

# Manchukuo Perspectives

## Transnational Approaches to Literary Production

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# Introduction

## *“Manchukuo Perspectives,” or “Collaboration” as a Transcendence of Literary, National, and Chronological Boundaries*

Annika A. Culver

### Introduction: What Is Manchukuo?

The Manchukuo state's 1932 birth arose out of violence and extremist political ideologies. Overlaying previous Japanese business interests in the southeastern portion of Northeast China, also known as Manchuria, a utopian rationale for this new state emerged amidst military-supported corporatism. The semigovernmental and semi-private South Manchuria Railway Company (SMRC) conglomerate enjoyed extraordinary economic and political privileges for its Japanese employees and investors, following its incorporation after imperial Japan's Pyrrhic 1905 victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Protected from bandits and other elements of instability by its own military force known as the Kantō Army (Eng: Kwantung Army; Ch: Guandong jun), the SMRC administered areas under its control in southern Manchuria to garner substantial gains. However, by the late 1920s, the fate of the leased territory surrounding Dairen was uncertain. Originally, tsarist Russia developed this Chinese fishing village named Qingniwa into a commercial port city that its colonists called Dalny; since imperial Japan's defeat in 1945, Chinese have referred to it as Dalian. Japanese memories of wartime losses two decades earlier revived within a “spatial politics of empire,”<sup>1</sup> and local politicians in Japan's metropole used these to argue in favour of continued imperial control over such “significant soil.”<sup>2</sup>

On 18 September 1931, masterminded by Ishiwara Kanji (1889–1949) and other far-right Japanese military leaders, the Kantō Army staged a bomb explosion on a portion of SMRC-administered track near Chinese military barracks in

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1. Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 7. See also how Japanese boosters touted the manufacture of certain memories on battlefields of the Russo-Japanese War, such as 203-Meter Hill overshadowing Port Arthur, where imperial tourists were brought “so that they might develop affective ties to the contested territory” (36). Japanese tourists still visit the hill, which is topped with a souvenir shop selling souvenirs supposedly fashioned from casings and shells from the war.
  2. Emer O'Dwyer, *Significant Soil: Settler Colonialism and Japan's Urban Empire in Manchuria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 5.

Shenyang. This plot, called the “Manchurian Incident,” or *Manshū Jiken* in Japanese, was blamed on the machinations of Chinese Communists and became the pretext for these 19,000 or so Japanese troops to invade all of Northeast China. They eventually pushed out Zhang Xueliang (1901–2001), the Chinese warlord controlling the region, but ethnic Korean populations in the Jiandao area bordering colonial Korea (annexed to the Japanese Empire), fought skirmishes until the Kantō Army’s brutal campaign of attacks and forced displacement of villages quelled resistance by 1933.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, by early 1932, once the Japanese government quit dithering over whether to “recognize” Manchukuo (Ch: *Manzhouguo*; Jp: *Manshūkoku*) as an independent state, its Japanese framers needed to construct an apparatus for the new nation’s ideological framework and justify its existence to Japanese imperial subjects as well as the outside world while incorporating a diverse, and multiethnic population into the polity’s founding narrative. Manchukuo, in reality a puppet state set up under Japanese domination, was ostensibly framed as a multiethnic political experiment, where the officially recognized “five races” could live together in harmony (Jp: *minzoku kyōwa*; Ch: *minzu xiehe*). Intriguingly, imperial Japan’s propaganda aims for the “new state” under its domination even extended into the cultural sphere, where literature and the arts were mobilized to create a unique space for cooperative endeavours amongst ethnicities. These included multiple volumes of multiethnic literary collections, literary magazines emphasizing contributions from the different ethnicities, and literature and art associations.<sup>4</sup> Loosely inspired by earlier ideologies, such as those under Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) dating from the Chinese Republic’s (est. 1912) early days, this sense of cooperation falsely connoted equality when, in fact, most cooperative literary and artistic endeavours operated under the primacy of Japanese linguistic and political hierarchies. Also, after the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) (known as the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance in China) broke out, such cultural activities were increasingly subsumed into the Japanese imperial state’s wartime needs and merged with the Manchukuo government’s control over a semicolonial space.

## On “Manchukuo Perspectives”

As this collection reveals, literature was a means of both furthering national aims as well as contesting them, while writers of all ethnicities engaged in multivalent strategies to continue cultural production amidst difficult political circumstances. Our approaches to that literature build upon the groundbreaking work of French

3. Yi Xianshi, *Nihon no tairiku seisaku to Chūgoku tōhoku* [Japan’s Policy on the Continent and China’s Northeast] (Tokyo: Rakkō shuppan, 1989), 269–70.

4. See “The Legitimization of a Multi-ethnic Literary Culture in Manchukuo,” in *Glorify the Empire: Japanese Avant-Garde Propaganda in Manchukuo*, by Annika A. Culver (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 168–92.

historians like Gisele Sapiro (1999),<sup>5</sup> who has examined sociological factors surrounding writers in German-occupied Vichy France (1940–1945)—an approach much more recent in the critical study of writers in Manchukuo. Studies of their work demonstrate that these writers often faced various factors that potentially influenced the outcomes of their production, such as censorship demands, the Japanese occupation regime’s propaganda aims, and even the market. This volume examines what we call “Manchukuo perspectives,” which reveal choices made by writers—and at times lack of choice—between 1932 and 1945 when China’s Northeast was under Japanese control. These perspectives, unique to cultural producers in a state transformed by Japanese interests but later shaped by more inclusive multivalent aims, reflected the difficulties faced by Chinese intellectuals, who could feel a keen loss of nation—and arguably including Japanese converted leftists who had to convert their antipathy towards imperialist capitalism into support for a fascist state that seemingly offered the utopian promises of a “right-wing proletarianism.”<sup>6</sup>

This borderland region, in its unique geographical position as a former “homeland” for the Manchus, touched Republican China,<sup>7</sup> colonial Korea, Soviet Russia, and Mongolia, supporting cultural layering and even prompted a long history of cooperation with outside political forces. The problematic idea of collaboration should be understood in this context, which allows for a unique understanding of Manchukuo perspectives that differs from experiences of writers in China proper or even colonial Korea. The post-Liberation legacy of these writers will also be considered, where their works have continued to be politicized and remembered in ways reflecting governments’ use of the arts as a political tool for national awakening or condemnation of a past then cast as demoralizing.<sup>8</sup> Yet, how should one analyse anti-fascist narratives? Resistance versus collaboration paradigms do not fit neatly in this case, where Manchukuo literature is intriguing because it arguably contains both elements and shades in between. Were the exiled writers more ideologically “pure” than those who remained in Manchukuo, writing amidst a cultural landscape that promoted multiethnic literary endeavours under the Japanese—or did the exiles abandon their compatriots?

5. See Gisele Sapiro, *La Guerre des Écrivains, 1940–1953* [*The War of the Writers, 1940–1953*] (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

6. See Annika A. Culver, “Literature in Service of the State: Yamada Seizaburō and Rightwing Proletarianism, 1931–1943,” in Culver, *Glorify the Empire*, 34–50. A definition of this term appears on page 35.

7. See Dan Shao’s intriguing discussion of how Manchus attempted to hold onto their local power by first collaborating with Russians, and then Chinese, in Dan Shao, *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907–1984* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2012).

8. This multifaceted collective memory mirrors that surrounding cultural figures from Vichy France in the postwar period and evokes interesting parallels. In the case of France under German occupation in the Vichy Era (1940–1945), French historian Henry Rousso defines the resulting postwar Vichy Syndrome as “the complex of heterogenous symptoms and manifestations revealing, particularly in political, cultural, and social life, the existence of traumas engendered by the Occupation, especially those linked to internal divisions—traumas that have been maintained, and sometimes heightened after the events are over.” Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 18–19.



This pioneering volume of new research emphasizes Manchukuo as a cultural and linguistic borderland, where transnationalism became an everyday practice leading to a succession of discursive layers of literary production in a colonial contact zone. Framed as “independent,” its literature and history are unique in East Asia for containing elements of Chinese, European (Russian and others), Japanese, Korean, and Manchu cultures merging over time to create an area of literary borderlands. Our studies collected here critically examine Manchukuo perspectives, which were forged by local elites and external colonizers in the early to mid-twentieth century and helped sustain a practice of literary production reaching into the post-Liberation period and beyond. Our approach contests binaries of resistance and collaboration, by focusing on multiple perspectives particular to the area during a highly controversial period. We aim to create a dialogue between scholars in the fields of literary or cultural studies and historians by emphasizing the necessarily interdisciplinary study of Manchukuo literary production. This is further emphasized by the diversity of primary sources analysed in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian. These sources, and the international array of contributors—from China, Japan, South Korea, Canada, and the United States—underline the rich collaborative potential of studying one of the more ethnically diverse, and least understood, regions of China. The volume is a distillation of the newest scholarship by established and rising experts in the field that raises provocative questions on literary production, colonialism, and history.<sup>9</sup>

The eighteen chapters herein reexamine “icons” of Manchurian literature as well as less well-known figures. To begin the volume, Liu Xiaoli focuses attention upon popular Chinese memories of Manchukuo, as well as the propaganda role of the era’s foremost magazine, *Xin Manzhou* [*New Manchuria*], which published children’s fairy tales that Chen Shi links with popular ideologies surrounding the “future nation” of Manchukuo. Jiang Lei interrogates the surprising persistence of what she calls “resistance literature” in literary supplements to another prominent media publication, *Datong bao* [*Great Unity Herald*]. If its Chinese contributors failed to flee for exile in China proper, many paid for their bold prose with the loss of their careers, freedom, and even lives, after arrest or imprisonment. Nevertheless, a few years before and during Japan’s “Holy War” [*Seisen*] (1941–1945), a diverse group of writers helped create a multiethnic portfolio of canonical work expressing national ideals throughout the wartime empire and occupied areas in a venture continuing to haunt understandings of their history. Chen Yan, Ying Xiong, Ōkubo

9. For a comprehensive Chinese-language collection of works by Manchukuo writers, see the thirty-three-volume collection edited by Liu Xiaoli, *Wei Man shiqi wenxue ziliao zhengli yu yanjiu* [Systematic Arrangement and Research of Literary Materials from Bogus Manchukuo] (Harbin: Beifang wenyi chubanshe [The Northern Arts Press], 2017). The project was led by Liu Xiaoli, as head editor, with the participation of scholars from Canada, China, Japan, Korea, and the United States. Nine other editors helped compile the collections of literature by various Manchukuo-based writers and write introductions to the volumes. On the China side, they include Zhang Quan, Li Haiying, Chen Yan, and Chen Shi; Japanese editors include Ōkubo Akio and Okada Hideki; Kim Jaeyong is the sole Korean editor, with Norman Smith as an editor from Canada and Ronald Suleski as an editor from the United States.

Akio, and Zhang Quan analyse the careers of border-crossing Chinese and Japanese writers, editors, and translators who contributed greatly to the construction of new cultural discourses and ties across the region. Notably, our volume is enriched by inclusion of a new personal reflection of cultural production and life in Manchukuo by the prolific writer Ke Ju (Li Zhengzhong, b. 1921), who remembers his wife Zhu Ti (Zhang Xingjuan, 1923–2012); the famous couple is also the subject of Norman Smith's chapter, which examines how they challenged the new state's bright official aspirations with bleak and melancholic fictional depictions. Miya Qiong Xie examines how Gu Ding (1914–1964), one of the new state's most noted writers often castigated as a "collaborator" in postwar analyses, engaged in linguistic practices emphasizing the region's hybridity and how the politics of language could involve different meanings if put into a Japanese or Chinese setting. Junko Agnew offers a new interpretation of his works as well as those of Xiao Hong (1911–1942), focusing on how biopolitics and the state appear within these writers' themes of death and survival. Olga Bakich brings to light themes explored in White Russian poetry in 1930s–1940s Manchukuo—including loss of nationhood but also adoption of fascist Japanese ideals in some cases. Ying Xiong and Stephen Poland analyse the legacies of Japanese translators or writers who migrated to Manchukuo and attempted to create new visions of cooperation. Watanabe Naoki directs attention to the creation of Korean agrarian literature and its depiction in film, while Kim Jaeyong examines the complex politics of Korean writers describing Manchukuo, which lingered into the postwar division of Korea into North and South. Lastly, Norman Smith concludes the volume with reflections upon the contemporary field of Manchukuo literature and its potential for future studies.

Several authors in the collection, including Liu Xiaoli, Zhang Quan, and Zhan Li argue strongly in favour of including Manchukuo literature and its many manifestations, including detective fiction, into the canon of modern Chinese literature, and global literature as well. In fact, many authors, including Xiao Hong and others, had enjoyed direct contact with the "father" of socially conscious vernacular Chinese literature, Lu Xun (1881–1936), whose works both inspired and arose out of the May Fourth / New Culture Movement (circa 1915–1926) whose adherents believed that fiction could arouse the masses to revolutionary consciousness and transform their society. This notion also characterized proletarian literature movements in late Taishō (1912–1926) and early Shōwa (1927–1989) Japan, the Soviet Union, and even the United States. As argued by Liu Chao, the debates between the *Wenxuan* (Literary Selections) and *Yiwenzhi* (Record of Arts and Literature)<sup>10</sup>

10. The original term *Yiwenzhi* (Treatise on Literature) refers to the last bibliographical section in the *Hanshu* [*Book of Han*], which contains ten treatises. During the Manchukuo era, those with Chinese classical training might understand this reference as a clever way to reference cataloguing of the former Han imperial library (when it allegedly fell into disarray and needed rectification in the first century AD to presumably solidify a threatened Han identity). The later Han era (25–220 CE) Chinese historian Ban Gu (32–92 CE) created this inventory of scholarly sources to understand "alternating cycles of prosperity and decline in the historical perspective." Wu Huaiqi, *An Historical Sketch of Chinese Historiography* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2018), 183

factions of Manchurian Chinese writers point to emerging polarizations between political interpretations of the role of fiction in inspiring social change. This also mirrors debates between Communist interpretations of socialist realism as a force for revolution in depicting positive views of workers and farmers, versus the native place politics of the Record of Arts and Literature group, represented by Liang Shanding (1914–1995), who depicted a much bleaker vision of social realities in favour of native place evoking a hidden nationalism. Wang Yue examines Liang's response in an investigation of *Lüse de gu* [*Green Valley*], his representative work published in the early 1940s. In all of these examples, our collection reveals a complicated politics situated not between resistance and collaboration but containing elements of both, in an approach very much tied to the region's history even before the 1932 founding of Manchukuo.

### Ethnicity, Culture, and the Emotive Loss of Nationhood

Historical archives oftentimes present researchers only with one side of the story, neglecting the role of emotions and the senses in everyday life, as well as lived experience, in politically complex spaces like Japanese-occupied Northeast China, otherwise known as the nominally “independent” multiethnic state of Manchukuo. Literary scholars and proponents of queer theory such as Anne Cvetkovich have long argued in favour of analysing the politicality of emotion in English-language literatures and literary depictions of everyday life,<sup>11</sup> but applying such theory to interpretations of complex East Asian historical spaces like Manchukuo is relatively new. Drawing upon her own self-reflexive experiences as a writer, Cvetkovich argues that depression should be understood as a cultural and political phenomenon: such an approach can also help readers understand the melancholy descriptions of Chinese and Russian writers who routinely flouted the *Ba bu* [Eight Abstentions] initiated by the Manchukuo regime in 1941 to combat excessively gloomy and bleak descriptions of the new state.<sup>12</sup> In recent scholarship, cultural historians such as Norman Smith and I have investigated both the lives and works of Chinese and Japanese writers in Manchukuo to examine how literary worlds intersected with external realities.<sup>13</sup> Questions of unequal power relations, utopian desires, or dystopian horrors can emerge by unfolding vividly in the literary imaginations of Manchukuo-based writers as they describe narratives in various forms of realism. Though fictional,

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(jointly published in Beijing by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Company, this textbook was also listed as a textbook for Chinese college students as part of the “Eleventh Five Year Plan”).

11. See Anne Cvetkovich, *Public Depression* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); and Janet Staiger, Anne Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds, eds., *Political Emotions* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
12. See Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007); and Olga Bakelich, *Valerii Pereleshin: The Life of a Silkworm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).
13. See “Writing Intoxicant Consumption,” in *Intoxicating Manchuria: Alcohol, Opium, and Culture in China's Northeast*, by Norman Smith (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 93–110; and “Literature in Service of the State,” in Culver, *Glorify the Empire*, 34–50.

short stories or novels expose a visceral sense of place to the reader and effectively capture the atmosphere of a fascist state under Japanese domination. In addition, these narratives reveal patterns of everyday life, in settings ranging from urban to rural, and how people related to each other in a multiethnic society occupied by a foreign power. Valuable new theoretical possibilities emerge in the weaving of literary sources into historical investigation and reveal how cultural history can be enhanced through the use of nontraditional primary sources, such as fiction.

In this edited volume, an international group of researchers contributes chapters investigating the literary legacies of Manchukuo-based writers from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. We examine several complex questions: How can scholars approach literary narratives from different ethnic perspectives, and what does “national identity” mean in a context where the Japanese-led state of Manchukuo attempted to erase distinctions of difference through a narrative of “inclusion” while still highlighting these very differences? Are these writers mired in a condition of “internal exile” like the White Russians and Chinese, who have literally lost their nation, or are they forced into literal exile, like the most well-known Manchukuo writer, Xiao Hong, who fled to a relatively freer occupied Peiping (contemporary Beijing), and then to Shanghai and Hong Kong, to avoid Japanese domination, only to die in enemy hands? After 1937, many of their writings were also translated into Japanese, and, as this language became the official form of publication, it marked yet another loss of nationhood through linguistic estrangement—but what, if any, benefits accrued to Manchukuo’s majority inhabitants?

Though it is difficult to determine an author’s politics or assess from her or his literary writings neat binaries of resistance or collaboration, fiction can reveal intriguing aspects of living under semicolonial domination for Chinese, Russian, and Korean (sometimes counted in statistics as “Japanese”) populations in Manchukuo. For some Japanese, Manchukuo provided a safe refuge for former leftists, who often enthusiastically touted the new state as a “utopia” contrasting the bleak and politically restricted wartime Japan they had left. Others involved themselves in promoting literary endeavours as propaganda, like Yamada Seizaburō who, in 1938, began working as a journalist for the state-run mass organization, the Concordia Association (Jp: Kyōwa-kai or Ch: Xiehehui). Even these Japanese leftists, privileged through their status as representatives of the imperial state, found themselves in a position of having to explain Manchukuo’s legitimate nationhood while they both lauded and criticized the regime’s efforts. For others, instead of overt resistance, these discrepancies appeared within vivid depictions of a barren or painful sensual environment and the complex emotions felt by a dominated people operating under varying hierarchies of power: a deep-seated notion of unmooredness for those in internal or external exile as in accounts by Boris Iul’skii (1912–1950?), or the depression and desolation of those unable to change their lot as in stories by Mei Niang (1916–2013) and Wu Ying (1915–1961). Even despite positions of privilege as a lower court judge and teacher, the writer Ke Ju and his wife Zhu Ti published

fiction, poems, and essays depicting the lives of Chinese under the Manchukuo regime in despondently depressing literary descriptions despite state regulations forbidding these. Ke Ju's novel *Xiang huai* [*Native Place Yearning*] (1941) and Zhu Ti's "Da Heilongjiang de youyu" [Melancholy of the Mighty Black Dragon River] (1943) show how Chinese writers worked within the Manchukuo system while criticizing it and betray their severe ambivalence towards an allegedly hopeful new state. Likewise, "pro-Japanese" writings like those of Gu Ding, often labelled by later scholars as "collaborationist," still communicated a painful sense of self-hatred, where narrators viewed their own people as "backwards" or unworthy of respect due to class hierarchies or an urban/rural bias. Japanese writers like Yamada and Nogawa Takashi (1901–1944) also saw Manchukuo as a space to be fashioned into new utopian narratives, some communicating what I call "right-wing proletarianism" where they saw the new state as compatible with former socialist ideals safeguarding the lives of workers and farmers and criticizing it when it failed to do so.

It is often difficult to tease these "hidden" political narratives out of literary fiction, but one of the means to do so is to investigate the emotive lives of the main characters and their interactions with political officials—or even the conspicuous lack thereof when common sense might assume some sort of description of bureaucracies or officialdom in ordinary urban or rural life. For some Manchukuo-based Chinese writers, their patriotism towards a lost China or even lack of national sentiment towards the "new" state of Manchukuo could be directly tied to literary descriptions of feelings of well-being or the opposite in their characters' fictive lives. Even a glaring absence of Japanese presence in Manchukuo is telling, like in Xiao Hong's stories of rural areas where "bandits" invade the region at a time suspiciously close to the 1931 Manchurian Incident, after which villagers begin to follow dissolute and immoral lives. In her prose, rural villages were blissfully free of intrusions from officialdom, but the misery found there caused by the oppression of the landlord class and that of men over women continued despite Manchukuo elites' desires to extend modernity and progressive human relationships throughout the nation. Junko Agnew argues that therein appears the peasants' resistance, in their disregard and obliviousness towards the nation and state apparatus; in the end, they are brought into awareness of the semicolonial hierarchies overlaying preexisting class and gender hierarchies that caused their misery. The Russian émigrés who fled the Bolshevik Revolution (1917–1921) were apparently abandoned by their country, but they were also placed into an uncomfortable liminal position by authoritarian Soviet control to the north under Stalin's dictatorship. They thus cannot vicariously relish national pride in the Soviet Union's rising strength, but neither can they fully identify with a Manchukuo state that excludes or marginalizes them. As Olga Bakich highlights in her chapter, for the Russian poet Arsenii Nesmelov (1889–1945) and others, their nation is forever lost, with metaphorical exile "in a drowned submarine," as described in one of his poems.

In contrast, literary scholar Watanabe Naoki argues that, for ethnic Korean writers like Lee Ki-yeong (1895–1984) and Han Seol-ya (1900–unknown), “colonial victimhood turned into colonialism when they crossed the Tumen River, the border between the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria. The ironic shift of subjectivity performed in the process shows how Korean ethnic nationalism was domesticated into imperial logic.”<sup>14</sup> He indicates how Korean writers often portrayed Manchuria as a “space of self-reformation, or a utopian place of human transformation.” Kim Jaeyong asserts that Korean writers’ views of Manchukuo as either positive or negative determined their political affiliations even after liberation of Northeast China and into the division of Korea into two countries. For Japanese former leftists, the new state embodied the ideals that domestic Japan never managed to reach and thus also points to a different kind of loss of nation. While Yamada successfully inserted himself into the official state apparatus, Stephen Poland notes how Nogawa paid with his life for supporting Chinese farmers’ struggle for equality in the rural cooperatives—despite being a finalist for the coveted Akutagawa Prize for his short story “Gobō” [Dog Pearls]. Yet, Nogawa’s 1942 story “The People Who Go to the Hamlet” paints a complicated picture of the Japanese protagonist who alights upon a Chinese village, allegedly to help, but in the end brings them only hardship, in his quasi-colonial guise representing the state’s paternalism. This collection aims to bring these complicated literary descriptions of ordinary life in Manchukuo to light and demonstrates how fiction can be a valuable means for understanding the nuances of a regime of occupation.

## Conclusion

Historians can find valuable tools to examine the historical context of cultural production in Manchukuo through the exploration of fictional narratives and popular emotions as depicted in literary accounts that might both challenge and also support the state. While such emotive atmospheres of “political emotion” presented in fiction are not as obviously polemic as op-eds or political essays, most fiction in early twentieth-century East Asia, including Manchukuo, appeared as serialized novels or single stories in newspapers and literary magazines. Thus, as mass media and indices of an “imagined community,” these sources serve as valuable wellsprings of popular literary descriptions of the Japanese-led state and life under it that point to a pervasive sense of loss of nationhood or that, somehow, the new nation was not living up to its ideals.

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14. In addition, for analysis of Korean literature under Japanese occupation, see Karen Laura Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

The following eighteen chapters provide multifaceted interpretations of Manchukuo perspectives by the state's key writers and those of other notable figures who wrestled with the meaning of literary production in a state not fully theirs. How does one grasp the trauma of the emotive loss of nationhood but by describing this fictive event through the means of a spiritual exorcism performed through the creation of literature?

## Manchukuo Melancholy

### *The Writings of Ke Ju and Zhu Ti*

Norman Smith

Li Zhengzhong (b. 1921) and Zhang Xingjuan (1923–2012) are Chinese writers who established prominent careers in Manchukuo; together, they comprise one couple of the “Northeast’s four famous husband-wife writers” (*Dongbei si da zhiming fufu zuojia*).<sup>1</sup> The literary world that they joined was structured by two momentous events: May Fourth and imperial Japan’s invasion of Manchuria: the former promoted awareness of literature’s ability to effectuate sociopolitical change, while the latter contoured their personal and professional lives. They published their writings in Manchukuo, Beijing,<sup>2</sup> Shanghai, and in the transnational journal, *Huawen Daban meiri* [*Chinese Osaka Daily*]. Their major works feature melancholic themes reflecting their engaged, yet alienated, relationship with contemporary society. This chapter outlines their personal lives and important elements of their professional careers before focusing on several of their fictional works: Li’s novel *Xiang huai* [*Native Place Yearning*]<sup>3</sup> and two of Zhang’s novellas, “Da Heilongjiang de youyu” [Melancholy on the Mighty Black Dragon River] and “Ying” [Cherry].<sup>4</sup>

In the late teens and early twenties, the May Fourth Movement swept across China, protesting its treatment in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Social activists decried traditional Confucian ideals as a major factor of Chinese national weakness. Japan, widely seen as an early twentieth-century model of modernity, was then denounced for imperialist pretensions and out-dated ideals. May Fourth’s empowerment of youth and women inspired debate across China, including Manchuria, where Li and Zhang’s self-identities and career aspirations took shape. On 18 September 1931, the Japanese military invaded Manchuria, and on 1 March 1932 Manchukuo was established. The Japanese-dominated regime enshrined the Confucian concept of *Wangdao* [Kingly Way] as an alternative to Nationalism and

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1. With Liu Longguang and Mei Niang; Shan Ding and Zuo Di; and Wu Lang and Wu Ying.
  2. Beijing was then named Beiping; for consistency, the former will be used in this chapter.
  3. Ke Ju, *Xiang huai* [*Native Place Yearning*] (Xinjing: Yi zhi shudian, 1941).
  4. The novellas were published in Zhu Ti’s *Ying* [*Cherry*] (Xinjing: Guomin tushu, 1945).



Republicanism.<sup>5</sup> A Confucian “return to tradition” would vanquish warlord rule and create a “golden mean between the fascism and bolshevism” that Japanese imperialists argued threatened Asia.<sup>6</sup> State propaganda expounded ideals evincing what historian Prasenjit Duara terms “tradition within modernity.”<sup>7</sup> Those traditions, as well as the modernity that they seemingly embodied, were major targets of Li’s and Zhang’s writings.

Literary regulations banning subversive, negative, and pessimistic writings were promulgated from the early 1930s and became increasingly onerous in the 1940s. On 21 February 1941, the government published the Eight Abstentions [*Babu*], banning the following:

1. Rebellious tendencies towards the current political situation.
2. Criticism of the shortcomings of national policies or non-constructive suggestions.
3. Stimulating opposition to national consciousness.
4. Singular focus on describing the dark side before and after establishment of the country.
5. Decadent thoughts as the theme.
6. About love and desire, descriptions of killing, love triangles, love games that denigrate chastity, lust, love’s sexual desire or dying for love, incest, and adultery.
7. Description of the cruelty of crimes or being too explicitly upsetting [in doing so].
8. Use of matchmakers or maids as themes, exaggerated descriptions of the peculiar state of affairs in red-light (*huajie liuxiang*) districts.<sup>8</sup>

These were to curb criticism of the regime and its depiction as a “paradise land” (*letu*). Yet, clearly, Li and Zhang violated many of the Eight Abstentions.

## Personal Lives

Li Zhengzhong was born in Yitong County, Jilin, on 16 April 1921; his most prominent pennames include Ke Ju and Wei Changming.<sup>9</sup> He was an only child in part because his family emphasized education and his parents recognized that they could not afford to properly educate more than one child. Li has recounted how

5. Bureau of Information, ed., *An Outline of the Manchoukuo Empire, 1939* (Dairen: Bureau of Education, 1939), 22–24.

6. Austin Fulton, *Through Earthquake, Wind and Fire* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1967), 19.

7. Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2003), 147.

8. Yu Lei, “Ziliao” [Data], in *Dongbei lunxian shiqi wenxue guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* [Collection of Papers from the International Research Conference on Literature of the Enemy Occupied Northeast], ed. Feng Weiqun, Wang Jianzhong, Li Chunyan, and Li Shuquan (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 1992), 171–81; 181.

9. Li employed more than forty pennames during his Manchukuo career.

his mother would recite Tang dynasty (618–907) poetry to him from an early age, instilling in him a love of literature.<sup>10</sup>

In the Japanese invasion's immediate aftermath, Li's family moved to Harbin and, in late 1932, returned to Jilin City. In 1937, Li met Zhang, then fourteen and also in middle school.<sup>11</sup> Li's aunt in Jilin lived close to Zhang's family; their relationship grew from Li's frequent visits. Also, in this year, aged sixteen, Li published his first collected writings, *Yu Yin guan shi cun* [*Yu Yin Pavilion Poems*], which remains lost to this day. The following year, he began his lifelong participation in calligraphy exhibitions. In 1939, he entered law school, graduating two years later. In 1941, Li published *Native Place Yearning* and, a year later, graduated with a law degree from Datong University and published a poetry collection, *Qiyue* [*July*]. In the early 1940s, his writings appeared in the region's most prominent publications, including *Datong bao* [*Great Unity Herald*], *Shengjing shibao* [*Shengjing Times*], *Xin Manzhou* [*New Manchuria*], *Qilin* [*Unicorn*], and *Xin qingnian* [*New Youth*]. In 1945, Li published four books: *Wuxian zhi sheng wuxian zhi lu* [*Unlimited Life, Unlimited Travel*], *Sun* [*Bamboo*], *Chuntian yi zhu cao* [*A Blade of Spring Grass*], and *Lu huo* [*Furnace Fire*]; a second edition of *July* was published in 1946.

Zhang Xingjuan was born on 16 March 1923 in Beijing; her most popular pennames include Zhu Ti and Xingzi. In 1925, while she was two years old, her merchant father moved his wife and three children to Jilin City. She grew up in a stable, loving household, with parents who encouraged her to study. As a child, in her recollections, she was known for her studious and “formidable character” (*lihai xingge*) and her refusal to be bullied by her elder brother or younger sister.<sup>12</sup> In 1929, Zhang began primary school, which was briefly interrupted by the 1931 Japanese invasion.

Zhang aspired to a teaching career. Manchukuo education, which officials touted as a symbol of their progressive rule, was noted by its critics for a focus on vocational study that they argued produced a subservient Chinese working class; in her novella “Wo he wo de haizimen” [*Me and My Children*] (1945), Zhang asserted that “under today's circumstances [Chinese youth] have lost the opportunity for advanced study.”<sup>13</sup> Despite such criticism, Manchukuo education provided youth like her with tools necessary to articulate dissatisfaction with what she identified as a regressive socioeconomic order. Zhang thus grew to maturity in an environment rife with contradictions: she was encouraged to study but no consensus existed regarding appropriate use of her education. In 1936, upon completing primary school, Zhang enrolled in Jilin Girl's Middle School, also alma mater of famed writers Wu Ying (1915–1961) and Mei Niang (1916–2013). Her love of reading, and her predecessors' growing stature, prompted her to begin writing. After her 1940

10. Li Zhengzhong and Zhang Xingjuan, personal interview (Victoria, Canada: 25 April 2004).

11. Li and Zhang, personal interview (Victoria, Canada: 25 April 2004).

12. Zhang Xingjuan, personal interview (Shenyang: 14 February 2001).

13. Zhu Ti, “Wo he wo de haizimen” [*Me and My Children*], in Zhu, *Ying*, 76.

### *Native Place Yearning*

In 1941, Li's *Native Place Yearning* was published, under the pen name of Ke Ju. It is the fictional story of Jin Xiang, a young man who fled his native place, Fort Willow (Liushu bao), when it was invaded by bandits; he returned seven years later, at which point the novel begins. He had left for a big city's safety, where he found work. There, unlike others, he amused himself through reading and self-reflection rather than living a "mahjong and coffee-style luxury life."<sup>15</sup> But life there brought Jin "only feelings of cold and hate."<sup>16</sup> Bai Xueru, the woman Jin loved, was unexpectedly married by her family to a rich man. Jin did not blame her, as he knew "how difficult things could be for a woman looking to live in society."<sup>17</sup> But her loss, coupled with disappointment with his career prospects, led to his feeling that he did

not dare think of the past or the future. He just had to face the reality of dark, cold, hopeless days. He was like an animal that had lost its senses, acting as if he were puzzled for no reason at all.<sup>18</sup>

Unsatisfied with city life, Jin returned home, to live with his doting grandmother. He soon finds life there boring. Jin then learns that his once-honourable uncle and neighbours have succumbed to bad times. When he first returned, he contemplated marrying a friend from his youth, Hu Huigu, with whom he had lost contact. One evening, looking through his childhood belongings, he reflects on his "so interesting and so busy child's life," which contrasted with his "sad and depressing" adult reality.<sup>19</sup>

A friend from his youth, schoolteacher Li Shuang, takes Jin to tour the village. When Jin observes that "the village is still so down to earth, it is so peaceful,"<sup>20</sup> Li is appalled that Jin cannot see that the once "upright" (*zhengzhi*) people gamble and drink as if they "do not know if they will have a future." Li tells Jin:

This change is too fast. Before, everything was so proper. Now, it is this evil. Before, people were so diligent. Now, they have a big-spending money style. The people here act as if they do not know if they will have a future. Every time I walk here, it makes me feel cold like being in a tomb!<sup>21</sup>

Li recounts how the village is "gradually defeated, day by day"<sup>22</sup> and suspects that Jin's inability to recognize the decline surrounding them contributed to Jin's failure to succeed in the city. After encountering his intoxicated uncle raving like a lunatic,

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15. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 3.

16. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 3.

17. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 4.

18. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 7.

19. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 15.

20. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 16.

21. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 19–20.

22. Ke, *Xiang huai*, 17.

a crime, she could earn a wage while Li was allowed nothing; her small wage packet supported the family of six for much of the decade that they lived there.<sup>64</sup>

In 1978, the Communist Party reversed in toto the political verdict condemning occupation-era writers, and the couple returned to Shenyang in 1979. Since then, increased interest in regional literature resulted in the republication of many of their writings. Zhang's work was featured in a 1986 volume of fiction by Manchukuo's women writers titled *Changye yinghuo* [*Fireflies of the Long Night*]. Li's work was included in the 1989 collection of Manchukuo's men writers, *Zhuxin ji* [*Candlewick Collection*]. Their work has since been published in multiple collected volumes, including, most recently, *Zhu Ti, Ke Ju zuopin ji* [*Collection of Ke Ju and Zhu Ti's Writings*].<sup>65</sup> Since then, Li, one of Liaoning's greatest calligraphers, has held exhibitions across China and in Canada, England, and Taiwan.

## Conclusions

The writing careers of Li Zhengzhong and Zhang Xingjuan illustrate the complex nexus of Japanese colonial rule, personal ambition, and social ideals structuring Chinese lives in Manchukuo. Just children when the occupation began, the education system enabled them to strive for careers in writing politically charged fiction to deliberate on life in Manchukuo. Through their work, Li and Zhang sought to raise awareness of inequitable socioeconomic conditions. Both created May Fourth–inspired Chinese literature, in a Japanese colonial context, pursuing literary goals that promoted the transformative potential of “grim realism” in native place writing.<sup>66</sup>

Significantly, the Japanese do not feature in their work; they are portrayed in neither a positive nor negative manner but are missing entirely. This absence is remarkable, considering their importance in Manchukuo. Instead, Zhang's “Melancholy on the Mighty Black Dragon River” features a Caucasian protagonist, most likely Russian, a population whose significance paled in comparison to the Japanese but who, like the Chinese, were relegated to a subordinate position in the colonial order. How should this Japanese absence be assessed? Such an absence is understandable, given the fascistic nature of Japanese rule; grave punishments were meted out to writers for negative or pessimistic reflection on Japan. The absence of reference to Japan or the Japanese afforded writers like Li and Zhang the freedom to critically reflect on the Japanese imperial order within which they lived.

The sudden collapse of Japan's empire, a divisive civil war, the population's desire to consign an ambiguous colonial history to the past, and the works of writers such as Li and Zhang empowered narratives condemning Chinese life in Manchukuo. In

64. Zhang Xingjuan, personal interview (Oxford, England: 31 October 2004).

65. Norman Smith and Qiu Xiaodan, eds., *Zhu Ti, Ke Ju zuopin ji* [*Collection of Ke Ju and Zhu Ti's Writings*] (Harbin: Beifang wenyi chubanshe, 2017).

66. Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 219.

1949, the PRC's establishment, and its accompanied nationalist fervour, erased the complexities of Japan's colonial rule and silenced the anti-patriarchal discourses that had enlivened local culture from the 1930s, replacing them with literature extolling the socialist state and critiquing bourgeois ideals. In 1945, Zhang celebrated *Cherry's* publication with the poem "Ziji de geling, ziji de ganqing" [My Song, My Feelings], averring, "I am only a little river on the cliff of mother earth, I am only a little grass amongst the bushes."<sup>67</sup> In the afterword of *Native Place Yearning*, Li called his work "immature" (*wei chengshu*).<sup>68</sup> Such modesty reflects their characters and may also have been meant to lull Manchukuo censors into a false sense of security regarding their work, but that sentiment is suggestive of a decades-long minimizing of the effect of such writers on darkening perceptions of Manchukuo. The melancholy manifested in their writings was born in, and contributed to, Chinese alienation from Manchukuo.

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67. Zhu Ti, "Ziji de geling, ziji de ganqing" [My Song, My Feelings], in Zhu, *Ying*, 1.

68. Li, "Houji" [Afterword]. In Li, *Xiang huai*, 2.

## Modern Korean Literature and Manchukuo

Kim Jaeyong

### Introduction: Manchukuo and East Asia, 1936–1940

Manchukuo as a theme emerged in modern Korean literature after implementation of the 1936 *NaiSen ittai* (Japan and Korea as one body) campaign by Minami Jirō (1874–1955), colonial Korea’s governor-general appointed in August of that year.<sup>1</sup> Novelist Kang Kyōng-ae (1906–1944),<sup>2</sup> a feminist proletarian writer living in Manchuria during Manchukuo’s 1932 establishment, mentioned then that Koreans’ status changed after this date. These transformations grew more prominent from 1936 onwards, when colonial authorities began to enforce the *NaiSen ittai* policy.

Under this policy, police agents of the governor-general arrested newspaper editors over an incident known as “the erasure of the Japanese flag.” This incident began when marathoner Sohn Kee-chung (1912–2002) won a gold medal in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and Joseon<sup>3</sup> newspapers deliberately removed the Japanese flag from his uniform in their photographs. The new governor-general, a strong advocate of *NaiSen ittai*, did not take this act of resistance lightly. In retaliation for such expressions of independence, he ordered suspension from publication of *Joseon JoongAng Ilbo* [*Korea Central Times*], along with its monthly magazine *JoongAng* [*Centre*], while the latter was eventually discontinued. The *Dong-A Ilbo* [*East Asia Daily*] was also suspended but then revived. These two newspapers were major publications strongly influencing Koreans under Japanese rule.<sup>4</sup>

1. Minami held his position until 1942, when he served as a member of the Privy Council to advise the emperor of Japan until the war’s 1945 end. For more on Minami’s goals for colonial Korea and implementation of *NaiSen ittai* (*NaeSeon iche* in Korean), see Jeon Sang-sook, “The Characteristics of Japanese Rule in Korea,” *The Journal of Northeast Asian History* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 39–74.

2. Kang Kyōng-ae is renowned for her proletarian novel *Ingen munjie* [*The Human Question*, translated into English by Samuel Perry as *From Wonsoo Pond* (New York: Feminist Press, 2009).

3. In Japanese, Chōsen was a term used to connote colonial Korea. This is its Korean translation.

4. For more on Japanese censorship in colonial Korea, see Kyeong-Hee Choi, *Beneath the Vermilion Ink: Japanese Colonial Censorship and the Making of Modern Korean Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

Korean writer and journalist Yŏm Sang-sŏp (1897–1963) was well informed of such policy changes since he also worked for the *Maeil Sinbo* [*Daily News*]. Because of fears that *NaiSen ittai* ideology would completely subsume any forms of Korean identity, Yŏm chose to move to Manchukuo in late 1936. *Gozoku kyōwa* (harmony of the five races / ethnicities), or Manchukuo's national motto and main ideology since 1932, took on special meaning for Yŏm when Japan introduced the *NaiSen ittai* policy in Joseon (Korea under Japanese rule). Yŏm could not refer to himself as a Korean in Joseon but could do so in Manchukuo, where national ideology enshrined ideas of five races in harmony.<sup>5</sup> After leaving Joseon, Yŏm moved around within Manchuria until imperial Japan's 1945 defeat.

Following Wuhan's October 1938 defeat, when Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro (1891–1945) announced the formation of his new cabinet and plan for East Asia's coprosperity, including China, Manchukuo, and Japan, Manchukuo's presence grew stronger in Joseon's literary world. Koreans who regarded China as an indirect base for anti-Japanese activities, were shocked that key areas of China, like those around Peiping (contemporary Beijing), Nanking, and Shanghai, were dominated by imperial Japan—which had attacked these cities since 1937. This was aggravated by Konoe's 22 December 1938 announcement of a New Order in Northeast Asia (*TōA shin chitsujō*). Therefore, writers needed to rethink their status as Koreans in East Asia, along with Manchukuo's significance under the New Order in East Asia, which expanded from its relationship with Joseon to becoming a template for future directions in East Asia. From this perspective, Manchukuo came under the spotlight in the Joseon literary world. These issues intensified in 1940, when Konoe once again became prime minister and announced formation of a new cabinet, and promoted planning of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere to include parts of Southeast Asia, along with Japan, China, and Manchukuo.

When Korean writers realized that Konoe's New Order, initiated in late 1938, merely served as a pretext to expand the Japanese Empire, they were rapidly divided. Those who resisted Japan's invasion did not trust the aims for Manchukuo's establishment. Instead, they viewed Manchukuo as a refuge for farmers who failed to maintain their livelihoods in Joseon. Many Korean farmers unable to survive under Japanese rule hoped to move to Manchukuo. However, those believing that their only means for survival was to become faithful subjects of the Japanese Empire now envisioned Manchukuo as a new land of promise. They thought that they could play an important role in Manchukuo because of the assumption that they would then become citizens of imperial Japan after migration.

Thus, the division of writers according to perceptions of Manchukuo as either a "land of migrants" or "land of promise" majorly characterized Joseon literary circles. Writers such as Yi Ki-yŏng (1896–1984), Han Sŏrya (1900–1976), and Yi T'ae-jun (1904–1970), belonging to the former group, emphasized peasant suffering

5. Tanaka Ryūichi, *Manshūkoku to Nihon no Tēikoku shihai* [*Manchukuo and the Dominance of the Japanese Empire*] (Tokyo: Yūshisha, 2007), 130–47.

under Japan's empire and wrote about rural migrations to the region. Meanwhile, Jang Hyuk-ju (1905–1998), Yu Chi-jin (1905–1974), Yi Mu-yŏng (1908–1960), and Jŏng In-t'aek (1909–1953), belonging to the latter group, wrote about Korean peasants' bright futures.

Manchukuo's impact on Korea's literary world following Wuhan's 1938 fall was felt not only by writers who lived in Joseon and travelled to Manchukuo for inspiration but also, with the spread of new Manchuria concepts, as discussed in this volume by Liu Xiaoli, to writers who moved to Manchukuo and remained divided according to political views. Those critical of a Japanese-dominated East Asia instead asserted their identity as "Korean." They include Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Baek Seok (1912–1995), and An Su-gil (1911–1977). However, those cooperating with the Japanese Empire supported Manchukuo's "harmony of the five races" and engaged in discussions of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere after 1940. These include Pak Yŏng-jun (1911–1976) and Yu Chi-hwan (1908–1967). They believed that Korean peasants who migrated to Manchukuo could become the leading ethnic group and acquire their own land.

### Manchukuo as Viewed from Joseon

Before Manchukuo's 1932 establishment, Koreans who could not sustain themselves or fell afoul of the state in Joseon often chose to move to Manchuria to gain relative freedom. After Manchukuo's founding, however, farmers then began moving to Manchukuo under the pretext of supporting national policy. Those moving individually were known as "free migrants," and those moving in larger groups were called "mass migrants." Sen-Man Takushoku Kaisha (the Korea-Manchuria Development Company), founded in 1936, led the relocation to Manchukuo for such Korean migrants. From a broader perspective, this policy was introduced to help imperial Japan achieve its vision of dominating East Asia. In 1939, however, migration of Koreans to Manchukuo had more complex implications.

After the Japanese empire took over China's major cities, including Peiping and Shanghai, during its war against Republican China, Manchukuo assumed greater significance in relation to the New Order in East Asia. "Harmony of the five races" was recognized as the future of coexistence amongst peoples in East Asia. Given Manchukuo's complex political status in East Asia then, Korean writers travelling to Manchukuo represented diverse views of the new state in their writings. Depending on their perceptions of the Japanese empire's expansion, the writers could be divided into two groups. One group viewed the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and imperial Japan's partial victory in China as part of this expansion. These writers supported Korean farmers who moved to Manchukuo to escape suffering under Japanese rule. Another group, who regarded these events as a new age for East Asia, found hope in the farmers' relocation.



This same conceit is found in his famous short story “Byeo” [Rice] (1941), also part of the *Bukwon* short story collection.<sup>9</sup>

Manchukuo underwent even more noticeable changes after 1939. The country’s ideologues continued to assert primacy of the “harmony of the five races” policy, but Koreans felt a stronger political presence of the Japanese Empire in Manchukuo, especially through the Kantō Army’s increased control. Following imperial Japan’s victory in parts of China, and, later, other Asian countries, some writers harboured desires to live as Japanese and even hid that they were Korean. They include Imamura Eiji, who denied his Korean nationality and pretended to be Japanese, Pak Yŏng-jun, and Yu Chi-hwan.

Pak even referred to those who fought against the Kantō Army as “barbaric.” He believed that Koreans should accept Manchukuo and abandon hopes for emancipation. Therefore, guerrillas in mountainous border areas who fought against Manchukuo just sustained their status as “barbarian.” In his short story “Millim e Yŏin” [The Woman of the Jungle] (1941), Pak described the Japanese Empire as “civilized” and those who resisted it as “barbaric.” This short story dealt with a negative portrayal of a guerrilla woman who fought against the Kantō Army and against accepting the Manchukuo order. This attitude shows that Pak and other writers like him viewed Japan’s dominant status in East Asia as symbolizing regional progress. Furthermore, Pak’s writings portrayed as heroes agents working for the Japanese Empire and persuading Koreans to submit to Japan’s control.

Yu Chi-hwan showed a cooperative attitude similar to that of Pak Yŏng-jun. He emphasized in his poems that those sacrificing their lives in resisting Japan’s empire were anachronistic. The poem “Su” [Head] (1942), which dealt with the fatal prosecution of a guerrilla in a village square, signified abandonment of emancipation. Yu’s writings intimated that Koreans who believed that they could achieve liberation from the Japanese Empire still sustained the negative conditions of barbarism. This resembles how Pak also regarded those expressing anti-Japanese sentiments as barbaric. Yu wrote the poem “Chŏn’ya” [The Night Before] (1943) that even encouraged Korean youth to serve as student soldiers for Japan’s empire, which he perceived as possessing a higher civilization. For Yu, it provided a way to stand up to Western imperialism: Japan needed to triumph to ensure Asia’s better future, while Koreans should participate in the war as “Japanese.”

## Conclusion: The Cold War and Distorted Memory

Efforts of Koreans to gain independence from the Japanese Empire ultimately failed because of conflicts between the left wing, which hoped to build a socialist state connected with the Soviet Union, and the right wing, which wanted to build a nation-state connected with the United States, amidst conditions of a worsening Cold War.

9. Found in An Su-gil, *Bukwon* [Northern Village] (Yeongil: Yemundang, 1943), 203–91.

When the Korean War (active: 1950–1953) finally broke out, Korean writers living in Northeast China, formerly Manchukuo, then had to choose, depending on their circumstances, between North and South Korea. Also, those who had travelled to Manchukuo in the Japanese Empire's final days no longer remained interested in reflecting upon experiences there. However, those who had lived in Manchukuo for longer periods continued to write about these experiences. Writers described Manchukuo from various perspectives, including Yöm Sang-söp and Baek Seok, who dreamed of independence; An Su-gil, who accepted his in-between status; and Pak Yöng-jun, who had cooperated with the Japanese Empire.

Yöm, An, and Pak ultimately chose to support South Korea, while Baek decided to return to North Korea because Jeongju was his hometown. In North Korea, however, it was impossible to recreate a literary perspective of Manchukuo in retrospect if such experiences were inconsistent with portrayals of the anti-Japanese movement launched by Kim Il-sung (1912–1994) before Liberation. This type of atmosphere formed gradually after Liberation in 1945, worsened in the mid-1950s, and became fully developed from 1967 onwards. Even writers like Baek Seok, who did not collaborate with the Japanese while living in Manchukuo, could not share their experiences since their form of resistance would have been represented differently from the political narrative propagated by Kim as North Korea's leader after 1948. Baek never mentioned Manchukuo until 1962, which was the last year he actively wrote. North Korea, after the official 1948 division of the Korean Peninsula, was filled with discourse on the Manchukuo experience, but writers who had actually lived there could not share their actual accounts of life under the Japanese regime for political reasons. It is interesting how a very similar tendency had occurred not only in Korea but also in postwar China.<sup>10</sup>

However, one writer in post-division South Korea who did share his experiences of Manchukuo in print was Pak Yöng-jun. The motive of his short autobiography, *Chönsa Shidae* [*The Era of the Past*] (1966), in which Manchukuo was recreated in a literary fashion, was to communicate anti-Communist ideas. South Korea's national ideology after the North-South division was anti-Communism; this was also consistent with earlier Japanese ideologies in the former puppet state of Manchukuo. As such, Pak could continue publishing works that featured Manchukuo in an anti-Communist context. In this process of reflection through a particular political lens, problems of cooperating with the Japanese Empire disappeared. Yet, this stance of anti-Communism would have had greater significance if accompanied by remorse over nonresistance. Yet, since this aspect was left uninterrogated, his works ended up being one-dimensional.

An Su-gil, who had regarded Manchukuo as his new homeland, described Manchukuo in his novel *Bukgando* [*North Jiandao*] (1959–1967), published after Korea's 1945 liberation. Because the writer was less burdened by topics of

10. Okada Hideki, *Bungaku ni miru "Manshükoku" no isö: zoku* [*Phases of "Manchukuo" in Literature, Volume Two*] (Tokyo: Keibun shuppan, 2013), 314–46.

pro-Japanese collaboration, he could deal with Manchukuo in a more multifaceted way than could Pak Yōng-jun. Although South Korea's anti-Communist ideology prevented him from covering details of activities of Manchukuo's numerous socialists, he exerted great efforts to include them while avoiding censorship. However, An's works after Korea's division do not contain criticism of the nation-state system upheld in Manchukuo. It is unfortunate that An, one of the few writers of modern Korean literature who criticized the nation-state system, failed to continue his intellectualism from before Korea's liberation. An, who knew the limits of the nation-state through conflicts between Japan and China in Manchukuo, wanted to overcome the nation-state system after the liberation of the Korea Peninsula. But the division of Korea and the building of the nation-states of South and North Korea forced him to abandon the concept and dream of a post-nation-state and focus instead on building a nation-state (in the South).

The most problematic writer active in South Korea after the division was Yōm Sang-sōp. Like An Su-gil, he enjoyed a greater degree of freedom writing in the postwar period since he had not collaborated with the Japanese while living in Manchukuo. While most writers who collaborated with Japan's empire could not write freely about Manchukuo because of a possible disclosure of their betrayal (of Korea), Yōm Sang-sōp did not need to fear assessments of his behaviour in the earlier Manchukuo era. He thus published various works based on experiences in Manchukuo following Korea's 1945 Liberation. In later works, he recreated a view of Manchukuo as a means of bypassing a divided Korea's oppressive reality. In *Chaesōkjang e So'nyōn* [*The Boy in the Quarry*] (1950), written before the Korean War, he deals with Korea's reunification through the topic of war victims who moved from Manchukuo to Seoul. Manchukuo evidently was an important space in literary works of writers who viewed its fate after Liberation.

It should be noted that only Yōm Sang-sōp remained consistent in his viewpoint of Manchukuo before and after Korea's 1945 Liberation. Although Yōm utilized Manchukuo's motto of the "harmony of the five races" as a writing trope, he dreamed of an independent Joseon and a democratic future for East Asia. Of course, he also criticized the nation-state system and modernity. As such, Yōm is the only modern Korean writer who remained consistent in his depiction of Manchukuo both before and after liberation.

The Cold War's political impact clearly distorted Korean writers' visions of life within Manchukuo, whether they decided to share their memories in print or not. Their works often revealed the continued divisions between perspectives developed during the Japanese colonial occupation era of Korea and Northeast China—divisions now still mirrored in the split between North and South Korea on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>11</sup>

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11. Annika A. Culver, editor's note as historical background.

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