Korean peasant literature during the Japanese colonial occupation: the novel Kohyang [Hometown] by Yi Ki-yŏng

Ann Sung-hi Lee*

Korean writers define “peasant literature” (nongmin munhak) as that which does not romanticize the peasantry, create false oppositions between rural and urban, or isolate peasants from a historical context.¹ Peasant literature does not set the peasant apart from the rest of society.

Members of the Korean Artists Proletariat Federation in the 1920s believed that agrarian literature should be based on indigent, landless peasants in particular.² This was in contrast to the Comintern’s December Thesis of December 7, 1928, which argued that the revolution in Korea be a revolution in landholding practices, and that this be carried out by peasants under the guidance of the proletariat; “peasants” included farmers with varying amounts of land and wealth.³ The peasantry became a field of political contention. Socialists and cultural nationalists, moreover,

*Professor of Korean Literature, University of Washington
1 Yu Yang-sŏn, Han’guk nongmin munhak yŏn’gu songmung suidae [Korean agrarian literature during the Japanese colonial period] (Seoul: Sŏgwang haksul charyosa), p 10
2 “Indigent farmers” (pumnong) were those who have no land, a small amount of land, and possess incomplete tools for production; they usually lease others’ land for farming, and are exploited through lease fees, interest, and as hired labor (koyong nodong). Kang T’aehun, “Ijhe-ha Chosŏn-ui nongminch’ŭng punhæ-e kwahang yŏn’gu [Analysis of the Korean farming class under the Japanese colonial occupation].” Chang Suwon et al., Han’guk kiindae nongch’on sahoe-wa nongmin undong [Early modern Korean agrarian society and peasant movements] (Yŏrumsa, 1988) p 60. Cited in Yu Yang-sŏn, p 51
3 Yu Yang-sŏn, p.22
competed intensely in the 1920s and ‘30’s for the loyalties of peasants, who constituted the majority of the population.  

In this article I will discuss aspects of class, nation and gender in the depiction of Korean peasants and workers during the Japanese colonial period in the novel Kohyang [Hometown](1932-33) by Yi Ki-yŏng. Kohyang depicted workers and peasantry in close alliance, with workers as the sons and daughters of the peasantry. Workers and peasants share the common experiences of ‘labor and hunger.’ Continuous impoverization of farmers drives many peasants into the ranks of tenant farmers and farm workers. Peasant women go to work in the local silk mill. Some peasants emigrated to Manchuria, or seek work in factories in Osaka. The use of Japanese language in the text, moreover, localizes this work of peasant literature in a specific historical setting: the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea.

The novel Kohyang portrays landlords and industrialization as closely associated with Japanese colonialism. In a process of colonial subject formation, Korean farmers participate in building the infrastructure that will be used by Japanese imperialism to colonize Korea. Farmers supplement their income by selling their labor for local construction projects sponsored by Japanese capital. The colonial nature of the projects is suggested by the fact that the workers are paid on kango day; kango is the Japanese word for “payment, settlement of an account.” The construction projects include a railroad and a silk mill. Japanese colonial presence is evident also in the close relationship between An Sŭng-hak, a tenant farm supervisor, and the Japanese colonial police. The novel begins with a visit by a Japanese police officer to An Sŭng-hak’s home. The police officer walks into the village with his sword clicking against the backs of his shoes. He asks An for information about Kim Hŭi-jun, a Korean student who has just returned from Tokyo. An Sŭng-hak is thus as apchabi or “front man” / “confidence man” for a landlord and for Japanese colonialism. An speaks Japanese, and wears geta, Japanese sandals.

It is implied that Japanese management also runs the local thread factory Kyŏng-ho, a Korean office worker at the factory, speaks Japanese and lives in factory

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4 Yu Yang-sŏn, p 18
5 Yi Ki-yŏng, Khyang [Hometown] (Seoul Munhak-sasangsa, 1995), p 102
7 Kohyang, p 214
housing that is furnished in Japanese style. His lives in a tatami room with an oshiiire, a cabinet for quilts and bedding. He and Ok-hui, a Korean worker at the same factory, use Japanese language in private conversation with each other. Even Hui-jun, who organizes the local peasants to collective action against the tenant supervisor, speaks Japanese; when he invites Kyong-ho into his home, he says, "Ohairi nasai." The use of Japanese language indicates colonial subject formation, youths such as Kyong-ho, Ok-hui and Hui-jun, who are in their teens, speak fluent Japanese Hui-jun studied in Tokyo. The others are products of the colonial education system. The text portrays the reality of colonial culture under the Japanese occupation. More overt, politicized portrayal of Japanese colonialism, moreover, might have been difficult due to Japanese censorship of the press.

The impoverishment of farmers results also in diasporic movement to China and Japan. Won-ch'il's son In-dong wants to go to work in a factory in Osaka. Many villagers leave to farm in Jian-dao.

The continuous impoverishment of the peasantry constitutes a central theme of the novel. When In-sun, a farmer's daughter who has become a factory worker, visits home on leave, she notices that all the farmers seem to have grown poorer than they were a year ago. She notices the difference because she has been away from home for awhile; but this deterioration has actually been taking place for many years. In-sun's brother quit elementary school in his second year in order to help his father, Won-ch'il, farm, but they keep getting poorer. Won-ch'il is a tenant farmer who leases a piece of land on the side of a mountain; the land has no access to irrigation, and is dependent on rainfall. Because the field typically has a low yield, Won-ch'il pays a fixed fee to lease the land, rather than a percentage of the crop.

"Landlords had fields and paddies which were let for two kinds of tenant fees: tojo and t'ajak. Min P'an-sö's irrigated fields were let for t'ajak fees, the fields that had no access to irrigation and relied on rainfall for water were let for tojo fees. This arrangement was based on profit calculations.

The t'ajak system was profitable with irrigated fields because harvest yields were high Tojo was collected from non-irrigated fields because such fields often had bad harvests. Yields had been high recently because fields were well fertilized. Tenant farmers who didn't fertilize their fields risked being evicted."

8 Kohyang, p 518

9 Kohyang, p 91

10 Tojo (cf toj) was rice paid each year as a fee for renting fields and paddies, t'ajak was a type of tenant farming in which tenant farmer and landlord divided the harvest according to a certain ratio, in units of tan or som
That was because it was unprofitable to the landlord if the tenant farmer didn’t use fertilizer. These days tenant farmers could be labeled as lazy and evicted for only weeding their fields twice when others had weeded their fields four times. So what tenant farmer would dare skimp on fertilizer? Indeed, it seemed as though it would be profitable for both landlord and tenant farmer if the tenant farmer used fertilizer and increased yields. Yet such was not actually the case.

Some generous landlords reimbursed the tenant farmer for half the costs of buying fertilizer. It would be unfair to make the tenant farmer bear the entire cost of fertilizer, just as it would be unfair to make the tenant farmer responsible for paying taxes on the land.

There were landlords, however, who wouldn’t even reimburse the tenant farmer so much as half the costs of fertilizer. Landlord Min was one such landlord. Debts incurred because of fertilizer thus became an additional burden for tenant farmers.

Supposing a tenant farmer spread a half of a sack of fertilizer on a rice field that usually yielded one sack of rice, and increased the yield thirty percent. If the farmer did this to ten fields, the farmer would have to use five sacks of fertilizer, and would increase the total yield of the fields by three sacks. After splitting the three sacks in half with the landlord, the farmer would have one and a half sacks of rice. Fertilizer costs one won and fifty chön per sack; five sacks of fertilizer would cost twelve won and fifty chön. After subtracting twelve won and fifty chön for fertilizer from the one and a half sacks of rice, not much would be left.

There was also almost a half year’s interest to pay on the money owed for fertilizer. If one sack of rice was ten won, then there wouldn’t even be enough to pay for fertilizer. Grain prices kept dropping, though, and the cost of fertilizer kept increasing. One could see why farming villages were growing weaker and weaker.

Won-ch’il works hard to fertilize his field in order to increase its yield, but is devastated by falling grain prices. The price of rice has fallen over 200% in the past year. “I have been farming in vain,” he says. Wealthy landowners can afford to wait for prices to rise before they sell, but middle class farmers (chungnong) and indigent farmers (pinnong) must sell immediately to pay their debts, community

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11 “pan tchak” A tchak is a full load placed on a horse or ox’s back. Is usually equivalent to a kuman, or a straw sack.

12 “Non han majgi” (p 392), or “one majgi of rice paddy land.” A majgi is a unit of measure referring to the width of a field wide enough to sow one mal (or approximately 18 liters) of seeds. Equals approximately 150-300 p’yông for a rice paddy (or 593-1,186 square yards) and 100 p’yông for a dry field (or approximately 395 square yards).

13 sôn A sôn is a straw sack used to contain rice. It is also a unit of measure, equal to 10 mal, or approximately 180 liters.

14 Kohyang, pp 392-3
fees and to purchase daily necessities. Won-ch’ill has very little left over after paying his lease, debts and various expenses.

A farmer named Ch’oe Myŏng-bo is a tenant farmer who is on the verge of not even being able to afford tenant farming, because of debts incurred for ritual. He went into debt marrying off his daughters, and into further debt relocating his parents’ graves upon the advice of a geomancer. His son-in-laws, moreover, experience the fall from middle class status to poverty. His son-in-law Soe-tuk’s family once had land of their own, but acquired heavy debt because of funerals for Soe-tuk’s father and grandmother, who died in an epidemic. Soe-tuk eventually sells the land and becomes a tenant farmer. He is allowed to lease land only after his wife Kuk-sil begins sleeping with the superintendent who supervises the lands for the landlord.

The peasants view the introduction of modern technology to farming as only a means of increasing landowners’ profits. With machines to sort and measure the rice, landlords increase the efficiency of grain collection.

“Just wait and see. Everyone will use threshing machines. And they’ll plant rice seedlings in straight even rows, then winnow the rice thresh the grain again to remove stones, and weigh the rice on a platform scale—two hundred honest kŏn per sack. They’re already doing this in the big fields.”

“Now that you mention it, I saw a field last year where the landlord was worried about being cheated in grain collections. In order to prevent cheating, the rice was measured out using a trough suspended in the air, and poured into an empty measure, then pounded again. Afterwards, the rice was bagged by machine. Once it passed inspection, the rice was ready to be sent to the train station and delivered to Inch’on or Kunsan. There was nothing like that several years ago.”

“Sounds fair to me. Remember how a rich man named Kim in X village cheated for years by putting solder on his scales? He was siphoning off grain and keeping it for himself. It’s the rich people you have to watch out for.”

“Yes, the newspaper made a big deal about it,” Kim Sŏn-dal replied in agreement. Landlords were only trying to make grain collection more fair and accurate so that they could take more grain for themselves.

Kim laughed bitterly.

“A sack of rice these days is very different from a sack of rice in the olden days. Back then, the sacks were made thick, and you would fill a sack with twenty scoops of rice that was still mixed with a lot of chaff and sand and dirt, then add straw and tie it up.”

“A sack of rice then would not be equivalent to even half a sack nowadays.”

Thus, although a plot of land was still the same plot of land, the actual lease fee had
doubled. This was the tenant farmer’s loss.\textsuperscript{15}

Factory workers and farmers become allies in anti-colonial struggle in \textit{Kohyang}. Factory workers are the sons and daughters of the farmer. In-sun, the daughter of tenant farmer Won-ch’i, works in the local silk mill. After working in the factory, she begins to see similarities between her and her parents’ lives.

"Why were her parents living on wine dregs? They were rice farmers. Why weren’t they eating rice? It is the same as In-sun being unable to wear the silk she herself had produced, while people like Kap-sun could"

"Then weren’t she and her parents in the same situation? Just now she had spoken as though life at the factory was more comfortable than life in a farming village, just because living quarters were in a clean, tiled roof house and she did not have to eat wine dregs. But at the factory she had to work for over ten hours a day. She could endure the work now because she was used to it, but it was unbearable at first, sitting in a bent over position and pulling silkworm threads from morning to night. The electric spools were quick as lightning, and it was very difficult to grope for the silkworm cocoons in the boiling water and find the ends of silk threads in the cocoons, to wind onto the spools. The threads broke easily, and trying to re-thread a cocoon thread onto a spool with her untrained hands made her swear profusely. Still, she worried about falling behind the others in work. One was paid less if one’s evaluation were worse than the others.

"After a day of such work, her hands would become red as radishes, her eyes would become blurred, her ears would ring with a sound like telegraph wires humming, her throat would be dry, and her back would ache as though it were breaking. Her arms and legs would be so stiff she couldn’t move them. The skin on the backs of her hands would crack like dry rice paddies"

"... There was no such labor in the farming villages, but the hunger was just as bad. Labor and hunger! Who could say which was better? Actually, laborers suffered from hunger just as much as farmers, and farmers had to labor just as much as factory workers. Weren’t these two things-labor and hunger—a fate that laborers and farmers shared in common?\textsuperscript{16}

When the factory workers eventually stage a strike towards the end of the novel, it coincides with collective action by local tenant farmers in a dispute with a landlord.

An actual farmer-worker alliance, however, takes place under the leadership of an intellectual, and a woman of bourgeois origins. Hūi-jun, a Tokyo-educated student, organizes a \textit{ture}, or farmers’ collectivity that has various community functions.

\textsuperscript{15} Yi Ki-yŏng, \textit{Kohyang} [Hometown], (Seoul Munhak-sasangsa, 1994), pp 399-400

\textsuperscript{16} Kohyang, p 102
Members of the *ture* perform farmers’ dance and music, and help one another with farmwork. Members chip in money to buy musical instruments for the *ture*, and to provide community resources that can be tapped into in times of need. When the *ture* sings and dances, it brings the villages together and creates a sense of community. Hŭi-jun also teaches evening school for the men and women and children of the farming village. When flooding devastates the village one year, Hŭi-jun and a woman named Ok-hŭi make it possible for the farmers to join together to demand that An Sŏng-hak waive lease fees for that year. Ok-hŭi is the daughter of none other than An Sŏng-hak, the tenant farmer supervisor. She has, however, run away from home and gone to live and work in the thread factory. She gives Hŭi-jun money that she and other workers have saves, so that Hŭi-jun can distribute the money among the straving farmers and enable them to hold out a little longer against An Sŏng-hak’s demands. She also gives Hŭi-jun information that enables him to blackmail her father into negotiating with the tenant farmers. Thus, a former member of the bourgeoisie participates in anti-colonial struggle, but only by joining the worker class. Hŭi-jun, the intellectual, is of landless peasant background.

Ok-hŭi develops a sense of social agency by learning from other women factory workers 17

At first they would not include her in their group because they thought she was an intellectual, but Ok-hŭi made an effort to befriend them nonetheless. After living with them, moreover, she realized that she could adapt to the way workers think and feel by interacting with them.

At times she glimpsed even in the midst of their idle talk and sighs of despair a fierce, burning passion and love for their friends, and a sense of justics.

They also seemed to believe in their own strength, possessing a spirit of independence and autonomy.

Indeed, whom else could they believe in but themselves? 18

The text describes, moreover, the effects of factory work on women workers’ bodies.

Some of her friends worked overtime at night in order to make more money. Night

17 You-me Park discusses the portrayal of women’s *subjectivity* in modern Korean literature, and asks “where do we locate the sites of struggle against patriarchy and neocolonialism where women negotiate their destiny and make history, individually AND collectively?” in “Representing Female Subjectivities in Korean Nationalist Literature,” Paper presented at the Gender and Korean Culture Conference, University of Southern California, October 18-20, 1996

18 Kohyang, p.410.
work was temporary, and workers were encouraged to compete with one another in order to increase productivity.

For Ok-hui, however, trying to keep a few more ounces of flesh on her body was more important than trying to earn a few more cents. It would be difficult for anyone with a weak physical constitution to sustain an excessively heavy work load all of a sudden, but this was particularly so for Ok-hui since she was experienced in physical labor. With the added pressure of having to compete to increase productivity, there was a danger that she might ruin her body within a few days.

Soem girls nevertheless worked excessively to be more productive than others, just as the supervisor encouraged them to do, without taking care of their deteriorating health.

The company may have preferred this, but women's bodies were broken like overworked machines, all for the sake of a few pennies. Within a few days, these women would start having nose bleeds, their faces would look sickly, and their bodies would become emaciated. 19

Skin splits from immersion in the hot water where the cocoons are kept, and women injure their health trying to make more money. The women's bodies are like machines, their hands living extensions of the automated thread spooling devices. 20

The narrative acknowledges, moreover, the significance of housework, and reveals the gender bias in Hui-jun's ways of thinking. Hui-jun beats his wife and hates her because she reminds him of the maternality of his own existence, the struggle for life that not even he is above. Though his wife's housework enables him to do his activist work outside the home, he refuses to acknowledge her contribution or answer her demands for food, clothing and shelter. Instead, he wishes he could kill her. He resents her for not understanding his ideas about public service. They seem too preoccupied with family and bodily, selfish needs. He desires only the self she sees reflected in the villagers' eyes when they look at him: the selfless teacher and leader.

"You are home late."
"Why aren't you asleep?"
"I couldn't sleep because of the bedbugs. There are so many bedbugs it looks like maybe the weather will be bad again."

Hui-jun's wife scratched at her rib cage, and looked at her husband, trying to read his

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19 Kohyang, p 413
She laughed girlishly  
"What about dinner?" she asked  
"I've already eaten"

Hŭi-jun took off his hat and jacket and threw them aside. He sat on the veranda and put a cigarette in his mouth. His wife folded his jacket and put it away. Then she crouched and sat at the doorway to the room next to the kitchen.  
"Why don't you go to sleep," Hŭi-jun said  
"Well you sound glad to see me!" his wife said jokingly. But Hŭi-jun did not want to see his wife smile. He wanted to trample on her mouth.

"Is this stupid woman trying to flirt with me?" he thought

"What did you do with the money you borrowed from the superintendent?" his wife asked. She had hesitated awhile before finding the courage to speak. Her heart pounded with the fear that her husband would take offense.

"Why do yo ask?"

Hŭi-jun gave his wife a hostile look  
"I've been hearing strange rumors"

"What kind of rumors?"

His wife hesitated  
"Ŏp-tong's mother said that she heard it from Hak-sam's mother. That you got a short term loan of two hundred nyang from the supervisor, for the youth center or the night school"

"The old woman heard right. But what business is it of yours?"

"I just wanted to know if the rumor was true or not."

"What if it is? What are you going to do about it?"

"Who said I was going to do anything about it? I was just asking because I heard a rumor. Our clothes are all in tatters, but we haven't made any summer clothes. It will soon be the monsoon season but we haven't bought any firewood. All we have are a few measures of grain and what you got paid for farmwork. Your mother was very upset when she heard the rumor."

His wife vented her frustrations in a trembling voice, as though upset  
"What are you complaining about? Are you worried I will starve you to death?"

"I never said anything like that. It's just that other people talk badly about us because we don't live well."

His wife wiped her tears away with the hem of her skirt and swallowed her sobs  
"It's none of your business. Don't worry, I won't tell you to go out and make a living."

"What gives you the right to talk like that?"

"What do you mean?"

"Have you given me enough to eat or wear? Have you made a comfortable life for your wife and children?"

His wife bit her lip. She was so furious that her breathing became labored.
“Idiot! Who asked you to live here? You should have married a rich man in the first place.”

“You’re always telling me to leave. Do you think I’ve lived well since I married into this family?” She sobbed. “I have done my share of work. I’m not asking for a free meal.”

Hūi-jun was so furious he wanted to beat his wife. She was never a cheerful sight to behold, whether he saw her when he came home or when he was leaving to go out. Wherever he went he saw only ignorance and reactionary behavior jumping out at him.

“Filthy human beings! Filthy greed!”

He had only asked for seven or eight won to pay for some supplies he had bought on credit for the evening school. Did she expect him to be a paragon of virtue, a Buddha made of stone?

“How can an ignorant and petty creature like you be human?” he asked.

Unable to control his rage, Hūi-jun punched his wife in the jaw. He saw his own self-hatred, however, reflected in his conscience.

“What a gentleman!” his wife cried. “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Why did you hit me?”

“A creature like you deserves to be killed!”

Hūi-jun seemed to be talking about himself as well, though, was his wife the only one with a desire for possessions?21

Hūi-jun privileges only certain kinds of experiences as the basis of reason and social significance. He tries to violently eliminate his wife’s presence because she reminds him of bodily aspects of existence in his own life. Yi Ki-yŏng’s critique of Hūi-jun resembles that set forth by feminist standpoint theory:

“Women have been assigned the kinds of work that men do not want to do. ‘Women’s work’ relieves men of the need to take care of their bodies or of the local places where they exist, freeing men to immerse themselves in the world of abstract concepts. The labor of women thereby articulates and shapes men’s concepts of the world into those appropriate for administrative work. Moreover, the more successfully women perform their work, the more invisible does it become to men. Men who are relieved of the need to maintain their own bodies and the local places where these bodies exist can now see as real only what corresponds to their abstracted mental world.”22

Hūi-jun eventually recognizes, however, that “life was struggle (ssaum). He knew that he must not forget that. He realized that struggle lay within himself, and in his

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21 Kohyang, p 167
family, and everywhere else."

In the end, the main characters seek a love that is socially based, rather than removed from social reality and exigencies. They seek "love between comrades" (tongjae). When Hŭi-jun tells Ok-hŭi that he loves her, he calls her "comrade" (tongmu). He does not want to leave his wife, however, he believes that love must be based on the intricate network of relations that form their society:

"I have realized that love seems to be extremely personal, and yet it is actually social in nature; love seems to be extremely emotional, yet in fact it is very much a matter of reason and intellect. I have come to believe that the love between lovers, siblings, and parents and their children cannot exist apart from the society in which we live. Our love must therefore be rooted in and evaluated against this social grounding. There is nothing unnatural about my having loved you, or my loving you in the future. There are no impure motive among comrades who join hands and go forth to do the same work. Romantic love, however, is not just the joining of two individuals. A love between comrades, a love that transcends physical union—such a love is greater and stronger and more lasting than physical love."

Ok-hŭi decides to marry Kyŏng-ho instead, and devote herself to serving farmers and workers.

Kyŏng-ho undergoes a transformation of class identity similar to that of Ok-hŭi. He learns that he was secretly adopted by his ruthless money-lender father Kwon Sang-ch'ŏl, and that his birth-father is a poor peasant worker named Kwak Ch'ŏm-ji. Ok-hŭi agrees to marry Kyŏng-ho in part because she respects his birth-father. Kyŏng-ho leaves his adoptive family and resolves to live with his peasant worker father. Ironically, however, the narrative valorizes patriarchy by stressing the importance of fathering sons. Kwon Sang-ch'ŏl is unable to father a son, and is portrayed as vulnerable to social humiliation. He secretly adopts a boy to hide his sterility.

Characters view the factory with a kind of religious reverence and longing. Pang-gae tells In-dong that if he does not agree to run away with her, she will go to work in the thread factory. Going to work in the factory seems to be the equivalent of joining a religion. In-dong tells her he cannot abandon his parents; he advises her to go work in the factory. In-sun tells Pang-gae that she has found the meaning of life.

23 Kohyang, p 205
24 Kohyang, p 547
25 Kohyang, pp 548-549
26 Kohyang, pp 587-8
while working in the factory.\textsuperscript{27}

“Don’t be so cynical, Pang-gae. Whatever you do, put your heart into it. Life is full of interesting things if you look hard enough. I used to think like you, but after I went to work in the factory I began to understand many things I had never understood before, and I realized why people live!”

“That’s why I said to you just now that I want to go to work in the factory. Now that we’re on the subject, do you think someone like me could get in?”

“Why not!”

“Even though I’m married?”

“There are many married women who commute.”

“Then get me a job there!”

Factory work seems to be a kind of sacred calling, and workers, members of a religion.

The novel Kohyang does not isolate the Korean peasantry from a historical setting, but portrays peasants within the context of continuous impoverization, colonialism, diasporic migration and modernization. There is movement, moreover, across divides of farm and factory, nation and class. It is not always possible to draw distinctions between worker and peasant, or urban and rural. The narrative does not prioritize peasant or laborer, but depicts these groups in close alliance. The novel offers a rare critique of patriarchy, in the depiction of Hŭi-jun’s violent hatred of his wife. There are more nuanced portrayals of household work and economic activities outside the home by peasant women, in literature by women writers such as Paek Sin-ae.\textsuperscript{28} Kohyang is nevertheless significant for attempting to critically depict gender-related aspects of labor and production, in a specific historical setting.\textsuperscript{29} The text also portrays the subjectivity of women participating in strikes and tenant-landlord disputes, and teaching and learning from one another.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} Kohyang, p 438

\textsuperscript{28} Cf Paek Sin-ae’s “Chokpun [Poverty],” November 1934, Kaebŏk [Creation] Reprinted in So Chong-ja, Han’guk yŏsŏng sosŏksŏn I (Seoul: Kahan ch’ulp’ansa, 1991) pp 110-113

\textsuperscript{29} Michele Barrett argues that “although women’s oppression is not (as some Marxists have argued) a theoretical prerequisite of capitalism, it is however historically embedded in its social relations and thus material in character.” Barrett analyzes “capitalist relations of production (including the division of labour and the organization of social class) as historically gendered” Michele Barrett, Women’s Oppression Today The Marxist/Feminist Encounter (London, New York: Verso, 1988), pp x-xi

\textsuperscript{30} You-me Park, “Representing Female Subjectivities in Korean Nationalist Literature,” Paper presented at the Gender and Korean Culture Conference, University of Southern California, October 18-20, 1996