

Modern Korean Literature (I)

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1. Literature of the Enlightenment Period

The Enlightenment Movement and the Establishment of a New Literature

The first stage in the establishment of modern Korean literature took place between the mid-1800's and the early 1900's. This era was marked by the dissolution of the feudal Chosŏn society and the introduction of Western civilization. This era was marked by invasive threats from abroad, and by the broad unfolding of a movement for social enlightenment that emphasized the nation-state's independence and autonomy. The literature formed during this period is referred to as the literature of the enlightenment period. This literature nicely illustrates the modern reworking of traditional literary forms and the reception of foreign literary forms. In the course of overcoming the fixed concepts and the conventional outlook of Chosŏn literature, the first change to appear was that the *sjŏ*, a traditional poetic form, was divested of its musical aspect. In the case of fiction, we no longer see

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the unrealistic intervention of a transcendental world, the heart of the story lies in everyday life, and reverse chronology begins to appear in the narrative structure. And along with the critical recognition of the present reality, there appeared a tendency to express enlightenment thought through literature.

The reworking of traditional literature in the enlightenment period made extensive use of the new education and the influence of campaign on behalf of the native language and literature. The new education was put into effect after the Kabo Reforms of 1894, at the same time as the founding of Western-style schools and the intensive publication of textbooks designed to convey Western civilization and learning. The reading public expanded as a result, the literary hegemony of classical Chinese was stripped away, and the use of the native script expanded widely. As the informational function of classical Chinese ebbed, there appeared a mixed script that incorporated both *hanmun* (classical Chinese) and *han'gŭl* (the native script). But inasmuch as readers for the most part accepted the use of the native script in the literary forms of this period, the establishment of a new literature with its basis in the native script was made possible.

Enlightenment literature first established itself in two new popular media: the newspaper and magazine. Most of the newspapers—the *Tongnip Sinmun* (Independent News), *Hwangŏng Sinmun* (Capital Gazette), *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* (Korea Daily News), *Cheguk Sinmun* (Imperial Post), *Manse-bo* (Independence news), *Taehan Minbo* (Korea People's Press)—carried literary works (fiction, *syjo*, *kasa*) in addition to their usual articles. There appeared several academic journals, such as the *Kiho hŭngghakhoe hoebo* (Journal of the Kyŏnggi-Ch'ungch'ŏng

educational association), and the *Taehan chaganghoe hoebo* (Journal of the Korea self-strengthening society), published by social organizations, as well as magazines such as *Somyŏn* (Children), all of them carrying various forms of literature. And the introduction of new printing techniques and the appearance of commercial publishers made possible the commercial publication of literary works.

Biography, Fable, and the New Fiction

Narrative literature in this period consisted of the biography, fable, and New Fiction. There appeared many biographies of heroic historical figures. These emphasized the enlightenment movement and the spirit of the new age. The biography blended history with the *chŏn* (life) appearing in *hanmun* literature. It was composed with the enlightenment aims of developing the people's patriotism and awakening in them a nationalist consciousness. *Three Heroes of Italian Nationhood* was translated into Korean by Shin Ch'e-ho in 1906, and it along with Chang Chi-yŏn's *Aeguk puin chŏn* (The patriotic wife, 1907) and Shin Ch'e-ho's *Ŭlchi mundŏk* (Ŭlchi mundŏk, 1908) and *Tongguk kŏgŏl Ch'oe To-t'ong chŏn* (Ch'oe To-t'ong. A great Korean hero, 1909) present the kinds of heroic human figures longed for by the people of that time.

Fables offered a satirical or critical look at contemporary society and conditions. Perhaps the best-known example is An Kuk-sŏn's *Kŭmsu hoeŭi rok* (Proceedings of the council of birds and beasts, 1908). Through the speeches of animals criticizing the degradation and confusion of human morals, these works emphasized the importance of such traditional values and moral standards as loyalty, filial piety, amity, and friendship. Kim P'il-su's *Kyŏngsejong* (The

warning bell, 1908) and *Kimsu Chaep'an* (Trial by animals, 1910) belong to a similar school. We also see strong fabular elements in works such as Yu Wŏn-p'yo's *Monggyŏn Chegal Yang* (Monggyŏn Zhuge Liang, 1909), *Chugusŏng Miraemong* (Earth and dream for future, 1909), Pak Ŭn-shik's *Mongbae Kŏmt'aejo*, and Shin Ch'ae-ho's *Kkam hanŭl* (Sky of dreams), which take place in a dreamscape or a surrealist setting and satirize or criticize reality. This form of literature depicts dream scenes that run counter to reality, and in this sense it closely resembles the traditional "nightwalker's account," a narrative that takes place in a dream and expresses one's ideals and intentions.

These biographies and fables are a good representation of the spirit of the enlightenment movement, for they are nationalistic at heart, criticizing incursions by foreign powers. But this nationalistic spirit could not be sustained, for with the appearance of the imperial Japanese Resident General's Office, these forms of literature became subject to restriction, and upon the formal annexation of Korea in 1910, they were either confiscated or their sales were banned.

The New Fiction appearing at this time was a narrative form that, in the persons of such authors as Yi In-jik, Yi Hae-jo, Ch'oe Ch'an-shik, and Kim Kyo-je, marked the emergence of a writer class and that enjoyed a mass readership. The publication of Yi In-jik's *Hyŏl ŭ nu* (Tears of blood, 1906), *Ch'aksan* (Pheasant Mountain, 1908), and *Ŭnsegye* (Silver world, 1908) was followed by Yi Hae-jo's *Pinsangsŏl* (Gray at the temples, 1908), *Kumagŏm* (The demon-expelling sword, 1908), and *Hwa ŭi hyŏl* (Blood of a flower, 1912). Also well known is Ch'oe Ch'an-shik's *Ch'uwŏsek* (Color of the autumn moon, 1912). *Hyŏl ŭ nu* is centered in a Pyongyang family

affected by the Sino-Japanese War. The war destroys this happy family, but the female protagonist, separated from the rest of the family, is helped by Japanese soldiers along the path to enlightenment, and a new life opens to her. Notable in this work is the role of the victorious Japanese. They save the war-torn Koreans and guide them along the road to civilization and enlightenment. Evident here is the author's assertion of Japan as the medium for Korea's enlightenment. *Hyŏl ū nu* is connected with the novel *Moranbong* (Peony Peak), which involves the family's reunion and a Western-style marriage. The backbone of this work is the female protagonist's return to her homeland and reunion with her family, but in a series of exaggerated plot twists connected with her own marriage, this woman falls short of the enlightened civilization she seeks. The novel thereby raises another problem: the new reality follows a breakdown of ethics and values. *Ŭnsegŷe*, set against the background of the Kapshin Coup of 1884, expresses dissatisfaction with a corrupt society while advocating reform of the political system. The first half of the novel is an indictment of a feudal social system and oppression by a corrupt, covetous officialdom. The second half portrays the return of the protagonist's children from their studies abroad and their newfound enlightenment ideals, but the novel is left open-ended.

Yi Hae-jo popularized the new fiction. His novel *Pinsangsŏl* utilizes the familiar approach of rewarding good and punishing evil in dealing with the conflict between a man's wife and concubine. The story itself is concerned with worldly life and reflects the changes wrought by a greater emphasis on the individual. His novel *Kumagŏm* reveals a theme of strong anti-superstition, but underlying it is the

issue of the individual's worldly desires.

The New Fiction continues with authors such as Ch'oe Ch'an-shik and Kim Kyo-je, but in their hands the form changes into conventional "storybooks" catering to readers seeking entertainment. The attachment to mass tastes evident in the writers of the new fiction weakened the new fiction's social enlightenment function, but can be said to have transformed that tendency into a matter of individual taste

Enlightenment Kasa; Ch'angga; The New Poetry

The poetry of the enlightenment period reveals both a transformation of traditional poetry into early-modern forms and the appearance of entirely new poetic forms. With the advent of enlightenment, the *sijo*, the central form of Chosŏn period poetry, sought the possibility of a new poetic style. Enlightenment *sijo* departed from the practice of setting the poem to music, and it became possible for the poem to exist independent of music. Positive identification of the authors of the hundreds of *sijo* published in newspapers such as the *Taehan Maeil Sinbo* and the *Taehan Minbo* is impossible, but these poems do express criticism of contemporary realities and often emphasize an independence message. Enlightenment *kasa* inherited from traditional *kasa* only the requisite verse form of that genre, its content underwent considerable diversification. *Sahoedŏng Kasa* (Society's lantern *kasa*), published in the *Taehan Maeil Sinbo*, were social critiques, a kind of editorial-in-verse. They can be thought of as the representative form of enlightenment *kasa*. The enlightenment *kasa* enjoyed greater freedom in its verse form. And although it departed from the lyric world of the individual, its ability

to cover all areas of contemporary life allowed it to compete with the several prose forms of the period and to exert a great influence on the newly appearing *ch'angga*.

If enlightenment *shijo* and *kasa* can be said to have fallen under the rubric of traditional Korean literary forms, then the *ch'angga* and the new poetry represent the advent of new poetic forms in the enlightenment period. These new forms constitute the first stage in the formation of early-modern free verse. *Ch'angga* were contributed by readers to the *Tongnip Sinmun*, the best example being the "Aegukka," or the National Anthem. While the *ch'angga* retained the form of the traditional *kasa*, a refrain was typically attached. These *ch'angga* were set to Western melodies, and we can think of them as being sung. But with such works as Ch'oe Nam-sŏn's "Kyŏngbu ch'ŏlto ka" (Seoul-Pusan Railroad) we see the interplay of *ch'angga* and enlightenment *kasa*, the lengthening of the *ch'angga* form, its departure from the fixed verse patterns of *kasa*, and the appearance of a new verse pattern comprising units of seven and five syllables. *Ch'angga* sang of national autonomy and independence, or of enlightenment ideals. The new poetry departed from the fixed nature of poetic forms in favor of free verse. Representative are Ch'oe Nam-sŏn's "Hae egesŏ sonyŏn ege" (From the sea to the children, 1908), "Kkot tugo" (Flowers left), and "T'aebaeksan shi" (The T'aebaek Mountains). These works depart from the fixed forms evident in enlightenment *kasa* and in *ch'angga*. Their line division is comparatively free and the entire poetic form is removed from any regulatory framework. But despite this innovation, many of the poems sing more of an ideology of the times than of the individual's feelings. In terms of literary history the appearance of such forms represents a stage in the formation of free verse.

Ch'anggŭk and the New Drama

Enlightenment period drama can be thought of in terms of the transformation of the traditional oral narrative *p'ansori* into the new form of *ch'anggŭk*, together with the introduction of Japanese new drama. As traditionally staged, *p'ansori* combined the narrative element of the recitative with the musicality of melody, the whole of it performed by a noted singer. To this form of *p'ansori* dramatic elements were added, with the recitative assigned to several characters, and by the end of the 1800's a new singing style had appeared. The resulting form was termed *ch'anggŭk*. The appearance of *ch'anggŭk* was manifested in the specialization of traditional *p'ansori* into a theatrical form. Yi In-jik's 1908 novel *Ŭnsegye* was performed as a *ch'anggŭk*, and the form gradually approached that of modern drama.

This period also witnessed the introduction of Japanese new drama. Typically this form consisted not of direct translations of foreign works, but for the most part of adaptations of dramatic structure and content to the circumstances of contemporary Korea. The new drama was launched with works such as *Pulhyo ch'ŏnjo* (Heavenly retribution to the unfilial, 1911), performed by the *Hyŏkshundan* (Reformists), a theater group founded by Im Sŏng-gu. The new drama elicited mass interest and resulted in the diffusion of Japanese popular culture throughout Korea.

2. Literature of the Japanese Occupation

Conditions Under the Occupation and Changes in Literature

From the beginning of the occupation period in 1910, when Japan

forcibly occupied the nation, Korean literature underwent a historic trial. The Korea-Japan annexation treaty was pushed through by Japan, leading to the creation of a Japanese Government-General in Korea followed by the installation of a military regime. Calls for an enlightened civilization and the recovery of national sovereignty, seen in enlightenment literature, could no longer be expressed owing to rigid controls on public speech and publication.

Around that time, though, a literary discourse utilizing Western concepts emerged among Korean university students in Japan, and the recognition of art based on human emotion became acceptable. In his 1910 essay "Munhak ūi kach'i" (The value of literature) Yi Kwang-su stated this notion thus: "Through language static molecules of humanity become expressed as art" In 1917 Yi published his story "Sonyŏn ūi pie" (A child's grief), which depicts the inner agonies of an individual, and upon publishing the novel *Mujŏng* (Heartlessness) he became the central figure of the Korean literary world. Although *Mujŏng* lacks a thoroughgoing recognition of the realities of the colonial period, as a novel that combines the fated lives of individuals with the exigencies of the times, it is recognized for its modern temper. The most notable aspect of the novel is its presentation of love based on self-awakening and the positing of learning as the core issue of the story. Here self-awakening refers to the individual's expanding recognition that his existence is based in social realities. In approaching these issues *Mujŏng* emphasizes the liberation of the individual from traditional ethics and standards. Although the novel does not go so far as to explicitly expose the meaning of social existence as reflected in the awakening of the individual, it does offer that enlightening potential.

Literature under the occupation took momentum from the March 1 Independence Movement of 1919, and began to cope actively with the Korean people and their situation. Through the March 1 movement, literature stirred the awakening of a nationalist consciousness, began to display active expression of self-development and self-improvement, and showed increased interest in present realities. *Ch'angjo* (Creation, 1919), *P'yehö* (Ruins, 1920), *Paekcho* (White tide, 1922), and other magazines associated with different literary circles established themselves in the Korean literary world, and variety magazines such as *Kaebyoŭk* (Genesis, 1920) led to the further development of creative literary activity. In particular, the publication of nationalist newspapers such as the *Tong'a Ilbo* and the *Chosön Ilbo* laid a broad foundation for the practice of the literary arts.

The Formation of Early-Modern Fiction

The literature of the early 1920's reveals various influences, ranging from the pursuit of a modern self to the recognition of nationalist realities. Fictional works depicted the suffering of intellectuals wandering amidst gloomy realities and illustrated the miserable lives of workers and farmers. Kim Tong-in, with his fellow students in Japan, founded *Ch'angjo*, and in stories such as "Yakhan cha ūi sülp'üm" (The sorrow of the weak), "Paettaragi" (The seaman's chant), and "Kamja" (Potatoes), pioneered the formation of early-modern short fiction. "Paettaragi" tells of the downfall of brothers as a result of limited intellect and misunderstanding, and shows the tragedy of a man wandering in search of a life that has lost its value. "Kamja" depicts a woman in poverty who meets her death after losing her moral will and ethical sense. Especially notable in this story is the

terse style and dispassionate description in the development of plot.

Hyŏn Chun-gŏn began his literary career as a member of the *Paekcho* circle. His best-known stories include "Pinch'ŏ" (The destitute wife), "Sul kwonhanŭn sahoe" (A society that drives you to drink), and "Tarakcha" (The degenerate), all of which describe the frustrations and suffering of the intelligentsia under the occupation, and "Ŭnsu choŭn nal" (A lucky day), a scene in the life of a poverty-stricken laborer Na To-hyang, also a member of the *Paekcho* circle, is known for stories such as "Pŏng'ŏri Sam-nyong" (Sam-nyong the mute), "Mullebang'a" (The watermill), and "Ppong" (Mulberry leaves). The first of these stories describes a man who through self-sacrifice overcomes physical deformity and class differences. The other two treat lust and extreme poverty.

As a member of the *P'yehŏ* circle, Yŏm Sang-sŏp made a fundamental contribution to early-modern fiction, establishing his reputation with the publication of a trio of linked stories: "P'yobonshil ŭi ch'ŏng kaeguri" (The green frog in the specimen room), "Amya" (Dark night), and "Cheya" (New year's eve). Among his early works *Mansejŏn* (Before the hurrahs) is particularly noteworthy. Set in the period immediately preceding the March 1 movement, the work describes in realistic detail a variety of issues that catch the eye of the protagonist, brought home by a family emergency from study in Tokyo. The work is unprecedented in its realistic recognition of colonial period realities. The stamp of early-modern fiction, which combined personal problems with social conditions, first becomes evident here.

Formation of Free Verse

The poetics of 1920's Korea adapted the free verse of Western Europe and sought a unique style in early-modern poetry. Although the first poems of this period fell into sentimentalism and tended to avoid reality, these characteristics were often overcome through an expansion of the poetic awareness of contemporary circumstances. And the recognition of Korean meter promoted new developments in early-modern verse forms.

The direction of free verse as it appears in Chu Yo-han's "Pullori" (Fireworks) can be said to mean the establishment of a new poetic form that makes possible the expression of a poetic self. Kim Sowŏl played a large role in establishing the foundation of early-modern Korean poetry. His poetry collection *Chundallae kkot* (Azaleas, 1925) successfully reconstitutes the rules of versification of the traditional Korean folksong to create a lyric realm. The poetry of Yi Sang-hwa represents a triumph over the torment of the times and the suffering of the individual, and made possible an expansion of the poetic recognition of the realities of the occupation. Han Yong-un's poetry collection *Nim ūi ch'inmuk* (Silence of the beloved, 1926) calls for a new direction in its use of a female voice to establish a belief in history.

In the development of modern Korean poetry, the poems of Kim Sowŏl are a good example of the unique results of an individual effort to pursue perfection in a poetic form. The poetic form he discovered combined traditional folksong rhythms with a folklike linguistic sensibility. Kim Sowŏl sang of nature, but more than taking nature as his object, he brought nature into his own emotional world and made that sentiment the basis of his poetry. That is why the

natural world favored in his poetry becomes exchanged with the inner space of a lyric self, and functions as an individualized emotional reality. His best-known poems--"Chindallae kkot," "Sanyuhwa" (Mountain flowers), "Yejön e much'ö mollassöyo" (I never knew), and "Chöptongsae" (The cuckoo)--may all be characterized thus. Another virtue of Kim Sowöl's poetry is it, more than anyone else's poetry, saved the poetic possibilities of Korea's indigenous language. The profound expression in his poetry of the emotion of actual feeling is deeply related to this linguistic characteristic.

Han Yong-un sings of *nim* (the beloved). His poetic interest is concentrated on *nim*, and through his poetry his recognition of the existence of *nim* is made concrete. *Nim* is not a subject existing in reality together with the poetic self. *Nim* has already left reality and therefore no longer exists in it. But while Han Yong-un speaks of the sorrow of *nim's* departure, to overcome that sorrow he emphasizes a new expectation of and faith in *nim*. His poetry is thereby purposive and the intensity of its tone is striking. The spirit of his poetry is grounded in a belief in history. When we think of the uprightness of Han Yong-un's life, his opposition to evil, and his active struggle on behalf of his people and nation, then his use of the most lyrical tone to realize this intent in poetry is all the more remarkable.

Yi Sang-hwa is similar to Kim Sowöl in his sense of reality, but more grim and despairing. The lyric self evident in Kim Sowöl and Han Yong-un often stands out as a ruined existence in Yi Sang-hwa's poetry. Yi uses caverns of darkness and the emptiness of death to depict the reality of cruel suffering. The lyric self of the poetic subject retreats from gloomy reality into caverns or secret chambers, and reminisces in an indignant tone about the salvation of life. But

then in poems such as "Ppe'atkin ttül edo pom ün onünga" (Will spring come to a plundered field?) and "Yökc'h'ön" (In defiance of heaven), the poetic subject penetrates gloomy realities and then emerges from them.

The Class-Literature Movement

Mid-1920's Korean literature was marked by the appearance of conflict between those who sought a nationalist ideology in response to occupation period realities and those inclined toward a socialist ideology. The influence of the realist literature that appeared soon after the March 1 independence movement collided with socialist thought and expanded into a class-literature movement. This movement began to take concrete form with the formation in 1925 of the Korea Artista Proletaria Federacio (KAPF). The movement expanded with the objectives of exalting class consciousness and advancing to political struggle, while emphasizing the application of ideological standards to art and literature. KAPF established a nationwide network, and by ensuring solidarity with social and political organizations, it realized a group-centered literary movement.

The class-literature movement, passing through the New Tendency School and entering a goal-oriented period, emphasized ideology. After a change in direction in 1927 the movement concentrated on establishing a laborers' literature and an agrarian literature in an attempt to reach the masses. In the case of fiction such works as Ch'oe Hae-sŏ's "T'alch'ulgi" (Exodus, 1925), Cho Myöng-hüi's "Naktonggang" (The Naktong River, 1927), Yi Ki-yöng's *Kohyang* (The ancestral village), and Han Söl-ya's *Hwang'hon* (Twilight, 1936) were published as a result. Most of these works were grounded in class

consciousness, emphasized a critical recognition of colonial realities, and advocated class struggle as the historical mission of the proletariat

As a leader of the class-oriented literary world, Yi Ki-yŏng published works such as "Hongsu" (Flood) and "Sŏhwa" (Rat fire) dealing with the lives of peasants. His novel *Kohyang* contrasts the suffering of sharecroppers struggling to survive in extreme poverty, with the tyranny of the powerful landlords who exploit them. The sharecroppers are gradually awakened by the young intellectual protagonist to an awareness of class consciousness and their own lives, and they unite in opposition to the landlords in order to improve their destiny. The novel shows the realities of the farming villages and the maturation of the peasants' consciousness, and brings to life the lives and ways of the peasants.

Han Sŏl-ya, in works such as "Kwadogi" (Age of transition), "Sshirŭm" (Wrestling), and "Sabang kongsa" (Sandbanks), spotlights the formation and the thought patterns of the working class. The first half of his novel *Hwang'hon* concerns the lives and thought of a group of subordinate capitalists who operate a textile mill, the second half describes the struggle of workers protesting their conduct. The background of the novel is connected with the expansion of Japanese militarism, and the author's emphasis on the maturation of the working class into an organizational entity during such circumstances is worth noting.

In the case of poetry poets such as Pak Se-yŏng, Pak P'al-yang, Im Hwa, and Kim Ch'ang-sul criticized the class contradictions of the occupation period and wrote a great deal of tendency poetry emphasizing an awareness of class struggle. Such works as Im Hwa's

"Uri oppa wa hwaro" (Big brother and the brazier) and "Negöri üi Suni" (Sunu at the crossroads), referred to as *sösashu* (short narrative poems), are judged to have succeeded in highlighting class contradictions.

Literature of the Late Occupation Period

With the strengthening of Japanese militarism in the 1930's and the beginning of intellectual oppression, Korean literature underwent important changes. In particular, the dissolution of KAPF in 1935 marked the disappearance of the tendency toward ideological, group-centered literature that had formed the mainstream of Korean writing since the 1920's. Emerging in its place was a tendency toward a variety of pure literature grounded in individual sentiment. Poetry magazines such as *Shimunhak* (Poetics), *Shun purak* (Poets' Village), *Chaosön* (Meridian), *Samsa munhak* (Three-four literature), and *Tanch'ung* (Faultline) appeared in the mid-1930's, each centered in a particular school, and many new writers debuted, taking part in various small literary groups. Monthly variety magazines such as *Shindong'a* (New East Asia), *Cho'gwang* (Light of Chosön), and *Chung'ang* (The Center), published by newspaper companies, assumed the role of spurring interest in the literary arts. Pure literature magazines such as *Munjang* (Composition) and *Inmun p'yöngnon* (Humanities criticism), published in the late 1930's, were important media for literary activity, introducing many new faces and a wide spectrum of important works. Literary circles such as the Kunhoe (Group of nine) were formed, with Kunhoe members such as Yi T'ae-jun, Pak T'ae-wön, Yi Hyo-sök, Yi Sang, and Kim Yu-jöng distinguishing themselves in fiction. Modernist tendencies in poetry

took root in the Shimunhak (Poetics) School, centered in the poetry journal of that name and featuring poets such as Chŏng Chi-yong, Kim Yŏng-nang, and Pak Yong-ch'ŏl. The poetry journal *Shiin purak* and the poets who revolved about it, such as Sŏ Chŏng-ju and O Chang-hwan, embarked on a poetic search for the essence of human life. Around this time, Korean literature majors studying in Japan were exposed ever more actively to foreign literature, leading to increased diversification of Korean literary trends.

Variety of Fiction

The salient characteristic of the fiction of the late 1930's was the yielding of interest in political ideology and contemporary social issues to an artistic search for the internal requisites of literature. The forced dissolution of class-conscious literary circles resulted in the exclusion of the people, their history, the class system, and contemporary realities as objects of interest. With awareness of colonial realities no longer an option as a literary theme, writers bent their efforts toward a quest for the interior aspects of the everyday life of the individual. There was new interest in fictional technique and much modernist fiction appeared, emphasizing awareness of space. A new awareness of the autonomous attributes of art became possible. Fiction in particular flourished with the publication of novels with disparate themes.

Pak T'ae-wŏn, who had developed an interest in the fictional reconstruction of the meaning of everyday life, is the best example of modernism. He is shown to advantage in works such as *Sosŏlga Kubo sshi ū ril* (A day in the life of Kubo the novelist), *Sŏngt'anye* (The Christmas season), and *Ch'ŏnbyŏn p'unggyŏng* (Streamside sketches).

The protagonist of the *Kubo* novel wanders the city but makes no connection with his surroundings or with other people. This work exemplifies the internal awareness characteristic of the psychological novel, in which humanity is crystallized into a single individual divorced from social realities.

Yi Sang, in works such as "Chiju hoe shi" (Spider meets pig), "Nalgae" (Wings), and "Tonghae" (A child's), describes the crisis that occurs when one's desires collide with reality. "Nalgae" uses spatial technique as a point of departure for treating skepticism toward oneself and one's mode of existence, and the consequent desire to escape these. The enervated protagonist lives a twisted life with his prostitute wife, who represents social pathology. The subject of the story is his desire to escape the abnormal life symbolized by his cramped room.

Yi T'ae-jun is credited with establishing the technical foundation of early-modern Korean fiction with his introspective description of character and painstaking composition. His signature works, such as "Talbam" (Moonlit night), "Kamagwi" (Crows), and "Yöngwöl yönggam" (The old man of Yöngwöl), reveal a nihilism and lyricism that ardently voice the spirit of the times. "Talbam" describes a humaneness that retains its beauty in a changing world, while "Kamagwi" is a compassionate account of a dying woman. Both stories show this author's descriptive powers to good effect.

Yi Hyo-sök's literary career is divided into two broad periods: his fellow-traveler days, when he published such stories as "Toshi wa yuryöng" (City and ghost) and "Noryöng künhae" (At sea near Russia), and a later period that starts with the publication of "Ton" (Pigs) in 1933 and includes stories such as "San" (Mountains) and

"Memil kkot p'il muryöp" (When the buckwheat blooms). Much of his later work shows human sexual desire. "Memil kkot p'il muryöp" is considered his best work. The themes that can be read in this story--affinity with nature, elemental human life, primitive love--recur in several of his other works. The critics explain that his lyrical style is characterized by a search for close harmony among background, character, and event.

The literary world of Kim Tong-ni is based in native lore. This local flavor is clearly evident in "Munyödo" (The shaman painting), a story that can be considered the core of his fictional creation. "Munyödo" depicts the conflict resulting from a collision between native spiritual beliefs and Christianity. A native mythical world appears in "Hwangt'ogi" (Loess Valley) as well.

Apart from these works, Kim Yu-jöng's "Tongbaek kkot" (Camellias), Ch'oe Myöng-ik's "Changsam Yisa" (Every Tom, Dick, and Harry), Hö Chun's "Süpchakshil esö" (In the study), Pak Hwa-söng's "Hongsu chönya" (Night before the flood), Ch'oe Chöng-hüi's "Hyungga" (The haunted house), Chu Yo-söp's "Sarang sonnum kwa ömöni" (Mother and the boarder), and Kye Yong-muk's "Paekch'i Adada" (Adada the idiot) are considered to be among the most important stories of the period.

Among the novels of the 1930's Ch'ae Man-shik's *Tangnyu* (Muddy stream), the story of a woman's tragic life, can be explained as one person's trials and adversity as traditional conventions collide with new customs. Yöm Sang-söp's *Samdae* (Three Generations) uses an event from everyday life to illuminate the relations within a family and their attitudes toward life. Pak T'ae-wön's *Ch'önbyön p'unnggyöng* uses a variety of vignettes and individualized characters to fictionally

re-create everyday space. Notable in the latter 1930's are historical novels. Such novels as Hong Myöng-hüi's *Im Kkökchöng* (about a bandit leader of that name), Yi Kwang-su's *Ma üi t'aeja* (Crown prince in hemp), Kim Tong-in's *Unhyön'gung üi pom* (Spring at Unhyön Palace), Hyön Chin-gön's *Muyöngt'ap* (Muyöng Tower), and Pak Chong-hwa's *Kümsan üi p'i* (Blood on a silk summer jacket) borrow their themes from historical fact. Apart from these works, Hyön Chin-gön's *Chökto* (Equator) uses a problematic love affair as an axis in describing the rampant transformation of the times toward materialism and pleasure seeking, and Shim Hun's *Sangnoksü* (The evergreen) is a fictionalization of the enlightenment movement in the farming villages. Yi Kwang-su's *Hük* (Soil), Kim Nam-ch'ön's *Taeha* (Great river), Yi Ki-yöng's *Pom* (Spring), and Han Sör-ya's *T'ap* (Tower) are considered further fruits of this period.

Poetry and Modernism

Poetry of the 1930's initiated a period of modernism through a revolution in the linguistic sensibility of the poetic object. If we look at poetry collections such as *Chöng Chi-yong shujip* (Poems of Chöng Chi-yong, 1935), *Kim Yöng-nang shijip* (Poems of Yöng-nang, 1935), Kim Ki-rim's *Kisangdo* (Weather chart, 1936), O Chang-hwan's *Söngbyöck* (Castle wall, 1937), and Kim Kwang-gyun's *Wasadöng* (Gas lantern, 1939), we see many poems that are based on this new linguistic sensibility and utilize unique images. Chöng Chi-yong in particular recognized the importance of language. Applying a vivid imagination to his variegated sensibility, he strove for restrained expression and for a spare poetic lyricism that leaned toward sentimentalism. All of his poetic subjects are formed from images and

spatiality. In the case of Kim Yŏng-nang we have poetry with a delicate linguistic sensibility in which folksong-like rhythm is changed into a unique meter. O Chang-hwan sings of his lost ancestral village, of the new modern civilization of the city and the port. Especially notable in the poetry of Kim Kwang-gyun is a pictorial method that shapes his linguistic sensibility. Kim Ki-rim emphasizes the health of the poetic spirit and tries to realize a poetic lyricism through images based on linguistic sensibility. He developed a modernist view of literature based on his critical recognition of modern civilization.

Unlike these modernist poets of the 1930's, there were poets who sought lyricism, who contemplated life and nature, and who tried to sharpen their awareness of basic human life-force. Poetry collections such as Sŏ Chŏng-ju's *Hwasajip* (Flower snake, 1941), Yu Ch'i-hwan's *Ch'ŏngma shuch'o* (Selected poems of Ch'ŏngma, 1939), and Kim Kwang-sŏp's *Tonggyŏng* (Longing, 1937) are good illustrations of these characteristics. Sŏ Chŏng-ju, utilizing local background, gives sensuous expression to the basic human life-force. He also sings, within native representations of nature, of the traditional Korean life of *han*. Yu Ch'i-hwan works hard to embody the will to live in order to overcome the hollowness of human life and death. Appearing frequently in his poetry are love of and attachment to the life-force and the will to overcome hollowness.

One notable tendency in the poetry of the latter 1930's, visible in Yi Yuksa and Yun Tong-ju, is resistance and the accompanying tragedy. Yi Yuksa's *Yuksa shujip* (Poems of Yuksa) and Yun Tong-ju's *Han'ül kwa param kwa pyŏl kwa shu* (Heaven, wind, stars, and poems) were both published posthumously after Korea's liberation from Japan. In Yi Yuksa's poetry, self-awareness and aloofness stand in

contrast to the activism evident in the poet's life. His poetry, based on a lofty spirit that is close to faith, constructs a world of moderation and balance, and consequently most of his poems transcend the experience of everyday reality. Unlike Yi Yuksa's poetry, that of Yun Tong-ju embodies a sense of shame toward historical realities. The introspection evident in his poetry was not translated into action in his life, but it shows the possibility of critically approaching the problem of reality by ceaselessly looking back upon one's life.

Establishment of Modern Drama

With the onset of the colonial period a new dramatic movement arose that divested itself of new-school drama in order to establish a modern drama. Theater groups such as the *T'owŏlhoe*, centered among Korean students in Tokyo, were organized, and plays such as Cho Myŏng-hŭi's *P'asa* (1926) and Kim U-jin's *San twaepi* (Boar, 1926) were performed, marking the beginning of modern drama. A movement for class-conscious drama also flourished, the plays performed by touring groups. In particular, class-conscious professional theater groups were formed, such as the *Shingŏnsŏl sa* (New construction group), accelerating the popularization of this form of drama. At the same time, plays by Song Yŏng, such as *Ilch'e myŏnhoe kŏjŏlhara* (Let no visitor enter) and *Hwanggŭmsan* (Gold Mountain), were staged. The 1930's were marked by the creation of the *Kŏgyesul yŏnguhoe* (Theater arts research society) and the performance of high-quality foreign plays in translation, both of which stimulated interest in creative drama and made possible a transition in dramatic literature. Yu Ch'i-jin put out issue-driven works such as *T'omak* (Piece) and the fruits of a new

realistic drama were harvested.

But with the Japanese instigation of the Pacific War in 1941, colonial Korea was mercilessly forced to sacrifice itself. Koreans had to adopt Japanese names, the use of the Korean script and language were entirely forbidden, and all efforts were devoted to the war. Korean literature entered a dark age: the pro-Japanese journal *Kungmin munhak* (National literature), published in Japanese, was launched in 1941 and the pro-Japanese *Chosŏn munin bogukhoe* (Korean writers patriotic association) was formed in 1943. In these and other ways, Korean literature was forced into a pro-Japanese posture.