The Modern City from Imperial and Colonial Eyes: Focusing on Yokomitsu Riichi’s *Shanghai* (1932) and Kim Kirim’s *The Weather Map* (1936)*

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Yokomitsu Riichi’s *Shanghai (Shanhai; 1932)* and Kim Kirim’s *The Weather Map (Kisangdo; 1936)* share commensurable points of comparison within East Asian literary modernism despite the geopolitical incommensurability between imperial Japan and colonial Korea and the genre differences between fiction and poetry. Both texts provide historical background to the turmoil of 1920s and 1930s Shanghai, where the conflict between disparate cultural hegemonies led to the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925 and the Shanghai Incident of 1932, respectively. In addition to their two authors’ experimental writing styles, both texts address the hegemonic struggles between East and West and between Japan and China. These two works will be compared and contrasted to demonstrate how hegemonies competed within the transition period when the initiative in East Asia was shifting from the legacy of premodern China to the emerging power of Japan and the West. This article seeks to explore how both Yokomitsu and Kim, through their own senses of history, positioned the Japanese expatriates in Shanghai and Seoul citizens portrayed in their literary creations at the nexus of the legacy of Chinese civilization, expanding Japan, and the Western powers.

**Keywords:** Kim Kirim, Yokomitsu Riichi, literary modernism, Shanghai

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Unless otherwise noted, all translations to English are my own. Regarding the term “Imperial Eyes,” I borrow it from Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992) to explain “the contact zone” between two different cultures that meet asymmetrically, such as imperial Japan and semi-colonial China in Yokomitsu Riichi’s *Shanghai*, and imperial Japan, semi-colonial China, and colonial Korea in Kim Kirim’s *The Weather Map.*

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Introduction

Korean literary modernism during the colonial period was deeply engaged with contemporaneous Japanese literary modernism, as well as English modernism and European avant-garde. In the passage of a mere three decades, starting from the 1910s, Korean literary circles experienced a diverse range of Western artistic and literary movements formulated between the sixteenth century and the contemporary era, as the Korean modernist Kim Kirim pointed out in his essay “Chosôn munhak ūi pansŏng” (Reflection on Korean literature). The reception of literary modernism from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, bequeathed to colonial Korea via Japanese modernist journals such as Bungei jidai (Literary age; 1924–1927), Shi to shiron (Poetry and poetics; 1928–1931), and Bungaku (Literature; 1932–1933), also followed this accelerated process.

To contemporary Japanese and Korean modernists, the city of Shanghai symbolized the modern and metropolitan. In a literary symposium titled “Modanizumu bungaku oyobi seikatsu no hihyō” (Modernist literature and the criticism of life), held by the Shinchô Publishing Company in Tokyo in February 1930, Japanese modernists called Shanghai a far more liberal place than any other city in Japan:

Okada: It’s good to see that Chinese women hang around the city wearing trousers.
Furui: There are young Chinese women with bobbed hair and wearing military caps like commissioned officers, even in some places like Shanghai….
Nakamura: Mr. Nii, you’ve even been to Harbin. Have you found any pioneering figures of the “modern” where there is no such tradition?
Nii: Well, it’s easy to do anything in a place like Shanghai, because everything is permitted.
Asahara: Even of we insist on the image of the "modern" in Japan, the majority of the world does not seriously consider such modern image, because the image of poverty has been dominating Japan until today.
Nii: I agree, until today.2

Based on these modernist impressions and experiences of Shanghai, this city in the 1930s had a modern and exotic atmosphere, which created a cultural

2. “Modanizumu bungaku oyobi seikatsu no hihyō” [Modernist literature and criticism of life], Shinchô (Feb. 1930), 146.
distance between it and contemporaneous Japanese cities—where a traditional atmosphere existed. Another example illustrates the atmosphere of Shanghai. The Korean modernist Kim Kirim describes modern Shanghai, comparing it to developing and industrializing Seoul, in his essay: “A flâneur’s Napoleon” [Sanbo ro ū Nap’olleong](1934). He observes the newly adopted pet culture in Seoul, recalling when he met his relatives who were strolling about the city with their dog named Napoleon. He expresses sarcasm at the name of the dog and its barking and states that this Western pet culture must have arrived in Seoul via Shanghai or Tokyo, the two most Westernized and metropolitan East Asian cities at the time. Whereas intellectuals of imperial Japan idealized the liberal atmosphere of Shanghai, Kim Kirim, as a Korean modernist, believed that the exoticism of Shanghai and Tokyo differed from that of Seoul.

Kim thematizes the atmosphere of Shanghai in his poetic creation The Weather Map (Kisangdo, 1936), which was serialized in the literary magazines Chung’ang (Central) and Samch’ëlli (Land of Korea), and later published as a book after being edited by his colleague, Yi Sang. This long poem has as its background semi-colonial Shanghai, where the West and the East met, reflecting the asymmetric power relations surrounding the Shanghai Incident of 1932. Yi Sang, Kim’s lifetime literary companion in the modernist circle named Kuinhoe, also describes the Shanghai Incident of 1932 in his short story “Chido ū ŭamsil” (Darkroom of a map). Their adoration of Shanghai as a multicultural capital directly coincides with the views of contemporary Japanese modernist writers like Akutakawa Ryunosuke (1892–1927) and Yokomitsu Riichi (1898–1947). Yi Sang intertextualized several lines from both these writers’ works in his poem and short story.

Akutakawa Ryunosuke, a representative modernist writer of the Taishō period, recommended Yokomitsu Riichi to visit Shanghai and experience the international modern life there. Yokomitsu explained why he visited Shanghai

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4. The Weather Map was originally published in installments as stand-alone poems and eventually published together for the first time in 1936.

5. See Yi Hyŏngjin, “Yi Sang ū yŏsŏngsŏng e kwanhan yŏn’gu: Yokomitsu Riichi wa ū pigyo ril chungsim ūro” [Research on Yi Sang’s viewpoint of women, especially in comparison with Yokomitsu Riichi], in Yi Sang-jŏk wŏlg’yŏng kwa si ū saengsŏng [Crossing borders of Yi Sang’s literary world and the creation of poetry], edited by Nan Myŏng (Seoul: Yŏngnak, 2010), 79–108.
in his two essays: “Jing’ànji no hibun” (Inscription to Jing An Temple) and “Pekin to Pari” (Beijing and Paris).6 Yokomitsu stayed in Shanghai for a month in 1928 and then serialized and published his representative novel, Shanghai, in 1932. This novel focuses on the May Thirtieth Incident that took place in 1925, when Japanese expatriates faced riots of Chinese laborers working in a Japanese cotton mill in the International Concession.

Shanghai, which was composed of three districts—the International Concession mainly governed by the British and Americans, as well as the Japanese; the French Concession; and the Chinese district—was at the time the most multinational and multiracial city in East Asia. Even Akutagawa remarked that compared to Shanghai, Tokyo was but a small village. Moreover, visiting Shanghai meant a great deal to Yokomitsu, who wanted to experience modern life in East Asia. Yokomitsu’s writings circulated among Korean modernist writers, Yi Sang and Kim Kirim in particular. Kim was also an avid reader of a journal published by Japanese modernist poets, Shi to shiron (Poetry and poetics), between 1928 and 1933. He was familiar with the works of Haruyama Yukio, the editor-in-chief of that journal.7

This experience with modernism encouraged Kim to explore the geopolitical characteristics of the world and Shanghai through his representative poem, “The Weather Map.” He was confident in his modernist poetic style, which depicted ambivalent themes of modern life. When he began to serialize his long poem in the literary journal Central, he declared the motive for his creation: “I plan to compose a contemporary symphony. No aspect of contemporary civilization will be denied the right and opportunity of speech.”8 Kim attempted to capture the characteristics of the civilization around him in his poetry and then chose to portray the most modern and metropolitan city, Shanghai, as compared to the not-so-modernized Seoul of colonial Korea.

Semi-colonized Shanghai and its Literary Embodiment

Kim Kirim’s long poem, The Weather Map, follows Japanese depictions of China in turmoil, particularly those depictions found in Yokomitsu Riichi’s novel Shanghai. As a symbol of Chinese modernity—a cosmopolitan metropolis,

the largest city in China and all of Asia, and home to several foreign concessions—early twentieth-century Shanghai captured the imaginations of fiction writers the world over. Yokomitsu’s *Shanghai* narrates the experience of Japanese expatriates living in the city during the turbulence of 1925. Against the backdrop of the May Thirtieth Incident, when Chinese workers in Shanghai, outraged by the murder of several compatriots at a Japanese textile mill, went on a massive strike, along with rising tensions over national sovereignty, the novel addresses many of the pressing political and social crises confronting Shanghai and East Asia in the mid-1920s.

*Shanghai* describes many kinds of conflicts: between Eastern and Western cultures, Asian and white races, and proletariat and bourgeois. Such conflicts are well depicted as interwoven with the love-hate relationships of the novel’s characters. Sanki, the Japanese businessman, is tempted and challenged by most of the female characters: a Turkish bath hostess named Osugi; the madame of the Turkish bath, Oryū; a Japanese dancer named Miyako; a Chinese worker in the Japanese textile mill and also a proletarian cell member named Qiu-lan; Olga, a white émigré prostitute; and then Sanki’s first love, Kyoko, who lives in Japan. Since Kyoko married another man in Japan, Sanki has been looking for a wife, but he is not satisfied with anyone. He feels attraction to the Chinese proletarian Qiu-lan, but she is punished and murdered by her socialist colleagues for consorting with Sanki. When Sanki fails to meet Qiu-lan because of the frenzy of mass demonstrations and his flight from an angry Chinese mob during the May Thirtieth Incident, he flees to the room of Osugi, who is making money as a prostitute in the Chinese district. Osugi has little choice but to work as a prostitute after being fired from the Turkish bath. The story ends as the light in her room goes out as Sanki and Osugi wait for the Japanese military to suppress the Chinese rioters.

Through its seven chapters, *The Weather Map* captures historical events all around the world after World War I in a far larger scope than does *Shanghai*. Describing historical events that occur in colonial countries in Asia and Africa, Italy under the fascist regime, the United States as a symbol of imperialism and capitalism, and semi-colonial Shanghai in the early 1930s, the narrator captures the turmoil of the Shanghai Incident in chapters 2 and 4. The storm and typhoon pouring over Shanghai stand in for the precarious circumstances of a semi-colonized China caught between Western powers and the Japanese Empire. The Shanghai Incident was a riot similar to the May Thirtieth Incident of 1925. In the Shanghai Incident, Japan and a semi-colonial China, as represented by the extraterritorial areas of Shanghai, waged a local war on the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War that commenced in 1937. The May
Thirtieth Incident of 1925 had its source in outraged Chinese factory workers in Shanghai, whose cause was taken up by other classes, and their joint demonstrations led to increased tensions with Japan over Chinese national sovereignty. The Shanghai Incident in 1932 had similar characteristics, but it began when Japanese military agents instigated a war with China to expand Japan’s political influence in China following the Mukden Incident of 1931. Shanghai was selected by the Japanese forces for its extraterritorial concessions. Both incidents resulted in the augmentation of Japanese power over China prior to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

There are several similarities between Shanghai and The Weather Map. The background of both texts is turmoil in Shanghai, in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively. They both pay consistent attention to the phenomena of urban culture: speed, technology, and city space. Furthermore, both texts share characteristics of literary modernism, including fragmented sentences and montage constructions, characteristics easily noted in the writers’ descriptions of the Chinese crowds and urban landscape.

Nevertheless, some critics in the field of comparative literature hesitate to compare The Weather Map with Shanghai despite their similar writing styles and backgrounds. The major distinction between The Weather Map and Shanghai is literary genre, and there is no ready agreement on whether one can compare the literary genre of “novel” with “poetry.” Poetry in general compresses meaning and captures images, but novels tend to describe scenes in detail. According to conventional genre theory, each genre has its own distinct and very different way of writing and reading.

Literary “modernism” during the period of high modernism that came after the end of World War I attempted to interrogate the meaning of “genre difference.” Many modernist writers such as T.S. Eliot and C. Day Lewis believed that there was no critical difference between poems and novels. In his introduction to Paul Valéry’s The Art of Poetry, Eliot addresses the issue of genre difference in contemporary writings:

I have never yet come across a final, comprehensive, and satisfactory account of the difference between poetry and prose. We can distinguish between prose and verse, and between verse and poetry; but the moment the intermediate term verse is suppressed, I do not believe that any distinction between prose and poetry is meaningful.9

Lewis coined a new term, the “poetic novel,” to describe a genre vacillating between poetry and the prose novel. He argued that “the distinction between the poetic novel and the narrative poem is a purely formal one.” Kim Kirim borrowed Lewis’ concept of the “poetic novel” and in his essay “Sosöl üi p’agyo: Kkamwi üi p’esu’u e taehayō” (Unconventional novel: regarding Albert Camus’s La Peste) raises the question of whether James Joyce’s Ulysses (1922) was a novel or an epic poem. Moreover, in his short story, “Öttôn insaeng” (A certain life), Kim adapted his poetic style, jumping from one manner or style to another. He intentionally deleted all periods in his sentences in order to maintain the prose’s flow and velocity. Like Kim, when Yokomitsu explained the nature of the new sensory school in the context of Japanese modernism, he confessed that he wrote fiction with specific inspirations:

I acknowledge that certain parts come from Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Symbolism, Constructivism, and Realism—all belonging to the New Sensation School (Shinkankakuha). Needless to say, the subjects that inspire the feelings of these new schools stem, without doubt, from the vocabulary, poetry, and rhythm of the writing... Sometimes from the writing’s angle of theme refraction, sometimes from the degree of leap in silent rows and rows, and sometimes from backward feeding, repetition, and speed of storyline progress there are other various triggered states.

Furthermore, Yokomitsu stated that he did not write Shanghai in the usual manner of fiction writing, stating in 1935 that he attempted to express “Shanghai as the seaport of an objectively moving entity, including nature, rather than individual characters.”

If we appropriate Georg Lukács’ critical characterization of the literary “modernist” as one who positively and creatively describes the features of modernism in a paradoxical manner, the genre difference between The Weather Map and Shanghai can simply be a formal one, because both writers use stylistic experiments to depict a crowd in turmoil in a “realistic” way as being “frozen in their own immediacy.” In addition to their ambitious experiments,

12. Yokomitsu Riichi, Kakikata sosō: zuobitsu, shi, hyōron [Writing books: essay, poetry, criticism], (Tōkyō: Hakusuisha, 1931), 211.
Shanghai and The Weather Map, by their frequent use of maps, also address the hegemonic struggles between Japan and China and between East and West. Yokomitsu makes his protagonist Sanki imagine maps in a geopolitical sense when threatened by the Chinese rioters, such as a “map in the head” (atama no naka no chizu 頭の中の地図) and “map of Asia” (Ashū no chizu 亜洲の地図). Kim even utilizes the word in the poem’s title, The Weather Map (the expression “the weather” here functions as a metaphor for the political climate of Shanghai and the world). Despite their genre differences, these two texts will be compared and contrasted to demonstrate hegemonic struggle during a transitional period as power shifted from the legacy of premodern China to the emerging powers of Japan and the West in both Shanghai and China more broadly. This article seeks to explore how Yokomitsu and Kim, in their respective works Shanghai and The Weather Map, struggle with the legacy of Chinese civilization and the expanding power of Japan and the West through their own senses of history.

**Shanghai as Described in Shanghai and The Weather Map**

Kim Kirim’s long poem The Weather Map consists of seven chapters: “The Morning of the World,” “Citizen’s Parade,” “The Time the Typhoon Gets Up,” “Vestiges,” “Sick Landscape,” “The Owl's Incantation,” and “The Song of the Wheel.” “The Morning of the World” begins with montages from around the world. The repeated term “five-colored” in the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth lines of the chapter stands for “the five continents” of Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania, and America—namely, the entire world. The poetic narrator describes peaceful scenes from around the world, but amidst this tranquility, a typhoon is set to begin its voyage from “east of Sumatra” near the equator:

East of Sumatra... 5 km/hr on the sea...
Not a single passenger with the flu coughs on the ship...
Near the equator...10 a.m., the 20th.15

Chapter 2, “Citizen’s Parade,” describes the fascist movements that began to

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emotionally and intellectually they [modernists] all remain frozen in their own immediacy” (36). However, such an expression paradoxically represents the characteristics of Yokomitsu’s “realism.”

emerge around the world during the interwar period. The reference to “Madame Soong May-ling” denotes the turmoil in 1930s’ Shanghai:

White cannibals in ties  
Prefer negro-meat even to turkey  
The power of the black meat that makes their skins whiter  
Is the prescription of Dr. Colbert  
Summer vacationers wearing helmets  
Are crazy about messy war games  
The whistle of the referee, a sad soloist  
Being over-excited,  
Fascists wear only underwear.  
But in Italy,  
Medicines for diarrhea are all forbidden  
Madame Soong May-ling is finally able to learn how to wear Western clothes.  
...^{16}

Chiang Kai-shek’s wife Soong May-ling (1897–2003) was the third of the Soong sisters of China. She went to the United States at age eleven, eventually graduating from Wellesley College in 1917. Chiang and Soong married in Shanghai on December 1, 1927, with Soong becoming Chiang’s lifelong political partner. Soong helped Chiang and his political party, the Kuomintang (KMT), a great deal through her ability to procure financial aid and political patronage from the United States when the KMT was fighting the Japanese army during the Shanghai Incident in 1932. However, the narrator of The Weather Map depicts her in a negative light, criticizing her for siding with Western culture and sarcastically noting that Soong is “finally able to learn how to wear Western clothes.”

Soong was born into one of the wealthiest families in Shanghai, and spent ten years of her youth in the United States. Based on her foreign experience, her familiarity with Western styles and fashions is natural. In this context, “finally able to learn” does not accurately reflect her situation. Nonetheless, the narrator uses the metaphor to criticize the KMT’s alliance with the Western bourgeois powers and suppression of proletarian movements in Shanghai and China. The KMT had established the Blue Shirt Society (Lanyishe) in 1932, modeled after an Italian fascist organization, the Blackshirts, possibly inducing the narrator to describe Soong (and the KMT) in a negative way. Brian Martin

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has noted the ideological congruencies between the KMT and Italian fascists; both attempted to unite a nation under ultra-nationalism by utilizing the logic of assimilation and exclusion:

It is not surprising, therefore, that state corporatism, a coercive ideology of state building with a strong anti-Communist flavor, proved attractive to Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek]. Its appeal was only enhanced, moreover, by the fact that corporatism was a major component of the ideology of the Italian Fascist State, which Jiang himself saw as providing a blueprint for the future society. Indeed many factions close to Jiang were influenced strongly by the example of fascism, and some, notably the “Blue Shirts” and the CC Clique, believed that fascist ideology should eventually replace the official Guomindang [Kuomintang] ideology...\(^{17}\)

At this time, in the early 1930s, Chiang’s KMT exercised legitimate authority over the area that included Shanghai and Nanjing, and was expanding its reunification project against the Chinese Communists. Chiang had been keeping a hostile eye on the Soviet-backed Chinese Communists, as had Chiang’s supporters, the foreign and Chinese bourgeoisie and businessmen, who were also concerned about the expansion of communism in China. Fascist ideology may have functioned as a useful weapon in challenging the Chinese Communists and reinforcing the KMT’s power on the continent. Italian fascists and the KMT both employed fascist ideology as an effective means of uniting their members and destroying their enemies. The narrator of The Weather Map keenly observes this rising exclusive nationalism in China and criticizes the KMT’s policy of suppressing the working class and proletarian movements.

Shanghai explores similar political and social turmoil in Shanghai and China but from a somewhat different perspective. Yokomitsu is more concerned with the political and social conflict between Japan and China. Yokomitsu believes that the East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere led by Japan will stabilize the Chinese continent. However, each pan-Asianist character in the novel displays different attitudes. A Japanese called Yamaguchi, a Chinese called Li Ying-pu, and an Indian called Amuli address distinctive geopolitical positions when they discuss how to overcome Western powers in Asia:

As Yamaguchi walked along the pavement by himself, he got worked up recalling a past gathering of Asianists. That day, Li Ying-pu of China took the “Twenty-One Demands” of the Japan-China Cooperation Treaty as the pretext to denounce

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what he called “this clear case of Japanese militarism.” Yamaguchi responded right away, arguing, “Once China and India accept Japanese militarism, then the union of Asia will be possible. What’s more, if you consider the extension of Japan’s leasehold on Manchuria for ninety-nine years unfair, then we have no choice but to kill off the concept of East Asia. We must all recognize that with Japan’s ninety-nine-year lease of Southern Manchuria now a reality, East Asia is guaranteed its existence for the next century.

To this, Amuli replied sarcastically, “Thanks to Japan’s ninety-nine-year lease of Southern Manchuria, we can at least be sure that, just as Messrs. Yamaguchi and Li are arguing in this way, Japan will be arguing with its East Asian comrades for the next century. However, no matter what disputes arise between China and Japan, India will be independent. And when that day of independence comes, India must strive to expel all foreign powers from China. For India’s sake. For the sake of peace in Asia.”

Amuli resists the expansion of Japanese power in China. The Sikh policemen hired by the British Empire guard the property of the International Settlement of Shanghai, and so they fire at Chinese rioters to protect the settlement’s property. Unlike these Sikh policemen, Amuli dreams of an independent India free from the rule of the British Empire. Amuli and Yamaguchi are both pan-Asianists and both resist British power, but their political stance differs. Yamaguchi hopes that India will achieve independence from the British Empire and that the British influence in China will weaken as well. The British and the Americans keep interrupting Japan’s plans to establish the Manchurian Empire in northeastern China, prelude to annexing all of China. The weaker Western power becomes, Yamaguchi reasons, the easier it will be for the Japanese to occupy China. However, Amuli opposes Yamaguchi. Amuli insists that Japan’s expansionist policy will weaken British power, but he also realizes that Japan can threaten India after occupying China and building up its political and economic power in South Asia. After Japan conquers China, it is highly possible that India would be the next target for Japan in its dream of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. At the same time, Yamaguchi worries that India’s independence from the British Empire might lead to a domino effect, impacting colonies of the Japanese Empire, such as Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria. The debate between Yamaguchi and Amuli gives the sense that the pan-Asianists’ struggle against British power is far from being a “purely” anti-imperial movement. Pan-Asianists are not reluctant to use the cause of

independence for their own individual profit.

In addition to exploring the conflicts between pan-Asianists, Yokomitsu also depicts the city of Shanghai as a turbulent cesspool. As Gregory Golley keenly observed, “The confluence depicted here of flesh and matter offers a grim parody of the sensory shock and material proliferation of modernity, unveiling the final ignominious phase of the chaotic process of production and consumption: the story of decay, of exhaustion, and finally, of disposal.”19 As this note indicates, Shanghai’s merit rests in its vividly graphic depiction of a hellish city. The English translator of Shanghai, Dennis Washburn, also points out that “one of the elements of Shanghai that has most often been praised by Japanese critics is Yokomitsu’s handling of the scenes of crowds and riots…”20 These scenes exemplify Yokomitsu’s stylistic experiment in using language as a new sensation. He describes the riot at a police station in Shanghai via different characters’ streams of consciousness. Sanki, the main protagonist, wanders around the city and observes the mass strike:

Sanki was forced back into the sunken entrance of a shop and could see only a pivoting transom opened horizontally above his head. The rioting crowd was reflected upside down in the transom glass. It was like being on the floor of an ocean that had lost its watery sky. Countless heads beneath shoulders, shoulders beneath feet. They described a weird, suspended canopy on the verge of falling, swaying like seaweed that drifted out, then drew back and drifted out again. As the riot continued swirling about, Sanki searched for the face of Fang Qiu-lan in the crowd suspended over him.21

The technique the writer uses to describe the riot resists the conventional language of representation in realism. His use of a mirror image reflected on the “transom glass” is worth reviewing in terms of reification and self-reflexivity of Yokomitsu’s writing style. He describes turmoil in a vivacious and dynamic manner using overlapped and inverted images. Furthermore, the metaphor of human heads swaying like “seaweed” appeals to both visual and textual sensations, making the scene more vivid and surrealistic. Such a writing style is shared by Kim Kirim, who employs a similar technique to describe the riot during the Shanghai Incident of 1932 in The Weather Map:

21. Yokomitsu, Shanghai, 149.
... Automobiles kick rocks and fall over
Trams fall down in a stream
The forest of buildings
The sewers of black heads gathered at the crossroads of intersections
Thin arms floundering like seaweed
Endeavor to catch the air instead of salvation
The waves of shaking shoulders

The Chinese riots paralyzed the city and automobiles and trams were destroyed. Much as Yokomitsu did, Kim uses the metaphors of “seaweed” and “sewer” to make his description of the movement of the Chinese crowd seem more dynamic and tumultuous. Nonetheless, when a typhoon leaves Shanghai and heads north, the sun emerges. The last chapter, “The Song of the Wheel,” describes the hopeful future of Shanghai under the sun:

The Song of the Wheel

Though
At last,
The young sun rises
Flapping like a chick
On the broken metropolis trod by typhoon
It upholds its dewy wings to the sky,
Shaking off innumerable scares and terrors
That passed over the one-night dream

Dear friends!
Let’s be furious like the sun,
Let’s cover the shade in its own rays like the sun,
Let’s swallow sadness like the sun,
Let’s burn up darkness like the sun.

The next day,
The white flag flies like a cloud wisp
On the mast of the weather observatory

The rising young sun’s reflection on the white flag can be recognized as standing

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for the “Rising Sun Flag,” the Kyokujitsu-ki, symbol of Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This symbolizes Japan’s victory in the Shanghai Incident of 1932. The war between Japan and China was about to expand from the city to the wider Asian continent.24

Just like at the end of The Weather Map, Chinese rioters in Shanghai encounter a Japanese military brigade, marching on under the “Rising Sun Flag.” Yokomitsu does not go directly into the outcome of the May Thirtieth Incident, but alludes to it in a conversation between Sanki and his Japanese prostitute lover, Osugi:

However, if tomorrow the military brigade landed and restored order to the city, wouldn’t she once again have to continue on blankly, just as in those days? Then once more the men—their coarse, shark-like skin, their mouths reeking of garlic, the sticky oil plastered to their hair, the long fingernails, the sharp irregular teeth. Reflecting on these things, she stretched out like a patient who has given up and stared into the darkness spread across the ceiling. [The end]25

Osugi, who once worked at a Chinese-style “Turkish bath,” was fired by the Japanese madame, Oryū. Oryū fired Osugi when Sanki felt compassion for Osugi rather than herself. In addition, Oryū annulled Osugi’s legitimate right to work for her as a Japanese citizen residing in Shanghai, compelling Osugi to take up prostitution, like the Russian émigré women expelled from their homeland as a result of the Russian Revolution in 1917. This reflects the emphasis placed in Shanghai on human corruption under capitalism rather than on collective value based on national identity. Japanese expatriates struggle against and compete with one another in a capitalistic society.

Japanese expatriates in Shanghai cannot help but be made conscious of their national identity as Japanese and run for their lives in the face of an angry Chinese mob. Nevertheless, in Shanghai, the individual’s national identity is not as pronounced as in The Weather Map, and Sanki possesses no strong sense of his own identity as Japanese. Having been away from Japan for years, he often feels as though his life is a series of jumbled episodes without real purpose. He declares, “I haven’t got a country, let alone money,” and like many Japanese expatriate characters, he never really feels as though he belongs. The many lives Yokomitsu paints, caught up in turmoil, are brimming with unanswered but

25. Yokomitsu Riichi, Shanghai, translated by Dennis Washburn, 217.
inescapable questions. Yokomitsu’s transnational and interracial position is very different from the personality of the narrator of *The Weather Map*, who keeps a relatively firm identity as a colonial Korean:

(The Bulletin Board of Pu)

Citizens
May take off their worn-out raincoats
That grow moldy with
Depression, jealousy, anger,
Endless lamentation,
And all the rain of resentment.
Then, change into the sun’s clothes
As light as wings.26

In the final chapter of *The Weather Map*, the narrator cries out to the people of Seoul. The Chinese character *fu* 府 (K. *pu*; prefecture), from Kyōngsŏng-*bu* 京城府, Seoul’s official name under Japanese colonization, does not carry the same meaning as *shi* 市 (K. *si*; city), as in Shanghai-*shi* 上海市: it makes clear that there is a higher metropolis, Tokyo, that ranks above it. The narrator proposes that the citizens of Seoul “change into the sun’s clothes” to catch up with modern civilization. The sun here functions as a metaphor for rising Japanese power in China, as previously mentioned. The narrator draws attention to the hegemonic struggle between Japan and China over Shanghai and suggests that Korean citizens should learn intellectual reasoning and attitudes, just as the Japanese have been learning from Western civilization and science since the Meiji Restoration. The narrator of the poem suggests that Korea should reconfigure its relationship with China.

In this transitional period between heavy Chinese influence and Japanese colonization, colonial Korean intellectuals reevaluated their use of vernacular language, Han’gŭl, and their own national and cultural identity. In this process, Kim proposed that Koreans should refer to Japan’s modernizing process and how the Japanese of the Meiji period liberated themselves from Chinese Confucian civilization and established their own identity in the face of Western civilization and the capitalist system. Yokomitsu’s text may have guided Kim’s understanding of how Japanese expatriates living in Shanghai, a part of China, confronted or coexisted with the China of the day. One great example of this is the romantic relationship between the unemployed Japanese banker, Sanki, and

a beautiful Chinese dancer and proletarian cell member, Qiu-lan. The author alludes to the tragic relationship between the two countries when Qiu-lan’s proletarian Chinese compatriots execute her for secretly communicating with Sanki.

Both Yokomitsu and Kim describe Shanghai as a modern hell, the most capitalistic but corrupt metropolis in East Asia. However, the major difference between the two is uncovered in the final parts of their respective works. In Shanghai, Sanki rejoins Osugi upon learning of Qiu-lan’s death, but maintains hopes of seeing Qiu-lan in his dreams. Like Sanki, most characters in Shanghai are stuck with their diverse desires and impulses in a complex way, and so the text seems to resist collective value orientation to some degree; however, even Sanki admits the legitimacy of the slogan, “Japan’s Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere.” He shows an ambivalent attitude towards the geopolitical relationship between China and Japan.

Compared to Shanghai, The Weather Map promotes collective value quite straightforwardly. Diverse montage constructions are combined in the last chapter, “The Song of the Wheel.” A modern hell has been purified by the typhoon, and a new sun rises to conclude the turmoil. Several critics have disapproved of the poem’s abrupt ending, criticizing the fact that Kim follows an old-fashioned romanticism to some degree even in his modernistic poem due to his use of images of a bright future and dreams of utopia. Utopia, an ideal community of all people regardless of race, nation, and class, cannot be realized in a modern society, and a modernist like Yokomitsu depicts the reality of urban life in Shanghai pessimistically. Kim’s writing style, pursuing new sensations to depict the modern city, generally follows Yokomitsu’s writing style; however, Kim’s utopian finale distinguishes The Weather Map from Shanghai.

The characters of Shanghai face unanswered and unresolved questions like, “Where is home?” and continue to demonstrate their ambivalent existence throughout the text. Sanki cannot decide who his true love is, and Osugi, despite being a prostitute, still pursues Sanki’s love. Pan-Asianists such as Yamaguchi, Amuli, and Li Ying-pu have different opinions as to how to formulate and develop Asia, as shown in their debates. Unlike Shanghai, the diverse voices heard in the early chapters of The Weather Map are united as a single voice in its final chapter. Kim’s obsession with enlightenment and civilization is revealed in the end.

When the two texts are compared, both should be considered with the notion of “incommensurability.” The turmoil in Shanghai is similarly
described in both; however, the imperialist and colonial standpoints, adopted by Yokomitsu and Kim respectively, cause these two writers to reach different conclusions. Yokomitsu, writing from the empire builder’s perspective, is able to stand outside of national identities (while still showing an obsession with racial hierarchy between whites and Asians, mainly the Japanese) and depict individuals as independent characters in the text, and then finish the novel in the modernist style—that is, in an unanswered and disorderly fashion. However, Kim reveals his obsession with the collective Korean identity and the need to overcome modernity as led by the Western powers and capitalism.

The sun of *The Weather Map* symbolizes the rising power of Japan; however, the symbol is not necessarily confined to rising Japanese power in Shanghai, or China more broadly. The symbol of the sun carries a double connotation; the narrator of the poem stresses that this is the time to wear the sun’s clothes, but his metaphor comparing worldly geo-politics to the changing weather addresses the subject of the rise and fall of civilizations throughout history. The change in weather from a ravaging typhoon to sunny days implies that the current hardships symbolized by the typhoon will be replaced by a sunshine-filled future. At this time, colonial Korean citizens were busy catching up with Western civilization and technology, but the narrator of *The Weather Map* dreams that Korean civilization will ascend to the peak of the ever-changing topography of world history.

**Japan and Korea In-between-ness**

Yokomitsu’s *Shanghai* to some degree reveals a Japanese national identity, although Japanese expatriates in the novel are depicted as “seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic.” The ambiguous description of individual characters’ own psyches and their collective value reflects Japan’s ambiguous position in world politics during the 1930s. Japanese expatriates in *Shanghai* may locate themselves in the First World relative to semi-colonized China and colonized India, but they still criticize white people for their inferior minds. Koya, who wants to marry the Japanese dancer Miyako, is rejected because of his Japanese nationality. Instead, Miyako chooses western businessmen as dancing and dating partners to become the most desirable

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dancer (the “number one” dancer) at the dance hall.

*Shanghai* portrays Japan’s ambiguous position between Western imperialism, especially British economic power in Shanghai, and semi-colonized China. Sanki’s agonizing behavior is understandable considering his lingering obsession with his motherland. When he meets Russian émigré prostitutes, he brings up the issue of money. The author highlights the dark side of capitalism through Sanki’s conversation with a Russian prostitute:

Sanki sat down, settling himself next to the woman without saying a word.
“Got a smoke?”
Sanki took out his cigarettes and asked, “Do you come here every night?”
“Yeah.”
“You look like you’re broke.”
“Broke?”
“Oh-huh.”
“I haven’t got a country, let alone money.”
“That’s rough.”
“You bet it is.”

In this scene, the first question Sanki raises concerns money. The prostitute answers that she has no money, let alone a “country.” She remarks on the status of her homeland and points out the dark side of the capitalist system. Japanese and Russian expatriates living in Shanghai left home for Shanghai to make more money and to flee revolution, respectively. Even though it seems that both have almost forgotten about their homelands, they still dream of returning there someday.

Sanki awakens to his national identity when he faces death in the final scene. He is thrown into the sea by a group of Chinese strikers but fortunately lands in the excrement of a ship at anchor. He smells in that puddle of excrement and waste a Japanese village:

That fertilizer smell of the sewage filling the spaces between the boats! It was the smell of a Japanese village. Right about now mother, wearing those glasses with their patina of age, is probably winding thread and darning the soles of socks. She has no idea that I’ve fallen in among these boats here and now.

“That fertilizer smell of the sewage” may not smell so sweet in reality, but it evokes in Sanki a sense of nostalgia in a different way. Being thrown into the

30. Ibid., 207.
excrement and waste, Sanki smells his hometown air and is reminded of his elderly mother working in the village. The imagined mother who is “winding thread and darning the soles of socks” symbolizes the intimate Japanese tradition. When he faces his death at the hands of Chinese rioters, he awakens to realize a longing for his home, which he remembers as being poor, worn out, and old. Modern technology and the dazzling neon signs in Shanghai have alienated Sanki from the old customs and traditions of his home village.

Yokomitsu keenly portrays the loneliness and alienation of Japanese expatriates who attempt to survive in Shanghai. Their feelings of alienation derive from Japan’s ambiguous position between the British colonizers and semi-colonized China. The narrator in Shanghai is stuck between the threatening power of the West and the Chinese proletarians seeking respite from Japanese capitalism.

Unlike Japanese expatriates in Shanghai, Korean residents in Seoul do not wish to be stuck between colonizers and colonized, because they are themselves subalterns, doubly colonized by the legacy of premodern China and emerging Japan. Kim Kirim attempts to overcome the legacy of premodern and Confucian China through the modernization project led by Japan when he depicts the back alleys of Shanghai in the “Vestiges” chapter: “The ousted Confucius stands whimpering/On the alley where all house-roofs are blown away.”31 “Ousted” and “roofs blown away” both connote the legacy of Confucianism, which have no value to contemporary Korea.

Kim describes the demonic capital of Shanghai as a corrupt city to be purified by modern civilization. His position on enlightenment coincides with that of the Japanese empire, as shown in Kim’s admiration of the Korean reformist Kim Okkyun during the Kapsin Coup of 1884.32 It would be a stretch to say Kim Kirim supported Japanese militarism and expansion; however, the poet at least supports the Japanese modernization project to eradicate the legacy of Chinese premodern civilization that lingered in colonial Korea.

Conclusion

Yokomitsu and Kim react with modernistic sensitivity to the international politics surrounding Shanghai from the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925 to the Shanghai Incident of 1932. Semi-colonized Chinese commoners began to

realize their national identity in face of the threat from Western powers and Japanese expansion in Manchuria, while the Japanese Kwantung Army attacked both the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in order to confront Western imperialist capitalism. The Sino-Japanese conflict had begun to affect Shanghai from the late 1920s. Other hegemonic struggles surrounding Shanghai are portrayed by these two writers as well: the conflict between fascist movements in Italy and Germany on the one hand and British and French capitalism on the other, the ideological conflict between American and British liberalism and the socialism of the Soviet Union, and the possibility of civil war between the KMT and the CCP.

The narrators of Shanghai and The Weather Map seek to portray the situation in the international city of Shanghai to establish new international relations with China and Chinese civilization. Yokomitsu believes that the Japanese need to understand the reality of Shanghai through the lenses of Japanese expatriates who make money by exploiting cheap Chinese labor and resources. Yokomitsu reminds us of the political position of Japan, which is stuck between the Western powers and a popular uprising in semi-colonial China, exemplified by the May Thirtieth Movement. Like Yokomitsu, Kim believes that the Koreans need to eradicate the Confucian legacy passed down from premodern China and to establish new relations with semi-colonized China. In the final chapter of The Weather Map, Kim sees the “wheel of fortune” when he carefully examines the political atmosphere of Shanghai and applies these circulating power dynamics.33 In the situation in Shanghai, Kim precisely captures the fall of Chinese civilization and the rise of modern Japan. The hardships Shanghai faced in this transitional process of East Asian power dynamics was witnessed through these modernist writers’ keen sense of history.

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33. The motif of the “wheel of fortune” is discussed in another article by the author, which compares Kim Kirim’s The Weather Map (1936) with T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land (1922): Kim Hansŏng, “Kisangdo wa Hwangmuji pigyo,” 154. Based on further research, this paper changed the target for comparison to works by the Japanese modernist Yokomitsu Riichi to explain the shared nature of Yokomitsu and Kim’s will of hegemony surrounding East Asia in the early twentieth century.