually leased land was overseen by international law, barring the state's ability to impose tax and extort land from its lessee. From the late nineteenth century, China was second only to Japan regarding the scale of land leased or owned in Korea (Government-General of Korea 1910). Although Japan had an exhaustive military and judicial grip over Korea, the foreign presence in Korea, both Western and Chinese, fractured Japan's colonial economic agency. Unlike its prevailing image of unmitigated, unrestricted colonial power, the Japanese empire compromised its economic agency due to other empires having infringed on Korea's economic rights decades earlier.

Like China, colonized Korea was fragmented by the vestigial yet inefaceable economic extraterritoriality of the Western empires and China. Despite the ostensible difference between China and Korea – the former equipped with partial sovereignty and the latter deprived of all sovereignty – both states grappled with multiple imperiums on their soil. In this sense, colonial-era Sino-Korean relations can hardly be reduced to the matter of two states, despite the appearance of their relations at face value. Western empires that reaped profits in the two countries had deep, inexorable ties to Sino-Korean tension, which either generated unintended damaging repercussions to Western business interests or provided them with political leverage to further expand their economic prerogatives. Despite the structural parallel between semicolonized China and colonized Korea, colonial public discourses privileged either the competitiveness of Chinese laborers, under the aegis of resourceful Chinese consuls (Hakota 2012; Kikuchi 2011; Republic of China 1913, pp. 67–74), or dehumanized portraits of them. Chu Yosöp's detailed description of Shanghai's concession area in "Murder" on the other hand offers an alternative narrative. Chu sidesteps his audience's partial and warped understanding of contemporary China, presenting a lesser-known picture that alludes to the transnational Sino-Korean affinity.

The structure of surrogate feeling

Despite Chu's sensitivity toward the transnational fronts of Sino-Korean proletarian conflicts, there were sociopolitical blind spots that he was oblivious to and that become clear through a historical hindsight, including China's relation to the West within colonized Korea. Although the ethnonational friction between migrant Chinese laborers and colonized Korean masses was palpable, structural components exceeding national relations overdetermined the mass conflict at stake. Even the dyadic (Sino-Korean or Sino-Japanese) or tripartite (Sino-Korean-Japanese) relations fail to exhaust a larger structure that underpinned the issue. A diachronic approach would stress China's centuries-long suzerainty over Korea to explain China's abiding power over Korean politics in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. This study, however, grapples with a less tangible, geopolitical ingredient that previous studies have overlooked.

In colonized Korea, China held more collaborative economic-diplomatic ties with Western empires than in its own territory; modern Sino-Western relations preceded Japano-Western ones by more than a decade.¹³ China's politico-economic proximity to Western empires in the Korean peninsula secured China's extraterritorial economic power in Japan-ruled Korea (Chō 1935; Wu 1990). In several economic sectors, Korea-based Chinese entrepreneurs outstripped Japanese – for instance, in the industries of textile, steel-made utensils, and vegetables and fruits (Yi 2012) – frustrating Japan in its inability to quash their economic activity due to intimate Sino-Western bonds. Since China's worth in the colonized Korean sphere was aligned more with Western empires' interests than with

¹³Though Warlord-era China was embroiled in endless domestic battles and social turmoil, Chinese consuls exhibited remarkable diplomatic acumen and prowess, bolstering the central government's foreign-affairs machinery (Mühlhahn 2019, Ch. 5). Korea-based Chinese consuls were skilled in navigating entangled power relations among China, Japan, and the West in the Korean peninsula and protected interests of Chinese entrepreneurs and laborers. For more details, see Hakota (2012); Kikuchi (2011); Republic of China (1913, pp. 67–74).

Japan's, Japanese colonial powers considered Chinese influence a menace to be quelled. As each East Asian country was tethered to Western empires by all dissimilar semicolonial intents, the global geopolitics undergirded colonial-era Sino-Korean relations.

Chinese merchants and entrepreneurs based in Korea had strong networks of collective entities, including the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (華商商會), the Chinese Merchants' Guild (華商公會), and the International Settlement Society (居留地會), to defend their economic and financial interests (Kawashima 2004, Part 3, Ch.1). Furthermore, adroit maneuvers of Chinese consuls in the Korean peninsula helped Chinese people in navigating a pathway through both communities of colonized Koreans and colonial Japanese settlers and securing the trading and commercial practices of Chinese businessmen (Republic of China 1913, pp. 67–74). Thus, the stakes of antagonizing Chinese business interests were exceedingly high. An explicit target of the colonial state's Sinophobia had to be ones with lesser power or the powerless, i.e. Chinese manual laborers. Levelling racist criticism against Chinese laborers, copious anti-Chinese discourses privilege laborers' nationality, rather than their class, so that Sinophobia would not be confined to Chinese workers, but be transmitted to other Chinese groups.

Sino-Western relations in colonized Korea deterred Japan from venting Sinophobia in crude and unfiltered forms. The political stakes were too high for Japan to directly take action against Chinese migrant laborers or overseas Chinese settling in Korea. Such a move could have provided the West with a diplomatic pretext to intervene in Japan's rule in Korea. As a result, rather than articulating Japan's resentment against China, the colonial regime and state-backed and collaborationist Korean-language media fomented and fueled anti-Chinese sentiment among the Korean masses.¹⁴ Korean laborers were exploited to emote on behalf of the colonial state and colonial capitalists. In Korea, the Japanese empire redirected its frustration and outrage onto its colonized subjects, making the Korean people ventriloquize colonial Japan's rancor. Not daring to provoke the West, Japan exploited its colonized subjects and subjugated the colonized under, what this study calls, the structure of surrogate feeling. The colonial state and Korean journalists–collaborators, compradors of word, inflamed the frustration of the Korean lower class¹⁵; a large swath of Korean people resented seasonal and migrant laborers and Chinese merchants in the service of their colonizers and on their behalf. In so doing, the colonial state dictates to the colonized what to feel about the empire's enemy and how to express that feeling; furthermore, as discussed below, it also determines whether the colonized should be permitted to feel anything at all.

The everyday life of the colonized was organized around structures that dictated how they should feel toward Chinese people. Born-translated literature, however, upends the colonial structure of affect because it induces readers to inhabit lived experiences and feelings of oppressed Chinese people; it seeks to rescue victimized Chinese people from the false, politicized accusation that they threatened the livelihood of Korean laborers. Chu's Korean audience, who engages with stories that pretend to be Chinese in authorship, is stirred into vicarious feeling of the Chinese lower class: mourning

¹⁴The media include the Government-General-issued Korean-language paper *The Daily* (每日申報) and the papers with private ownership: *Chosŏn Daily* (朝鮮日報), founded by the collaborationist group Taisho Amity Society (大正親睦會), and *East Asia Daily* (東亞日報 1923) that upheld Korean nationalism at its outset and, from 1924, turned to the acquiescent self-rule. Though left-leaning nationalists Sin Sŏkku and An Chaehong took over *Chosŏn Daily* in September 1924 (Pak 2015, p. 299), toward the end of 1920s, the paper moved closer to the acquiescent stance and forsook its creed in anticolonial nationalism (Pak 2021, p. 131). Another state-sponsored daily was *Times Daily* (時代日報) that endorsed Korean-ethnos reformism (民族改良主義) (Pak 2015, p. 177). Korean journalists who actively promoted colonial statist views include Sŏ Chun and Chŏng In'ik of *The Daily*, Chin Hak'mun of *Times Daily* and *East Asia Daily*, Yi Sanghyŏp who worked at *The Daily*, *Chosŏn Daily*, and *East Asia Daily* (Pak 2015, p. 180; Pak 2021, pp. 114–26).

¹⁵Previous studies have documented that mostly the lower class in cities and the urban poor participated in the 1927 and 1931 anti-Chinese riots, revealing the class nature of Sino-Korean clashes (Chŏng 2015). Yi's study further points out differences in the extent to which each municipal police force was primed for and responded to a potentially violent clash. For instance, when the prospect of a Sino-Korean confrontation loomed large, the Seoul Police Bureau allocated armed police across the city, while the Inchŏn Bureau did not take preemptive measures. As a result, the most ravaging damages were meted out to Inchŏn's Chinatown, despite its smaller scale than Chinatown in Seoul.

unremitting hardship, being helpless at every juncture of life crisis, feeling unworthy of loving an admirable man, and sensing the unjustness of the state's killing the legendary brigand leader only a few months following a deal. In "Rickshaw Puller," hours before Ah-jing dies, the miseries of his past play out in his head: the deaths of his family members at early ages, toiling as a servant in the house of a pitiless family, migrating to Shanghai only to become a factory worker, and finally laboring as a rickshaw man. In hindsight, he sees his entire life riddled with poverty, affliction, and misfortune with no prospect of a better future; he had to bear countless hardships all alone. Overwhelmed by the sense of desolation, Ah-jing weeps dolefully. Yet, even at that moment, he is unaware of his own imminent death. Furthermore, "Murder" concretizes the lesser-known aesthetic of unfeeling, challenging the Marxist assumption that the oppressed endure pain and thus yearn for a radical change to be liberated from all shackles in their lives. According to the story, the unfeeling of external stimuli is the precise reason why underclass prostitutes remain passive in the given system, which defies the premise that a surfeit of anguish and torment characterizes the psyche of the oppressed. The narrative arc's emotional transition from dispassion to passion is as dramatic as the protagonist's murder of her madam toward the end of the story. Chu's "Murder" thus shows that a lack of feeling constitutes a crucial facet of the Chinese underclass's experiences.

The Japanese colonial structure of surrogate feeling centers on causing antagonism against Chinese people, but Chu's born-translated literature reverses the structure and enacts feeling and unfeeling in the service of the Chinese lower class. In so doing, born-translated literature, first, reclaims the forcibly disconnected Sino-Korean relations of affect. Second, the restored transnational ties bolster the anticolonial front that frustrates the Japanese empire. The presence of overseas Chinese people and migrant Chinese laborers in Korea thwarted Japan's exhaustive conquest of Korea, as seen in the residues of precolonial Chinese extraterritoriality in the Korean peninsula and the intractable problem of Chinese migrant laborers. The inability to eradicate Chinese influence, backed by other Western powers, was a perennial marker of Japan's compromised power. Although not decisively dismantling the Japanese empire, the Chinese presence in Korea enervated the Japanese colonial power. Born-translated literature, which feigns Chineseness, communicates what Chinese characters experience and also unfeels along with those characters; in so doing, it unsettles the colonial structure of emotion, in which the colonized are supposed to and compelled to ventriloquize ugly, contemptuous Sinophobic ideas.

Though Chu's stories do not address all geopolitical contexts,¹⁶ they nonetheless fulfill the anticolonial intent of born-translated literature because they invert the colonial structure of surrogate feeling by dint of their processual logic and ethics, as analyzed below. The process-oriented paradigm and its new aesthetic ethics make born-translated literature reverberate potently through contexts that Chu's stories do not explicitly cope with.

The processive logic of born-translated literature

Chu's short stories circumvent an entity-oriented narration that privileges discrete subjects of nation, state, class, or individual, bringing an ever-changing process instead to the fore. In "Murder," for instance, the protagonist-prostitute Uppo's awakening moment cannot be reduced to an entity but rather is due to an undefined process. Two young men appear in the story; one is a one-time customer, and the other is a man she looks at through her window every day. The former is an unusual customer who only talks to her the whole night, is curious and sympathetic about her life, and pays her in full the next morning. It turns out, however, that he paid with counterfeit money. In contrast, the latter man, unaware of her existence, has no direct interaction with her. The story contrasts the action of a hypocritical elite to the non-action of a man with an admirable air. Despite the second man's

¹⁶These contexts include the Manchurian issue. The colonial regime was wary of taking hardline, exclusionary measures against migrant Chinese laborers lest the Chinese state intervened in Japan's ongoing project of occupying Korea-bordering Manchuria ("Analysis" 1921, p. 1; "Inchön Shipping" 1924, p. 3; "Manchu" 1923, p. 17). The Japanese state's expulsion of Chinese manual laborers in its archipelago contradicted its policies in its Korean colony (Yi 2012).

non-action, he catalyzes awakening in Uppo because his presence gradually makes her feel that she wants to become a person worthy of love. The insensibility to pain morphs into a passion for a non-subjugated life. The cause of Uppo's awakening is not within her nor does it originate from resisting external power. Beyond the active-passive divide, a processual functioning seeps through her psyche, awakens her to feeling, to which she was previously benumbed, and propels her to the path of liberation.

This study draws on the concept of processual logic in Francois Jullien's work on Chinese philosophy, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, to illustrate an alternative to entity-centric understanding of others. Jullien discusses the functioning of, not an agent, but a whole surrounding condition, which exceeds the active-passive binary, to theorize a type of operation that is

both integral to us and at the same time inclines us to such behavior.... For whatever "inclines" me in this way is neither within me nor imposed upon me; rather, it "passes through me." Whereas action is personal and refers back to a subject, this transformation is *transindividual*, and its indirect efficacy dissolves the subject. Naturally, this benefits the category of the process (2004, p. 52; italics original).

When seeking to articulate a moment of transmutation through neither the internal qualities of individual subjects nor external power wielded against them, the processive logic – rather than an entity- or telos-based thought – furnishes us with better analytical tools. Processive logic ascribes a cause of mounting Sinophobia in colonized Korea not to Chinese workers or identifiable external factors, but to a whole politico-economic ecosystem. The process-centric approach's winning strategy does not lie in debunking the national character theory or unveiling Japanese colonial ambition toward Northeast China. A small number of newspaper articles, in fact, pinpointed Japan's Manchurian project as the crux of Sino-Japanese relations underlying the Chinese-laborer issue in colonized Korea ("Analysis" 1921, p. 1; "Inchön Shipping" 1924, p. 3; "Manchu" 1923, p. 17). The articles, despite their acute political insight, failed to unleash any meaningful response from colonized readers. Though critical and insightful, media exposés on Manchuria tend to single out one or more of key components rather than grappling with the whole picture. A process-centric approach, on the other hand, provides an alternative to the mechanics of permutating separate entities, as seen in the prostitute's awakening in "Murder." Its narrative does not attribute Uppo's awakening to a specific entity in recounting how her transformation results in an irrevocable, life-changing event: her killing of the brothel owner.

The new approach, which decenters discrete entities in its attempt to understand social changes or transformation of others, focalizes a moment when a given situation is about to be set in motion, is pierced by stirring subterranean forces, and before long bursts into an action. While untangled from fixed entities, "Murder" illuminates how situation-embedded potential can be harnessed through an upstream stimulus – for instance, the stranger who daily appears in the vicinity of Uppo – for whom no feeling is allowed and even feeling pain is a luxury. It is the intricate process in which potential of breaking free from her quasi servitude is actualized that "Murder" foregrounds. Even after Uppo is awakened to feeling, "Murder" does not turn to a narratorial device that heightens the prostitute-madam conflict as a harbinger of the story's culmination: Uppo's stabbing her madam and escaping the brothel. Chu rules out plot points that serve as downstream impetuses and prefigure the climax. The born-translated stories pivot on configuring situational and processual forces, rather than allocating steps and presteps that causally lead to the climax and finale. This approach contradicts Marxist aesthetics of transformation; Marxist literature tells its readers what to see and unsee, inculcates its audience with political consciousness and zeal for revolution, and ultimately seeks to induce action to overthrow the capitalist, colonial order. Whereas Marxism employs the human action of edifying the oppressed to meet a given goal, process-centrism makes a surrounding ecosystem bear an intended sociopolitical force.

Just as Chu's "Murder" shows how to make an upriver stimulus to break new ground of affect and action, this study argues, Chu's born-translated literature itself performs as an upstream stimulus

vis-à-vis the Sinophobia-ridden colony of the Japanese empire. In order for an upriver maneuver to be effective, a situation should be fluid and malleable. In the Sino-Korean history of the colonial period, the mid-1920s was a fluid time rife with ethnic tensions yet open to multiple possibilities, whereas in the late 1920s and 1930s, ethnic conflict veered to large-scale, violent forms. The first anti-Chinese riot broke out in 1927, resulting in a large number of the injured; the second in 1931 had a death toll of 195 Chinese living in Korea (Yi 2012, pp. 417–77). Earlier studies on colonial-era Sino-Korean clashes have prioritized the two events over other junctures. In so doing, their event-centric approach privileges the preceding moments that are causally related to the explosive events and obscures inchoate and existing countercurrents against hegemonic Sinophobia. In contrast, a set of the 1925 born-translated stories provides us with a window to access the malleable, volatile, and multifaceted situation around overseas Chinese people and Chinese migrant laborers living in Japan-ruled Korea before the situation was locked into destructive, belligerent modes of action.

Chu's born-translated literature itself becomes an upriver spur to shift the dynamics underlying the Chinese-laborers issue of colonized Korea, aspiring to processual changes of the social ecosystem, rather than dealing with distinct entities, such as Korean workers, migrant Chinese laborers, or colonial capitalists. Yet the cultural impact that a configurational change generates inevitably affects the general public, unsettles their previous perceptions about migrant workers, and potentially produces palpable outcomes in the long run. In this vein, this study argues, born-translated literature confounds the view of colonial-era Sino-Korean relations, formed in hindsight, that the bloody Sino-Korean clashes in 1927 and 1931 were unavoidable. In contrast to the inevitability-of-history thesis, Chu's stories evidence an aesthetic appeal and a cultural pull that opposes the swirling force of Sinophobia, constituting an indelible part of the China-related cultural ecosystem of colonized Korea. The colonial build-up of Sinophobia was impeded by means of fictional and non-fictional narratives, such as Chu's born-translated literature, as well as kindred anticolonial discourses, which strove to rescue migrant Chinese laborers and overseas Chinese people from blind, irrational enmity. The political evolution from the early 1920s to 1927 was not, then, an inexorable path toward the two violent clashes, but a route awash with colonial schemes to offset the social, cultural weight of Sinophile literature and discourse.

Concurrent with the publication of Chu's stories in 1925, Mitsuya Miyamatsu (三矢宮松), the Korean Government-General's police bureau chief, and Yu Zhen (于珍), the commissioner of the Fengtian province under the Zhang Zuolin warlordship, signed a confidential pact – also known as Mitsuya Agreement – in June 1925. The pact concerns the Manchurian police's cooperation with Japan, stipulating that the Chinese police arrest Korean anticolonial activists, whose guerrilla warfare and propaganda movements surged in Manchuria in the first half of the 1920s, and hand them over to the Japanese consulate in Manchuria. The Manchurian police's round-up and surveillance of numerous Korean activists and communists debilitated their anti-Japanese movements in the region. Moreover, Korean-language newspapers' reportage on Chinese suppression of Koreans in Manchuria further amplified Sinophobia of the Korean public not privy to the underhanded Sino-Japanese deal (Esselstrom 2009, pp. 87–90; Lee 2004, pp. 459–61). The pact is an additional piece of historical evidence that reveals the forced, manufactured aspect of Sinophobia rampant in colonized Korea, whereas the inevitability-of-history thesis assumes the natural, spontaneous, and impersonal quality of the calamitous eruptions of anti-Chinese riots in Korea. To make the thesis valid, discrete political, economic, diplomatic, cultural, and other social sectors should have coincidentally converged at the point of stoking Sinophobia at an unanticipated juncture of colonial history. Yet the colonial state relied on the surreptitious pact and employed the formidable police and news-media apparatuses to engineer Sinophobia on the Korean soil. In this respect, the amplification of colonial Sinophobia was far from a machination-free progress of history. Had it not been for the behind-the-scenes machinations of Japan's Government-General, Chu's born-translated literature, along with other leftist narratives and political discourses, may have redirected Sinophobia into anticolonial Sino-Korean coalitions by way of wielding configurational potential to its end of antixenophobia.

Ethics of others as the transcendental

At stake in Chu's writing practice was not the resolution of antinomy via synthesis but its retention. A valid antinomy, in which both thesis and antithesis hold true, necessitates a third point that configures the cohabitating structure of contradictory clauses. As an axis that shapes an antinomic condition, a third point precedes our cognitive understanding and is positioned in, not the phenomena, but the noumena. This third point – termed the transcendental (differentiated from the transcendent) in the branch of idealism – is known only *ex post facto* by valid antinomy. Each clause in an antinomic relation is deemed illusionary in that it only mediates the noumena and is precluded from direct, whole access to it. The illusionary attribute, however, fails to nullify either thesis or antithesis, because, as Karatani Kojin cogently explicates in *Transcritique*, this illusion is a grounded illusion, rooted in the transcendental. Although falling short of revealing the noumena proper, either clause is nonetheless predicated on the noumena. The philosophical and aesthetic thinkers – such as Kant, Lukacs, Hall, and Rancière – who valorize the transcendental, rather than a dialectical synthesis, suppose the impossibility of sublimating antithetical others, discrediting the assertion of exhaustive, ultimate knowledge about others and the world. The defiance against cognitive dogmatism underlying both Chu's literature and his critical essays ushers his readers onto a metaphysical route that elevates others to the noumena. Born-translated stories, along with Chu's essay, lead Chu's Korean audience not to a better knowledge of the Chinese lower class but to a realization that we can never plumb a full breadth and depth of others' lives. Specifically, the unfathomable depth of others galvanizes our ethical responses to Korea-based migrant laborers and overseas Chinese people, challenging the complacency about sympathizing with them.

"Forever-living Man" exemplifies how insight about the transcendental, which exceeds our cognitive understanding, prompts ethical practice to its highest degree and extent. The unnamed protagonist held captive by the brigands at the train station at first hesitates to take any action to halt their scheme of hijacking a train. In his head, however, appears a powerful image of his mother, wife, and son sitting among the passengers; soon thereafter, all the passengers metamorphose into his mothers, wives, and sons. Upon glimpsing the powerful, phantasmagoric images, he rushes to the middle of the railroad, desperately waving a light and shouting at the train approaching the station. At this warning sign, the train veers onto a different route with no harm. The protagonist, however, is shot several times. Nearing death, he thought to himself, "I acted, as befitted human dignity" (1925e, p. 98 "사람 노릇했다"). Although tales of heroes forsaking their lives to save strangers abound, the catalyst for the protagonist's sacrifice renders Chu's story ethically and aesthetically more potent. Readers may conclude that the man did so because unknown passengers could have been his family. If that were the case, his sacrifice would be bound to the instinctive impulse of saving his own kin from imminent danger rather than to an ethical imperative; his action of rescuing others then becomes accidental rather than ethical. Though on the surface the storyline invites such a reading, this study suggests a different analysis focusing on the ethical front of "Forever-living Man."

First, the lack of a communal imperative – neither national, statist, counter-statist, nor religious – characterizes the protagonist's action. His self-immolation does not correlate with rescuing his fellow nationals, upholding the statist order, stemming the anti-statist endeavor, or espousing community codes that we internalize by being schooled and interacting with others. Lacking any shared sense of belonging – social, political, or religious – he nonetheless sacrifices himself. The unmitigated otherness of others, this study argues, that the protagonist salvages at the expense of his life, defines the ethical orientation of this story. Others in "Forever-living Man" are elevated to the noumena that the protagonist, the omniscient narrator, and Chu's readers can never exploit or exhaust. Second, at the climactic point of the story, what is transformed is not others (passengers on the train), but the protagonist, the only character who undergoes any change in the story. A naïve railway worker buying into implausible rumors mutates into a hero who saves the lives of dozens and frustrates the formidable, vengeful brigands. At the intersection of the lives of others and the life of the protagonist, the presence of others can transmute him; yet he cannot do the same to others. This

asymmetrical relation makes the passengers in the story assume the unqualified otherness and also turns ordinary others into a part of the noumena. As Karatani has also construed, others with categorical otherness are those “from whom one can never evoke mutual consent, onto whom one can never project a representation, and of whom one can never speak as a representative” (2003, p. 126). Karatani goes on to elucidate that what is absolute is not others themselves – such as the transcendent other premised in religious thought and practice – but our *relationship* with others, who are ordinary people around us in everyday lives.

What drives the protagonist’s action in the story, is neither a mutual relationship between him and others, an anticipated acknowledgement from others, nor the protagonist’s self-gratification, but the ethics of responding to others, the cognitive mastery of whom we will never be able to have. The cognitive inexhaustibility and noumenal quality of others quintessentially differ from social ethics built on a moral slope, where one who rescues others is deemed morally superior to the rescued. In contrast, metaphysical ethics, on which “Forever-living Man” is predicated, undoes the conventional moral hierarchy between the savior and the saved; the sanctity of others motivates the protagonist to save others. In short, what makes one a savior is the inviolability of the saved, or more precisely, the capability of responding to their inviolability. Since what constitutes the crux of metaphysical ethics lies in not the savior, but the saved, we are urged to respond to them, rather than doing something *for* them. Social ethics centered on migrant Chinese laborers would concern how to save them from the exploitation of colonial capitalism or the labor national-character theory to eradicate the falsehood about those workers. However, the contradiction-retained ethics and born-translated literature pivot on extricating others from cognitive dogmatism and uplifting them to the noumena imbued with sacrosanct qualities. Similar to how Derrida expounded the imbrication of being responsible for others and responding to others, “Forever-living Man” ingeniously shows how the *responsibility* to others constitutes the heart of our responsibility toward others and how it is us, not others, who are transformed in the practice of transcendental ethics.¹⁷

Conclusion

Chu Yosöp is best known for his short story “Mama and the Boarder” (1935), one of the most celebrated pieces of psychological literature in modern Korea. A six-year-old girl tells the story of unfulfilled love between her mother and a friend of her late father through a first-person observer’s point of view. The story masterfully conveys the subtle, wistful feelings between the two adults through the seemingly limited perspective of the child narrator. Though widely read and hailed, “Mama and the Boarder” shuns colonial, capitalist issues and swerves away from the Chu’s earlier political works. Chu’s leftist writerly path is mostly unknown to lay readers and underexamined by earlier scholarship. This study bridges the gap in the scholarly works on Chu’s literary and critical legacy and theorizes its potent aesthetic, political, and ethical implications through textual analyses.

Two years into the publication of Chu’s born-translated literature, the first anti-Chinese riot broke out in 1927 that resulted in hundreds of injured people in Korea-based Chinese communities. Most perpetrators of this incident were the lower-class Koreans, who were galvanized into violent actions by inflammatory news media accounts about migrant Chinese laborers and flourishing overseas Chinese entrepreneurs. As mentioned above, the Mitsuya Agreement decisively stymied the Sino-Korean alliance in the colonial Sinophobic environment. A year after the 1927 riot, Chu contributed the essay “Doomed Nation?” (멸망할 민족?) to *New Korea* (新韓民報). In that piece, we see how the first large-scale Korean-Chinese clash affected Chu’s stance on Sino-Korean relations; in short, the 1927 calamity failed to frustrate Chu. His immediate intent in writing this essay was to rebut a eugenicist article, “National View of General Yuk” by Ch’oe Nŭngjin, which appeared in

¹⁷In *Transcritique*, Karatani has pointed out that Derrida has dwelled on the close link between responsibility and *responsibility*; “Jacques Derrida reflected upon responsibility from the vantage point of *responsibility*. Responsibility appears only as a response to the other. The necessity to respond to others pushes us into the dimension of freedom” (2003, p. 124; italics in original).

the same newspaper. While denouncing colonial faux-biology, Chu's article shows how we should make sense of historical failure or regression; rather than blaming discrete entities, such as social actors, the oppressed class, and subjugated nations, we should instead investigate the "configurational potential of the world" at a given moment (1928, p. 4). Chu defies the self-defeatism inculcated into Korean people at that time, along with toxic skepticism about proletarian uprising; hegemonic colonial discourses asserted that sectarianism was intrinsic to the Korean national nature. In human history, Chu writes, we cannot possibly anticipate non-sectarian political movements, as seen in historical accounts about revolutions in France, Russia, Italy, and China. "Doomed Nation?" contends that the degree and extent to which a society was dismantled was, in fact, far greater in France than in Korea in times of revolution; from the intense social tumult, the French nonetheless established the modern democratic state, on which other European and non-European countries were later modeled. Furthermore, the essay decouples sectarianism from an inferior-nation index, highlighting that every human community suffers division, schism, or partisanship. Whereas colonial discourses cited the violent Sino-Korean clash to legitimize the inferior Korean national-character claim, Chu's turn to "configurational potential of the world" salvages the Korean nation from the false charge. In so doing, Chu's criticism exceeds the active-passive divide, attending to transnational, regional, and global contexts that shape the ecosystemic potential.

In the face of surging Sinophobia, one response that readers can expect from Chu Yosöp, who was well versed in Chinese culture, is to foreground the humanity of migrant Chinese workers for his Korean audience. If Chu's literature had focused on humanizing Chinese laborers, he would have directly countered demonizing discourses about the Korea-based Chinese people, exposed the artifice of the state-orchestrated Sinophobia, and convinced his audience to sympathize with migrant Chinese workers. Although it takes a *mélange* of intelligence, coolheaded judgment, and imaginative capability to sympathize with antithetical others, sympathy is simultaneously a feeble, fragile affect that can vanish and dissipate at any moment for unjustifiable reasons. Furthermore, we can sympathize with the oppressed while remaining bystanders. Chu could have focused on evoking a sense of sympathy or empathy from his readers, who, however, might withdraw their engaging affects from the scenes of ethnic conflicts at unforeseen moments. The aesthetic for the lower-class Chinese people in Chu's born-translated stories, on the other hand, is interlocked with metaphysical ethics in which antithetical others mutate into inviolable others, and which inspires us to embrace the mandate to respond to transcendental others. Chu's literature that feigns Chineseness invites his audience to answer an ethical call toward migrant Chinese laborers and unsettles the onlookership. The metaphysical ethics of saving others transforms *us* most. In that effect lies the bona fide potency of Sino-Korean, born-translated stories.

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