

## A Distorting Mirror of Modernity: Kim Naesŏng, Edogawa Rampo, and Detective Fiction in Colonial Korea

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# **A Distorting Mirror of Modernity: Kim Naesŏng, Edogawa Rampo, and Detective Fiction in Colonial Korea**

Jooyeon Rhee\*

Kim Naesŏng was one of the leading detective fiction writers in colonial Korea. As he publicly stated at the time, he was much inspired by Edogawa Rampo's works. Although detective fiction has become a globally accepted and experimented literary genre, paralleling Rampo and Kim presents an interesting case to see how the technique of unfamiliarizing human behavior and spaces, so prevalent in the genre, raises the question of the difference between imitation and the original. This difference goes beyond stylistic; rather, it directs us to face the complex map of the cultural sphere of the Japanese empire where the question of subjectivity destabilizes the ontology of the empire itself. This paper aims to identify sites where the distinction between imitation and original becomes slippery by examining works by Kim and Rampo; and to elucidate heterogeneous effects of the Japanese imperialism embedded in detective fiction.

## **Introduction**

This paper examines the ways in which the detective fiction genre developed in colonial Korea by focusing on a detective fiction writer, Kim Naesŏng, and his close connection with Japanese detective fiction. Kim and his works had been ignored until lately mainly because his works had not been considered 'serious' literature. Detective fiction was categorized as popular literature among writers and critics in colonial Korea, which, according to their observations, seriously lacked aesthetic quality. Furthermore, the scholarship on modern Korean literature had been concentrated on 'canonical' writers and their works after the liberation, an academic trend that was bounded by master narratives borne out of anti-communist, anti-colonial, and pro-capitalist ideologies guarded closely by the South Korean military regime until the early 1990s. The study of the popular literature of colonial Korea took off in the mid-1990s and detective fiction has begun to gain scholarly interest in recent years in South Korea.

This paper contributes to the current scholarship of popular literature by providing historical background to the formation and the development of Korean detective fiction and presenting my ongoing research on the Japan-Korea connection in literature. More specifically, it aims to map out the relationship between Korean detective fiction and Japanese detective fiction—both in translation and creative fiction—by focusing on Kim Naesŏng. As publicly stated at the time, works by a giant of Japanese detective fiction, Edogawa Rampo, were a source of inspiration for Kim. Besides some similarities in terms of style and content between works by Kim and Rampo, Kim's reference to Rampo in fiction and non-fiction

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works is significant for two reasons. First, his direct reference to Rampo as a source of inspiration was also his recognition and awareness of positioning his works in a broader literary tradition beyond the national boundary. Detective fiction, as widely construed among writers and critics, was a literary genre whose foreign origin was clearly acknowledged both in Japan and colonial Korea. This does not mean that the genre, like other genres that arrived in Korea, did not undergo a localization process, but it demonstrates how the genre's close and open affiliation with Western literature abled Kim to distance himself from ideological and industrial constraints specific to the era that other more 'serious' writers could not easily avoid.

Second, Kim's identification of Rampo as his interlocutor underlines how the ambiguity embedded in narratives of the bizarre, the erotic, and the mysterious was shared among writers and readers in the metropole and the colony. The blending of the power of detection as a symbol of modern science and the threat and fear of the unknown and unfamiliar in works by Rampo and Kim reveal the failing of modernity rather than a celebration of it. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the erotic and the grotesque appear frequently in both Rampo's and Kim's works, which reflects the dysfunctionality of social systems, institutes, and relations. Both writers present a cultural space where the possible and the impossible simultaneously exist. In the midst of blurring the boundary between desire and prevention, and between free choices and forced choices, however, a fantasy somehow "sustains hysterical desire," the hope of seeing or having things that are nearly impossible or that cannot be actualized in reality (Zizek 2008 [1997], 39).

Sari Kawana observes that Japanese detective fiction provided "antidotes to the modern epidemics of angst and anxiety, the roots of which remained obscured in the shadows of everyday life" (Kawana 2008, 32). This paper does not have enough evidence to affirm that the genre functioned in the same way in colonial Korea at the moment. However, my on-going research suggests that, as was the case for Japanese detective fiction, there seems to be a mixed existence of anguish and contentment in Korean detective fiction that embodies the 'hysterical desire' that simultaneously seeks access to the glamour of modernity and affirms the impossibility of it, expressed at a time of tightened colonial control from the mid-1930s. This paper explores the desire by comparing Rampo and Kim through a discussion of their works in general, with the exception of a relatively detailed analysis of two stories written by Rampo and Kim: "The Beast in the Shadow" (1928) and "The Devil of Fog" (1939) respectively.

## A Brief History of Detective Fiction in Colonial Korea

There has been a much debate on what the "first" Korean detective fiction was. Some would argue that Yi Haejo's (1869-1927) *The Twin Flute* (Ssangokjök, 1908) was the first work of detective fiction since policemen and a detective appear in this crime-focused novel. However, it would be more accurate to say that *The Twin Flute* is one of the enlightenment novels (kyemong sosöl) in which crime becomes an important apparatus to educate readers. The kind of crimes depicted in kyemong sosöl are different from crime narratives in detective fiction. On the one hand, the role of law enforcement or detectives is minimal in the genre. Even in Yi Haejo's *The Twin Flute*, the one and only detective does not play a significant role; she rather disappears quickly without adding anything substantial to the development of the whole narrative. On the other hand, crimes in kyemong sosöl were preoccupied with the criticism of old customs and manners that, in the eyes of writers, must be eradicated for national growth. Actual crimes

as serious as murders are committed in a straightforward fashion, clearly revealing the murderers and their motivation to the readers. It is rather the morality of criminals that is problematized or criticized, and there is a strong sense of ‘renewing’ or ‘correcting’ their morality by infusing knowledge and institutional systems from the West. The problem of nation is usually not a theme that is clearly visible in the detective fiction genre: rather, the genre is characterized by individual encounters with the force of modernity in private settings.

Rather than identifying the “first” or the beginning of detective fiction, discussion of the development of the genre in Korea must be directed to the cultural conditions in which the genre appeared. At the turn of the century, many foreign literary works arrived in Korea, and these were usually translated based on Japanese intermediary texts. In the early 1910s, shortly after Korea was annexed by Japan, works termed “detective fiction” (chǒngt’am sosŏl) were introduced to Korean readers, but these were, in fact, British sensational fiction and French adventure fiction in which crime becomes the sinew of narratives.<sup>1)</sup> The figure of the detective does appear in some of these works but its role is insignificant. Then why were they termed detective fiction? The answer can be found in Korean translators’ reliance on intermediary texts that were translated by Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862-1920). It is not a coincidence that Korean translations of the sensational fiction and adventure fiction named them detective fiction, as Ruikō was widely known as a “detective fiction” translator in Japan and Korea.

Second, we cannot dismiss some important changes to the publishing industry that were made right after the March First Movement in 1919. At that point, the publishing industry began to introduce various kinds of foreign literature, taking advantage of the relatively more liberated cultural environment than the previous era. Arthur Conan Doyle’s globally popular *Sherlock Holmes* series was introduced to Korean readers from the early 1920s through Kim Tongsŏng’s translation. The widespread perception of the detective fiction genre in the 1920s was made mainly through translations of Western literature based on Japanese intermediary texts though Kim Tongsŏng is a unique case since he translated the *Sherlock Holmes* series from English. It was from this time when works penned by Eden Phillpotts, Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc, Fortuné du Boisgobey, Émile Gaboriau, S. S. Van Dine, and more were introduced to Korea. Overall, Korean writers were not enthusiastic about writing creative detective fiction but their translations were crucial in popularizing the aforementioned works. Some notable translators were Pang Chǒnghwan, Kim Naesŏng, Pak T’aewŏn, Pang In’gŭn, Yi Sŏkhun, Kim Yujŏng, and An Hoenam, to name a few.<sup>2)</sup>

It has been widely discussed that the formation of modern Japanese and Korean literature cannot be separated from Western literary traditions and practices. As Karen L. Thornber succinctly demonstrates (2009), the arrival of Western literature, more specifically Euro-American literature, in early twentieth-century East Asia was one of the crucial forces that shaped writers’ and translators’ ideas about literary culture and tradition in Japan, China, Taiwan, and Korea at the time. The translation of a tremendous

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1) The colonial newspaper *Maeil sinbo* (*The Daily News*)’s serialization of Yi Sanghyŏp’s (1893-1957) translation of Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s (1837-1915) *Diavola*, entitled *A Virtuous Woman’s Resentment* (*Chǒngbuwŏn*, 1914-15), belongs to the former category; the same translator’s adaptation of Alexandre Dumas’ (1802-70) *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1845-46), entitled *Neptune* (*Haewangsŏng*, 1916-17), belongs to the latter.

2) See the list of translated detective fiction in O Hyejin 2008, 206-9.

number of Western texts is one example that shows how actively writers and translators engaged with Western literature. Japanese translators in particular were on the front line in translating a range of Western texts beyond literature around the beginning of the Meiji period; and their texts often became intermediary texts for Korean, Chinese, and Taiwanese translators as well.

Translation can be used interchangeably with “representation” since it makes a double claim. To borrow Timothy Mitchell’s insights on representation (2000), things that are established as a representation always betray their own reality. Representation can be an image or a copy of reality, always lacking “originality,” just the way that a translation is a copy of the original, lacking the context of its source culture and the reality of what the source texts claim as real. A representation “claims that the world it replicates, projects, reorganizes, enacts, or endows with meaning and structure must be complete in itself” (Mitchell 2000, 8). In other words, representation postulates a temporal and spatial gap between the “imagined” and “concrete” realities—a gap that is affirmed and denied at the same time. What I would like to add to Mitchell’s explication of representation is this: what is deemed to be real is possible only through representation or translation. It is through the process of replication and reimagination of “originality” that we perceive the world as real. This double claim is what characterized Korean modernity during the colonial period, where the real always had to go through “filtering” or “translating” processes. In colonial Korea, detective fiction emerged from translation; and yet, the filtering process, or “cultural borrowing” to borrow Mark Silver’s observation of Japanese translations of Western detective fiction, cannot be judged by the unequal cultural power or cross-cultural interaction only. Rather, it occurs for writers and translators when negotiating the original to serve local interests (Silver 2008, 97).

### **Kim Naesŏng and the Reception of Detective Fiction in Colonial Korea**

Despite the increasing popularity of Korean translations of detective fiction, the production of creative detective fiction was much delayed until the mid-1930s for various reasons. First, it was from the mid-1930s when the publishing industry turned its eyes to sensational and scandalous materials to publish; and the competition among newspapers and both literary and cultural magazines partly had to do with the tightened state censorship under which writers faced a serious challenge in publishing politically sensitive materials. Under the period’s difficult economic conditions, many writers negotiated with their positions and some would produce “popular literature,” namely, historical fiction, romance fiction, and detective fiction. It was in this kind of publishing environment that creative detective fiction began to appear. Although Kim Naesŏng, upon his return to colonial Korea from Japan, was pioneering the genre, some of those who were considered writers of ‘pure literature’ such as Ch’ae Mansik and Kim Tongin also penned detective fiction.

When detective fiction began to gain popularity from the mid-1930s, the literary world reacted to the genre with divided views; and at times, writers expressed their discontent with the genre quite vehemently. Kim Namch’ŏn (1911-53) in particular was a harsh critic of popular fiction, including detective fiction. He states:

Today’s newspaper serial novels are mostly popular novels such as detective novels, cinema novels, historical novels, and so on. It is extremely rare to see pure novels (sunsu sosŏl) these days.

The pure novels I am referring to are those that attend to readers' literary taste; and these were plentiful a while ago... Han Yongun, who has been known as a man with integrity, has even published such a didactic novel full of nonsensical stories recently. He has the guts to call it a modern novel (*hyōndae sosōl*), which is an insult to our literary circles. It is doubtful that he writes for the sake of literature or humanity, but it is wrong for someone like him to write novels for living.<sup>3)</sup>

Along with his attack on Han Yongun, Kim Namch'ōn provided a list of writers who "insulted literature and trampled art" by producing popular literature—these included Kim Malbong, Pak T'aewōn, and Yi T'aejun, among others.

Those who were supportive of popular literature welcomed detective fiction for its ability to reach wide readership in terms of the balanced co-existence between emotion and rationality and its educational merit. An Hoenam, for example, states that the most significant value detective fiction provides is the logical depiction of good and evil; and Kim Naesōng, he continues, is a highly skilled detective fiction writer who makes his readers experience the virtue of the genre.<sup>4)</sup> Others such as Yi Chongmyōng emphasize the deployment of scientific knowledge in the genre, especially knowledge of medical science and law, which would help readers to become intellectually mature.<sup>5)</sup> These writers' and critics' differing opinions were more than the discussion of the genre's aesthetic merits; they also demonstrated serious concerns over redefining "the masses" (*taejung*) and ways for Korean literature to serve them. Still, most writers in mainstream literature were reluctant to see the detective fiction genre as 'literature' proper. Kim Naesōng defended the genre as an art, arguing that the essence of art is to express some kind of urge or impulse (*ch'ungdong*), which is just expressed differently depending on the reason for the urge... and that the essence of detective fiction is to evoke curiosity and bewilderment in the minds of readers through presenting a mysterious case, and then to finally make readers understand the case with rationality.<sup>6)</sup>

Kim Naesōng made his literary debut as a detective fiction writer in Japan in 1935 with a short mystery story, "An Oval Mirror" (*t'awōnhyōng ūi kōul*).<sup>7)</sup> It has long been known to us that "An Oval Mirror" was the first Korean detective fiction story written in Japanese—Kim also stressed this at the time—but it was in colonial Korea where the first 'Korean' detective fiction appeared some years before Kim published the short story in Japan. In a government magazine, *Local Governments Administration in Colonial Korea* (*Chōsen chihō gyōsei*), a serialized fiction entitled "A Scalpel on the Stake" (*kui ni tatta mesu*) was published between November 1929 and 1930. The identity of the author of "A Scalpel on the Stake," Kim Samgyu, has not been discovered, but an interesting fact that connects Kim Samgyu and Kim

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3) Kim Namch'ōn, "Chakkūm ūi sinmun sosōl: t'ongsok sosōllon ūl wihan kamsang [Newspaper serial novels now: a sketch on popular novels]," *Pip'an*, December 1938, cited in Cho 1997, 240-42.

4) An Hoenam, "Kim Naesong and Main [The Devil]: The Famous Detective Yu Pullan," *Choson ilbo*, January 15, 1940, cited in Cho 1997, 334.

5) Song Injong, "T'amjōng sosōl sogo [Rethinking detective fiction]," *Sin donga*, April 1933, cited in Cho 1997, 129.

6) Kim Naesōng, "The Essentials of Detective Fiction," *Gekkan Tantei*, April 1936, cited in Cho 1997, 149-52.

7) Kim Naesōng, "An Oval Mirror," *Purofuiru*, March 1935, 32-51. It was translated into Korean and published in colonial Korea in 1936. This piece long has been regarded as the first detective story written by Korean writer in Japanese, but Yu Jaejin discovered that Kim Samgyu's detective fiction, "A Scalpel on the Stake" (*Kui ni tatta mesu*, Nov. 1929-March 1930, *Chōsen chihō gyōsei*), was written about six years prior to Kim's "An Oval Mirror." Yu 2017, 234-35.

Naesōng is that ‘Japan-route’—that is, Japanese detective fiction published in Japan and in colonial Korea played an important role in popularizing the genre in the colony. Alongside the magazine *Local Governments Administration in Colonial Korea*, contemporary Japanese literature including detective fiction was introduced through Japanese-language newspapers, magazines, and bulletins that were published in colonial Korea. *The Korean Bulletin* (Chōsen kōron) was such a magazine that not only introduced Japanese detective fiction but also published amateur writers’ works although works by Japanese residents in colonial Korea dominated the literature section in that magazine.

Korean writers’ literary debut with works written in Japanese is nothing new. As is widely known, Yi Kwangsu and Kim Tongin wrote their debut Japanese-language works in Japan. What is also noteworthy about Kim Naesōng, however, is his clear identification as a professional detective fiction writer: his pen name was identical to his real name at a time when translators and writers of detective fiction used pen names due to the negative view of the genre in the literary world (Chōng 2011, 316). Kim’s openness about his identity was received without much resignation or criticism from other writers. After all, he entered the Korean literary world by tagging himself as a detective writer, thus had no burden of being criticized for not meeting the ‘literary standard’ expected of him by critics. In addition, he entered the literary world at a ‘welcoming’ time since the publishing industry had been put under pressure to capitalize on sensational materials in the mid-1930s. Kim, in other words, was in a good social and cultural position to mold his identity as a detective fiction writer, and he successfully did so in terms of gaining fame as well as money.

He thus dedicated himself to the writing of detective fiction only until the liberation, exploring various styles that can be roughly divided into two: the orthodox (ponkkyōk) detective fiction, usually for his long novels, and the deviant (pyōnkkyōk) detective fiction for short stories. These two terms came from Japan, where detective fiction was likewise categorized into two: orthodox (honkaku), the conventionally known detective fictions where mysterious murder cases are solved by detectives’ scientific methods; and deviant (henkaku) detective fictions, which heighten the association of eroticism and bizarreness with mysterious incidents including murder cases. Edogawa Rampo was considered a writer of deviant detective fiction in the 1920s although he had never identified himself as one. Although there was a heated debate in Japan over the categorization of detective fiction, the Korean literary world was not affected by it too much (Ch’oe 2011, 64). However, it appears that in general, Kim was influenced by Rampo’s style, especially in his short stories where he gives emphasis to the bizarre and the erotic rather than detecting crimes by using scientific methods.

## The Bizarre and the Erotic

The development of Japanese detective fiction was heavily indebted to the genre from the West. Ruikō was one of the most significant translators of Western detective fiction in the 1880s and ’90s, although creative fiction emerged in Japan from the mid-1910s. Among many Western writers, Edgar Allan Poe has been considered a hugely influential figure for Japanese detective fiction writers such as Edogawa Rampo, Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Tanizaki Junichiro, Hagiwara Sakutarō, and more. Poe is an interesting case in that both scholars of English literature and the general public had read Poe’s works since the late Meiji period (Mizuta Lippit 1999), and Edogawa Rampo in particular publicly showed Poe’s influence on

his works by taking his literary name from Poe. Starting with his debut works, “Nisen doka” (Two-sen copper coin) and “Ichimai no kippu” (A ticket) in 1914, which resemble Poe’s “The Gold-Bug” and “The Purloined Letter,” Rampo’s detective stories are characterized by their bizarreness and mystery (Mizuta Lippit 1999, 138–41), mirroring Poe’s exploration of tales of mystery in terms of psychoanalytic themes that were conditioned specifically within the antebellum social and cultural milieu (Tomc 2004, 22).

Sandra Tomc observes that the image of Poe as alienated and disturbed was formed first because of the social and cultural condition of writing literature at a time when an economically deprived writer such as Poe had limited choices for publishing. These economic conditions had a significant psychological impact on Poe, which we cannot disregard when examining his works. Further, the intensively competitive publishing environment forced him to write sensational materials for magazines but also motivated him to capitalize on the abnormalities associated with marginalized writers like himself (Tomc 2004, 28–29). Tomc’s attention to the social and cultural condition of the American publishing industry when Poe was active demonstrates that the American capitalist force played a significant role in producing a writer like Poe beyond the economic terms: Poe also had to negotiate with the issue of class, and examining this force requires us to approach the social dimension of the absurdity of human behaviors and mysterious phenomena.

The sense of foreboding embedded in Poe’s work is also reflected in the work of Rampo, and in turn Kim Naesōng; and although their historical points are different from one another, the permeation of the erotic, the grotesque, and the non-sense in popular culture in Japan and Korea cannot be separated from the increasingly alienating forces of capitalism that were manifest in the expression of writers’ much-disturbed psychology. The psychological manifestation of disturbance is demonstrated by detectives and criminals who play games with their emotions in the garb of scientific rationality. In other words, especially with Rampo and Kim, emotion takes precedence in their works rather than the deductive method of solving crimes so characteristic to detective fiction. Still, Kim’s detectives are much less scientific than Rampo’s, which leads us to seriously rethink whether his works’ emotional description of human relationships and urban living conditions, rather than the promotion of science and rational behavior so deeply inscribed in ‘modernization,’ has to do with the multiple levels of hierarchy created between the metropole and the colony. What scholars criticize as the ‘shortfall’ of Korean detective fiction for its precedence of emotion, in other words, must be approached from a different vantage point by raising the question of the social and economic condition in which writers like Kim reacted emotionally to the force of capitalist modernity.

Rampo and Kim were more enthusiastic in experimenting with deviant detective fiction than orthodox detective fiction. In these deviant works, detectives fall in love with criminal women and lose their rationality; and criminals commit crimes due to their affective attachment to people and objects. The following passages from Kim’s and Rampo’s works, for example, reflect their stylistic preference:

I respect Mr. Hō for his vast knowledge in detective fiction, but I find that his attitude towards the genre is disturbing. Because he is not interested in orthodox detective fiction; he is rather passionate about the so-called “crime fiction” that is filled with eroticism and grotesqueness. (Kim Naesōng 2010 [1939], 49)



There are two types of detective fiction. One type is “criminal type,” meaning that the cruel nature of the criminal’s psychology is emphasized. The other is “detective type,” that only focuses on the detective’s intelligence and his detecting skills without paying too much attention to the psychology of the criminal... I am more fascinated by scientific deduction but the villain prefers the former. (Edogawa Rampo 2016 [1928], 222)

The first excerpt is taken from Kim Naesŏng’s short story, “The Devil of Fog” (1939), in which the protagonist—a detective fiction writer in the story— refers to his friend Mr. Hŏ, a fan of deviant detective fiction. The narrator identifies that he himself is a writer of orthodox detective fiction, but shows interest in Mr. Hŏ’s story about the narrator’s literary rival, Paek Ung. The narrator respects Paek in terms of the richness of his literary imagination and aesthetics: the extremely cruel description of crimes, the sex life of a pervert, the Dadaistic portrait of a nihilist, and so on. The narrator admits that he lacks the literary sensibility that Paek possesses, and Paek’s works, in his opinion, are rightfully called ‘literature.’

The second excerpt is taken from Rampo’s “The Beast in the Shadow (1928),” a novella in which the protagonist, Samukawa, is also a writer of orthodox detective fiction. Samukawa describes his rival, Ōe Shundei, a writer of deviant detective fiction created in the imagination of a mysterious woman, Oyamada Shizuko. In this work too, Samukawa expresses admiration to the imaginative writer Ōe for his—Oyamada in disguise—artistic exploration of the psychological landscape of the criminal. Interwoven with his feelings for the beautiful Oyamada, whose deviant sexual behavior excites Samukawa, the novella shows how the combination of the erotic and grotesque with murder stories enhances the psychological tension in this particular type of detective fiction, which both Kim and Rampo name “crime fiction.”

It is quite clear to see a close connection between Kim and Rampo in terms of their preference for the deviant style, though they did not use the term directly in their stories. However, what is striking about this preference is that both emphasize the value of the erotic and grotesque from the perspective of orthodox detective fiction writers. The world of their creativity is observed, sought, and admired by other writers, and the observation and detecting process involves these other writers’ (i.e., protagonists’) understanding of human psychology through their encounter with abnormal forms of eroticism. Since Rampo’s novella was published long before Kim’s short stories, it may have been possible that Kim was influenced by Rampo in terms of building narrative structures as well as the use of deviant sexuality that sets the mood for their works.

Another similarity Kim and Rampo share is the frequent deployment of doppelgänger-like figures. The observing writers in these two stories are in fact slowly growing to resemble the figures they observe through their encounters with the erotic and bizarre. Further, their presentation of two seemingly different characters often raises the question of the authenticity of each. In “The Beast in the Shadow,” Samukawa is able to identify that Ōe Shundei and Oyamada Shizuko are one person in reality. Ōe, in other words, is a mirror image of Oyamada, but the protagonist and readers remain puzzled until the end regarding what Oyamada’s true face is. In Kim’s “The Devil of Fog,” it turns out that a hand of a mannequin was mistaken for a human hand by the protagonist whose detecting does not help him to discern what is real or not. As the title of the story signifies, what is real perhaps can be detected only in fog, a delusion whose origi-

nal shape is never graspable.

In many other stories, Rampo plays with the figure of doubles in the form of twins, guises, mannequins, and so on. Kim seems to have been more fascinated by these forms throughout his writing career. In his debut work, “An Oval Mirror,” Kim creates a man who returns to the world with a different identity. And in his novels and short stories, fake deaths, twin brothers, twin sisters, and detectives and criminals in guise appear frequently, all of which play a central function in the solving of mysteries. While these figures also commonly appear in Japanese detective fiction, including Rampo’s work, another source of inspiration for the double perhaps came from Kim’s fascination with Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*. *The Count* had been popular in colonial Korea ever since it was first translated into Korean in the mid-1910s, and its theme of revenge, together with the manifestation of Dantès’ multiple identities as well as his return from death, are dominant features of Kim’s works, especially in his long newspaper novels such as *The Devil* (Main, 1939) and *Typhoon* (T’aep’ung, 1942). It is not a coincidence that Kim adapted (põnan) *The Count of Monte Cristo* shortly after the liberation, localizing the novel by changing the European situation into a Korean one.

The figure of the doppelgänger in Rampo’s and Kim’s works can be interpreted in the socio-political context. As Baryon Tensor Posadas rightly observes, Rampo’s doppelgänger “marks a sense of crisis, an anxiety mired in tensions and contradictions that manifest when the discursive boundaries of the structures of modernity are no longer tenable” (2009, 162). It is, by following Lacan, a formation of self, a mirror stage where ambiguous categories such as the self and other, or the West and the East, are troubled. If Rampo’s doppelgänger is a “point of departure from which to articulate the stakes of the critical practices through which objects of investigation are produced” (Tensor Posadas 2009, 163), Kim’s doppelgänger functions in a similar way in which the colonized self constantly seeks a window to express the suppressed or frustrated desire of modernity.

## The Spatial Arrangement of Desire

It has been observed that detective fiction in Japan was a cultural response to the public’s fear of and obsession with the urban environment. In a way, the genre turned this fear and obsession into entertainment for the public, especially for the people in Tokyo (Kawana 2008, 30-31). The source of the fear and obsession was largely associated with the Japanese state’s fervent promotion of enlightenment, which was intended to give a push to modernizing the society. By the 1930s, however, the widening gap between the ideal and reality in various social spheres was felt strongly by the public. The permeation of the ‘ero-guro-nansensu’ (the erotic, grotesque, and non-sense) into popular culture thus cannot be separated from the social condition in which this unknowability was expressed through the stories of mysteries and abnormalities. Detective fiction, in other words, capitalized on the unknowability or suspicion of the modernity project through unfamiliarizing the environment, people, and objects.

The promotion of modernity was initiated by the turn of the twentieth century in Korea, and it would be enhanced after Japan’s annexation of Korea. Although enlightening and civilizing the society towards modernity was more than an ideological campaign, the uneven colonial development was increasingly visible in colonial Korea, revealing economic, social, and cultural gaps between the metropole and the colony. As commonly detected in Japanese detective fiction, the gaps—and more specifically, the gap be-

tween urban and rural areas—was evident in Korean detective fiction. Further, the quick transformation of Seoul [keijo], with its uniform development of housing and commercial buildings, was a source of anxiety as it became increasingly difficult to identify neighbours and their houses due to their unknowability and uniformity: all neighbours appeared the same, but unknown. The reality of poor people in Seoul, many of whom had migrated from rural areas, was a significant aspect of the deprived economic condition of the colony, and it was portrayed by numerous writers including detective fiction writers at the time.

Although the various gaps between the metropole and the colony were hinted at, the main stage for detective fiction was quite the opposite. Most detectives and criminals are rather comfortably of the bourgeoisie class, and their consumption-driven lifestyle bore little resemblance to the lifestyle of most people in the city. Then why was there such enthusiasm for the modern way of living in popular culture, including detective fiction? Certainly, the media industry was exaggerating Seoul as a city of consumption. As discussed above, the competition among newspapers and magazines in the 1930s spurred the production of more sensational materials than before. But the glamour of modernity also functioned as an imaginative window for readers to feel satisfaction for their lack of it, a fantasy that seemed possible due to their exposure to markers of modernity in urban spaces but were deemed impossible to obtain in everyday life.

One of the fantasies commonly detected in Korean detective fiction at the time is the desire for social and capital mobility. The detective and the criminal are free to mobilize themselves, crossing geographical boundaries freely, for example. The movement of the detective and criminals from different international cities (such as Shanghai, Beijing, European cities, and American cities) to Seoul, for example, was, on the one hand, a pure imagination of liberty that rather affirms the economic and bodily mobility that readers had no access to; and on the other hand, an imagination of Koreans outside the Korean peninsula whose stories of exile, crime, education, and possibly struggles for independence meant more than pure fiction to the minds of readers. The co-existence of the two kinds of imagination of geographical mobility, in fact, would be consistently present in detective fiction in Korea—both translated and creative fiction works—until shortly after the liberation. The rearrangement of territorial focus both inside and outside of the peninsula meant an imagination of repositioning the colonized territory, enhanced by the stories of suspense and adventure depending on specific socio-political situations.

Towards the end of the colonial period, publishing detective fiction, like it was in Japan, was banned by the state. Instead, the former detective fiction writers, especially Kim Naesŏng, shifted his focus to Japan's war effort by writing military fiction, the so called 'counter-espionage fiction' (pangch'ŏp sosŏl). While the detective fiction formula remained intact, narratives revolved instead around Japan's spy war against the West; and detectives, who now become spies, would travel to Western countries and Southeast Asia to fight against the Western imperialists. Despite its blatant promotion of the war ideology, military fiction by Kim Naesŏng also reveals the dual function of mobility: one that coheres with the mobility of the Japanese empire and the other that opens a window to imagine Korean people's desire for mobility. The dual function of mobility is richly described in one of the protagonists' encounters with British imperialism, which takes place on a previously uninhabited island that is now full of 'slaves' forcefully brought there by British imperialists. The protagonist's testimony of the evil British is there to appease the censors, but his murder of the British Governor General of India on the island and subsequent escape to the 'free' land (i.e., colonial Korea) is a bold criticism of colonialism, and yet it strangely was accepted in the

empire. In this regard, Oguri Mushitarō perhaps was not the only military fiction writer at the time whose criticism of Japanese colonialism was veiled under Japan's war ideology (Kawana 2008, 179).

Whereas colonial consciousness is expressed through the emphasis on physical mobility in Korean detective fiction, the treatment of territories outside of the national boundary in Japanese detective fiction displays how the fear of and obsession with modernity were projected onto Japan's colonies and the colonized. As far as Rampo's works are concerned, Japan's colony hardly appears; one exception I have found so far is "The Twins" (1924), where the evil brother leaves for colonial Korea and returns to commit evil deeds against his twin brother. There is no description of the colony in this short story, but the colony is considered a place where troubled Japanese like the evil brother would go to. Japanese amateur detective fiction writers in colonial Korea, however, reveal something more substantial in their observations of their home country and the colony by creating characters that uncomfortably dwell in the colonial space. Some of their fiction works appeared in *The Korean Bulletin* (Chōsen kōron), a magazine that dealt with administration matters, colonial policies, politics, and culture. Geographically, most of these works are set in Seoul, where Japanese characters with their shady backgrounds and stories of the erotic and bizarre are interwoven with some serious social issues such as gender discrimination and inequality.

Overall, the spatial arrangement in detective stories in *The Korean Bulletin* shows detailed descriptions of some corners of the city; and there is almost no interaction with Koreans in them, as if Seoul is solely filled with Japanese. If the imagination of mobility in Korean detective fiction is expressed in the expanded space outside the peninsula, the urban space in stories written by Japanese residents appears to be much smaller to the point of claustrophobia. While a detailed analysis of the spatial arrangement in these works and its association with the Japanese residents' imagination of their position in the empire is beyond the scope of this paper, I would like to point out that the description of the city in the works produced by Japanese residents shows their desire to be connected to Japan (naichi) while maintaining critical distance from it.

Another fantasy for modernity is expressed in the figure of modern girls in urban space in Korean detective fiction, who function as a masculine imagination of freedom in Korean detective fiction. Women in detective fiction appear pathological by possessing evil minds, displaying deviant sexual behaviour, and enjoying consumption-driven lifestyles. The modern girl figure, in fact, coheres with the dominant media representation of Korean modern girls at the time; they were demonized, scandalized, and sexualized in popular culture. The erotic and dangerous modern girls often appear as criminals in detective fiction. Korean male detectives' full control of modern girls by the end of each story then perhaps was a reflection of their desire to obtain full access to modernity. Modern girls thus must be killed or punished since they are obstacles for the male detective to overcome in order to 'solve' their problems.

## Conclusion

As I have discussed so far, the development of Korean detective fiction was closely associated with writers' and translators' familiarization with Western detective fiction via Japan as well as Japanese detective fiction. The transnational literary transaction between Korea, Japan and the West was an important condition in which Korean detective fiction writers experimented the genre. And the comparative observation of works by Kim and Rampo reveals that the genre possessed the capability to critique the socio-

economic environment formed under Japanese imperialism. While Kim and Rampo expressed the ambiguity of the capitalist development, Kim's detective stories show how the genre could also critique Japanese colonialism through the use of the erotic and grotesque in his narratives of crimes as well as Japan's war effort.

Although this paper focused on the cultural environment and some of the representative themes that are shared between Kim Naesŏng and Edogawa Rampo, it is important to note that the reception of the genre in colonial Korea needs to be explored further. As briefly noted above, Korean writers' debate on the literary value of the genre reveals how integral it is to consider readership when historicizing certain literary genre or even modern Korean literature in colonial Korea. Kim Naesŏng, it appears, was quite clear about his target readership: the masses (*taejung*). Although reaching the masses was an urgent matter for Korean intellectuals in colonial Korea, the term doesn't always cohere with how writers used it. When it comes down to the term, *taejung sosŏl*, literally, 'novels for the masses,' the term 'taejung' was looked down upon by writers of 'serious literature.'

However, as Kim noted, popular literature cannot be understood as popular literature if readers do not see its value, fiction [novel] is an art that is meant to be read and understood by the masses. In other words, writers must be aware of what the readers desired to see in literature, no matter how it is labelled by writers and critics (1948; 1958). Detective fiction is a genre that cannot be discussed in isolation from readership, and as Chura Yi rightly points out (2016), we need to evaluate the genre by paying attention to the relationship between literature and readership to see how it served 'the masses' in their imagination of reality at the time.

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