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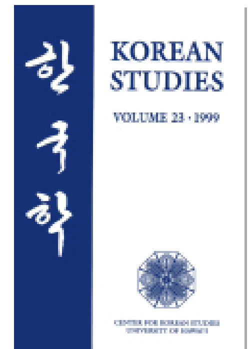

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A Critique on Traditional Korean Family Institutions: Kim Wŏnju's "Death of a Girl"

Yung-Hee Kim

Kim Wŏnju's "Death of a Girl" is a work with a thesis. The short story represents the author's sharp criticism of traditional Korean family structure and practices, which, she believes, have had deadly ramifications on Korean society's young, especially females. Kim drives her message home by having the exemplary young heroine of the narrative commit suicide in defiance of the horrifying and dehumanizing demands of her parents intent upon selling her as a concubine. In so doing, Kim underscores the compelling urgency of reforms in dictatorial parental authority over children, in polygamy and male philandering, and in the commercialization of the female body prevalent in the early decades of twentieth-century Korea. In short, the story promotes Kim's vision of an ideal society, which, freed of coercion stemming from familial and gender hierarchy, would allow its members freedom of individual choice, basic human dignity, and, ultimately, personal happiness.

Kim Wŏnju (1896–1971; pen name, Iryŏp) belonged to the first generation of women writers of modern Korea, which included Na Hyesŏk (1896–1946; Chŏngwŏl) and Kim Myŏngsun (1896–?; T'ansil, or Mang'yangch'o).[1] Of these three women, who began publishing in the 1910s, Kim Wŏnju was the last to appear on the scene.[2] Unlike Na Hyesŏk and Kim Myŏngsun, however, who published their first works in journals managed by men, Kim Wŏnju's works debuted in *Sinyŏja* (New Women), the first feminist magazine published in Korea, which she created in March 1920 and edited herself.[3] Kim Wŏnju thus launched and authorized her own literary career, an advantage that allowed her greater independence and control over her development as a writer. Using *Sinyŏja* as an instrument for her commitment to women's causes, Kim Wŏnju wrote short stories, essays, and criticism, mostly related to her personal campaign to improve the conditions of Korean women's lives. These writings

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focused on the necessity of women's education, of changing ideas about women, and calling for women's self-awakening.[4] Short-lived though the magazine was (it ceased publication in June 1920 after four issues), by publishing mainly women's works *Sinyŏja* provided Kim Wŏnju's female contemporaries an outlet through which to express their literary, critical, and artistic talents. For instance, Kim Myŏngsun's short story "The Road a Girl Takes" (Ch'ŏ'nyŏ ŭi kanŭn kil) was published in the first issue of *Sinyŏja,* and one of Na Hyesŏk's illustrations was published in its second issue (April 1920).[5] And it was in this same second issue of *Sinyŏja* that Kim Wŏnju's "Death of a Girl" (Ŏ'nŭ so'nyŏ ŭi sa), her second short story, was published.[6]

As the title suggests, "Death of a Girl" relates the circumstances that lead the heroine of the story, Cho Myŏngsuk, an eighteen-year-old high school student, to suicide. The story, presented from an omniscient narrative point of view, begins at night with Myŏngsuk's train ride to her final destination, the Han River, and ends with the police's discovery of her body in the river next morning. Within this temporal framework, the narrator freely moves between present and past and by making effective use of the epistolary form reveals Myŏngsuk's dilemma and the forces that drove her to self-destruction.

The reasons for Myŏngsuk's decision to take her own life are first disclosed through her two suicide letters—one addressed to her parents, the other to a newspaper.[7] The former letter carefully enunciates the core reasons that pushed her to this extremity. As the youngest of three daughters, Myŏngsuk is under unbearable and inescapable pressure from her parents to accept their plans to give her away as a concubine to Min Bŏmjun, a rich man of the town, in exchange for his support of her family. The situation is especially repugnant to Myŏngsuk because her parents, in order to carry out their scheme, have broken her betrothal to Kim Kapsŏng (an arrangement they themselves had masterminded years before as a means for their social advancement) on the grounds that Kim's family fortune has collapsed. Having witnessed her two older sisters' degrading experiences as concubines, Myŏngsuk is determined to avoid the same fate, and upon realizing her inability to block her parents' vile design, she decides to end her own life.

Details of Myŏngsuk's personal crisis are further divulged as the focus of the narrative shifts from her letters to tracing Myŏngsuk's family history up to the present. It exposes the secrets of a household full of moral chaos and decay, with Myŏngsuk's parents as the primary source of trouble. Myŏngsuk's father, Cho Owijang,[8] is a man with a checkered past. While serving as a functionary in the house of a Yi dynasty court official, he abused his power and gained illegal benefits by cheating. Having eventually lost the job, he lived off of a *kisaeng* (female entertainer or courtesan) as her proprietor. To top it off, Cho used to frequent *kisaeng* houses and even kept a mistress, to his wife's rage. Now completely out of work, he has no means of supporting his family. And

Myŏngsuk's mother draws no better portrayal of a parent. Though she herself has suffered through her husband's philandering, she becomes his willing accomplice in disposing of their oldest daughter as a concubine to a rich profligate, who in the end abandons her. This daughter, having become cynical about life, in turn sells her younger sister, Tongsuk, as a concubine in order to get herself out of trouble. In this way, the cycle of moral depravity continues through generations, and the older members of Myŏngsuk's family provide her with negative role models only.

The portrait of Myŏngsuk, on the other hand, sharply contrasts with that of the other members of her family. Despite the corrupting influence of her environment, Myŏngsuk maintains a clear sense of judgment, morality and even courage, and represents the only wholesome element in the Cho household. Keenly aware of her parents' wrong doings against her sisters, she laments their fate and feels shame for her entire family:

> While attending school, Myŏngsuk had observed what her parents and her older sisters were doing. She felt ashamed to meet people. She was fearful that others would notice what was going on at her home. One day some of her friends came over to her house to play and saw her oldest sister all dressed up and leading on men. The next day these girls spread these words at school: "Myŏngsuk's older sister is a flirt. She carries on with guys."
>
> These words quickly circulated all over the school, and students whispered to each other, glancing at Myŏngsuk. Sensing what was going on, Myŏngsuk felt her face afire. She came home crying and said to her parents, "How could you let my sister carry on like this? Please stop her, even if we starve to death.

Moreover, Myŏngsuk is convinced that her parents' decision to break up her engagement is nothing but a betrayal and rejects the proposal from Min Bŏmjun as "slavery." Her earlier attempt to run away from the impending doom only leads to her physical confinement at home under the ever more watchful eye of her parents. Finally, with the day of her concubinage fast approaching and with no further means of escape available, Myŏngsuk resorts to the drastic measure of cutting her life short.

Among other themes, two conspicuous thematic concerns emerge from "Death of a Girl." First is a critique of the traditional Confucian paradigm of the parent-child relationship, which categorically privileged parental position. Upholding the concept of *hyo* (filial piety), which was considered the highest of human virtues,[9] Korean society conferred uncontested power on parents and exacted children's obedience as the means of reinforcing order within the family. Since the Confucian orthodoxy ordained parental values, standards, and priorities as ethical absolutes, the negation of the self in deference to parents' directives was seen as the supreme goal for the young—especially on the part of female children. Given these expectations, Myŏngsuk and her siblings had no option but to comply with their parents' wishes, even if these went against their basic needs as human beings.

"Death of a Girl" dramatizes Korean society's uncritical emphasis on this parental authority and scrutinizes the implications of this one-sided domination-submission model. The story of Myŏngsuk highlights the dehumanizing outcome of the rigid, hierarchical ordering of human relationships within the family, which can breed destructive intergenerational conflicts, even as it preempts the younger generation's individuality and basic human decency. These detrimental consequences of filial piety in Korean society are pointed out in an observation by Kim Tuhŏn, a Korean legal scholar:

> Filial piety [*hyo*] meant an absolute obedience to father, that is, the household head, and was considered a means of honoring ancestors and worshipping forebears. Therefore, filial piety was regarded as the basis of all human behavior and as the highest virtue in Eastern ethics. . . . In the feudal system, youths and children were inculcated with this principle, and during Japanese colonial rule, the Korean educational system put a far greater emphasis on this concept. Such practices reached to the extent of totally eradicating children's human rights.[10]

Such parental dominance becomes a matter of far graver implication when it is ethically misguided. Cho Owijang and his wife collectively and symbolically represent abuse of parental entitlement, empty of goodness, truth, and love. What determines their actions are expediency and easy gain with utter disregard for morality. Essentially, they consider their children to be their personal chattel and mortgage their lives as a means of supporting parents, turning them into objects for economic transaction.[11] In this context, it is pathetically revealing to notice that Myŏngsuk and her sisters do not receive from their parents even the kind of care the train passenger in the story showed for his dog in defiance of the streetcar operator, as depicted in the opening scene of "Death of a Girl." Through this implied contrast, Kim Wŏnju renders the moral bankruptcy of Myŏngsuk's parents all the more inhuman and repulsive.

What is projected in the figure of Myŏngsuk, then, is an exemplary new consciousness of a younger generation, which protests against the existing reprehensible categories of familial relationships and reconceives them from an entirely different perspective. Myŏngsuk stands for a questioning mind that challenges the legitimacy of parental absolutism and resists its coercion. Her personal morality would not allow her to submit to her parents' orders, and her rebellious actions signify a new, disruptive language of the young, who attempt to write their own destiny and to establish their own new subjectivity independent of parental interference or dictates. Myŏngsuk may embody what Gerda Lerner characterized as the essence of "thinking women":

> Perhaps the greatest challenge to thinking women is the challenge to move from the desire for safety and approval to the most 'unfeminine' quality of all—that of intellectual arrogance, the supreme hubris which asserts to itself the right to reorder the world.[12]

Fundamentally, Myŏngsuk's posture and action make her different from her sisters—symbols of female acquiescence—and point to the rejection of the

passive mode of existence inscribed in Confucian formulae of filial piety. Her choice of suicide is the ultimate blow, because it transgresses the first article in the Confucian *hyo* principle, which prohibits self-injury, since one's body is given by one's parents and therefore is not one's own.[13] Seen in this light, suicide is one drastic form of rejection of parental authority to undermine its relevance and validity. It also may be seen as the last weapon of the entrapped, or "the politics of the power of the powerless, or resistance in the face of the radical absence of choice."[14] In this sense, Myŏngsuk personifies a revolutionary ideological challenge, which subverts parental hegemony.

Polemicization of the parent-child relationship surrounding the issue of marriage, however, is neither new nor unique to Kim Wŏnju. As early as the 1900s, the "new novel" genre, *sinsosŏl,* problematized this topic, beginning with *Hyŏl ŭi ru* (Tears of Blood, 1906) by Yi Injik (1862–1917). The theme was reiterated in Yi Injik's other works such as *Ŭnsegye* (The Silvery World, 1908) and *Ch'iaksan* (Pheasant Mountain, 1908) and was followed by Yi Haejo's (1869–1927) *Moranbyŏng* (Peony Screen, 1911) and Ch'oe Ch'ansik's (1881–1951) *Ch'uwŏlsaek* (Color of the Autumn Moon, 1912).[15] Similarly, Yi Kwangsu elaborated an outspoken critique of the family institution in Korea in his aforementioned article "Chosŏn kajŏng ŭi kaehyŏk," in which he promoted as an ideal the parity among family members by getting rid of the patriarchal, parent-centered family structure:

> Granted that it is necessary to make hierarchical distinctions between father and son, husband and wife, and among siblings, these relationships are groupings of human beings and stem from human interactions. This does not necessarily mean that father, husband, and older siblings are tens of thousands times nobler than son, wife, and younger siblings in terms of status, character, or ability. By the same token, it does not necessarily mean that son, wife, and younger siblings are tens of thousands times lower, either. Doesn't the wonder of life lie in the affectionate closeness, like that of friends, between father and son, while there still clearly exist distinctions between them?[16]

The same reformist orientation toward familial relationships characterizes a number of Yi Kwangsu's works published thereafter, but his "Chanyŏ chungsimnon" (A Tract on the Child-centered Family; *Ch'ŏngch'un,* no. 15, 1918) is the most thought-provoking and astute critique of rigid parental authority in favor of conferring on children the rights of choice, independence of thinking, and individuality:

> In Korea filial piety was the highest virtue that dictated children to submit to the will of their parents. . . . Children in old Korea lived, worked, and died for their parents. They exactly duplicated the will and purpose of their elders. If children insisted on their own will and followed their dreams, no matter how good these were, they were considered transgressors against their parents' orders. . . . But from the point of view of the children themselves, they are independent individuals born to live for themselves, not for their parents. Therefore, children do not have any obligations to

sacrifice themselves for their elders (because they themselves are individuals, too) and the elders do not have the right to demand sacrifices from their children. . . . This concept of filial piety has to change completely. . . . We have to rescue children of new Korea from the wrong morality of old Korea which insisted that the greatest duty of children be toward their parents. This is currently our most urgent task, which will decide the future destiny of our country for a thousand centuries. . . . First of all, let children have independent and free individuality. Allow them to abandon the concept that they are parents' property and let them have the idea that they own themselves. Next, let them have the notion that their greatest obligation is to themselves and to their children, never to their elders."[17]

Yi Kwangsu's contemporary male intellectuals followed suit, and the problem of parental authority and mistreatment of children was a recurring theme in the early 1920s. Most such discourse was carried on in *Kaebyŏk*, the leading journal of the day. For instance, Kim Soch'un (Kim Kijŏn,) censured adults' physical violence and use of abusive language toward young children, the deplorable custom of early marriage, horrible mistreatment of corpses of the young, and the inhuman discrimination against young girls.[18] Another critic, Ch'anghae kŏsa,[19] criticizes the traditional depreciation of women, oppression by the conservative old generation of the modern-educated young resulting in conflicts between them, and the concept of *hyo* as the obstacle of national development.[20]

It is also instructive to note that the works of Kim Wŏnju's women literary associates antedating "Death of a Girl"—such as Na Hyesŏk's "Kyŏng'hŭi" (*Yŏjagye*; Women's World, March 1918)[21] and Kim Myŏngsun's "Ch'ŏ'nyŏ ŭi kanŭn kil," mentioned above—also deal with the problem of parental coercion regarding marriage matters, as experienced by daughters with modern educations. Na's novella presents the long, anguished process undergone by the heroine, Kyŏng'hŭi—the Japan-educated daughter of a well-to-do family—until she decides to reject a marriage proposal through her father from a wealthy, socially prominent family. Kyŏng'hŭi bases her resolution on her conviction that she cannot enter into a matrimonial relationship concluded solely by her father,[22] and in rejecting the proposition she reconfirms her worth as an autonomous individual. In the case of Kim Myŏngsun's short story, the narrative focuses on Ch'unae, a high school student, who already has a sweetheart but is facing imminent matrimony to a man of her parents' choice, a man she doesn't know at all. The narrative ends with Ch'unae's running away from home and a possible union with the man she loves.[23]

Compared with these two works, Kim Wŏnju's "Death of a Girl" represents the most grim and despondent situation. Na's Kyŏng'hŭi has support from her warm, understanding mother and older brother and commands respect from her sister-in-law and her maid; even her father is well-meaning but autocratic. Kim Myŏngsun's Ch'unae has sympathetic friends who encourage her to run away, and her boyfriend is a trustworthy young man. In contrast, Myŏngsuk in

"Death of a Girl" has no support system to protect or guide her. Her parents are destructive agents, while her sisters are helpless victims. She is completely alienated from her world. In this sense, "Death of a Girl" underscores far more forcefully the enormity of the social forces that operate against new ways of choosing and defining female existential modes in traditional Korea and stresses the acute need for change.

Regardless of the contrasting points among these three works, however, the fact that these women writers chose to treat similar subjects suggests the vital significance of the topic to contemporary Korean society. They reveal that, although in great turmoil to modernize itself, Korea was deeply chained by old, dehumanizing practices in the family and resistant to such changes, and the message of these works to younger Korean audiences would have been compelling and timely, especially to those educated women in situations similar to those portrayed in these works.[24] As a group, these narratives, therefore, participate in fictional form in the larger ongoing social and intellectual discourse on reform of Korean family systems initiated by Yi Kwangsu and carried on by his contemporaries. In this connection, Myŏngsuk's suicide letter addressed to the press is intended to publicize this radical re-vision of the parent-children relationship and to transform what is "personal" into "political."[25] Her problem can no longer be confined to her private space of home but must become an issue in the public domain with far wider social implications, calling for a systemic change.

Another important ideological critique sustained in "Death of a Girl" is the gender issue, centering on the aggression of male sexuality and the double moral standard. The narrative exposes the prevailing acceptance of polygamy in Korea and its devastating effects, as personified in the behaviors of Myŏngsuk's father, her sister's one-time husband (Pak Yŏngt'ae), and Min Bŏmjun. The outrageous reaction of Myŏngsuk's mother to her husband's mistress is a case in point: male promiscuity not only inflicts mortification on women but also creates division and antagonism among them as they compete against each other for the favor of men. For the most part, however, men are safe from this female fury, although they are fundamentally responsible for it. The raging emotional outburst of Myŏngsuk's mother is in fact a telling indication of how oppressive for women the Confucian injunction against expressing jealousy had been—one of the criteria on which women could be divorced in traditional Korean society.[26]

Closely related to male sexual license, the issue of concubinage is given special prominence in "Death of a Girl." Underlying this practice is the definition of women's worth in terms of their value in providing sexual service to males and enhancing male social status. As a pseudo marriage form, concubinage is based on male polygamy and endorses the male monopoly of female sexuality, while it stigmatizes a concubine as a parasitical appendage and an

amoral deviant who suffers social anonymity.[27] The situation into which Myŏngsuk and her sisters are forced implies commodification of the female body—making it exchangeable, replaceable, and disposable. The idea of selling the daughters as concubines may have originated from the economic need of Myŏngsuk's parents; nonetheless, such thinking assumes an objectification of the female body as a sexual commodity. The moral degeneration Myŏnguk's oldest sister undergoes testifies to the deadening effect brought on by this kind of reification. Myŏngsuk's labeling of concubinage as "slavery," and her escape from it through suicide, challenge the social mores that perpetuate female sexual servitude and its ready availability. Myŏngsuk's suicide can be interpreted therefore as a form of radical, self-willed exit from a patriarchal culture that has dispossessed women by commercializing their bodies and has offered little in terms of female option and self-validation.

Through the death of the heroine, "Death of a Girl" indicts the gender politics of its author's time. The short story thus is Kim Wŏnju's first fictional articulation of feminist concerns that would constitute the main drive of her literary career, establishing her as one of the foremost spokespersons for pro-women causes in 1920s Korea. As such, the work marks a pivotal first step in her development, not only as a writer but also as a reform-minded social critic committed to a socially engaged view of literature which emphasizes the interventionary function of literature to rectify social wrongs.

NOTES

1. These women writers were contemporaries of Ch'oe Namsŏn (1890–1957) and Yi Kwangsu (1892–?), the two pillars of modern Korean literature, with whom they had close literary and personal associations.

2. Na Hyesŏk took the first, epoch-making step in 1914 by publishing a short feminist essay, "Isangjŏk puin" (Ideal Women), in the magazine *Hakchikwang* (The Light of Study; no. 3, December 1914). *Hakchikwang* was published in Tokyo by the Association of Korean Students in Japan (April 1914–April 1930). For details on the journal, see Kim Kŭnsu, "Hakchikwang e taehayŏ," in *Hakchikwang* [facsimile edition], (T'aehaksa, 1978), 1: 1–7. Kim Myŏngsun, on the other hand, made her literary debut in November 1917 by winning second place in the annual literary contest sponsored by the journal, *Ch'ŏngch'un* (Youth; October 1914–September 1918) published by Ch'oe Namsŏn, for her short story "Ŭisim ŭi so'nyŏ" (A Girl of Suspicion). For comments on the story made by Yi Kwangsu, who served as judge for the contest, see Kim Yŏlkyu and Sin Tong'uk eds., *Ch'oe Namsŏn kwa Yi Kwangsu ŭi munhak* (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1982), 3: 29–32.

3. Kim Wŏnju modeled *Sinyŏja* after Japan's first feminist magazine, *Seitō* (The Bluestocking), which was published from 1911 to 1916 under the leadership of Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971), the Japanese feminist writer and social activist. For detailed information on the publication of *Sinyŏja* and its relationship to *Seitō* and on Kim Wŏnju's life and literary activities, see my article "From Subservience to Autonomy: Kim Wŏnju's 'Awakening,' " *Korean Studies* 21 (1997): 1–30.

4. Kim Wŏnju's articles in *Sinyŏja,* such as "Sinyŏja ŭi sahoe e taehan ch'aegim

ŭl nonham" (On Societal Responsibilities of the New Woman; no. 1), "Uri sinyŏja ŭi yogu wa chujang" (Demands and Opinions of Us, the New Woman; no. 2), "Yŏja ŭi chagak" (Women's Awakening; no. 3), and "Mŏnjŏ hyŏnsang ŭl t'ap'ahara" (First of All, Vanquish the Status Quo!; no. 4), are representative examples.

5. In addition, Na's essay "Sa'nyŏnjŏn ilgi chung'esŏ" (From My Diary Four Years Ago), together with her cartoons depicting Kim Wŏnju's hardworking routine as the editor, was included in its fourth issue (June 1920).

6. Kim's first short story was "Kyesi"(Revelation), published in the first issue of *Sinyŏja.*

7. Kim Wŏnju was to further explore this letter-writing device in two of her later short stories, "Sunae ŭi chugŭm" (Death of Sunae; *Tonga ilbo,* 31 January–8 February 1926) and "Chagak" (Awakening; *Tonga ilbo,* 19–26 June 1926), which are written entirely in epistolary format. This literary technique was first utilized in modern Korean literature by Yi Kwangsu in his "Ŏrin bŏsege" (To My Young Friend, 1917) and flourished during the 1920s. For details on this subject, see Kim Yŏlkyu and Sin Tong'uk eds., *Ch'oe Namsŏn kwa Yi Kwangsu ŭi munhak,* 1: 104–12.

8. The term "Owijang" is not the personal name of Myŏngsuk's father but a title for army generals, who belonged to the five divisions (owi) in the military system in the central government of the Yi dynasty. The Owi system itself was abolished in 1882. See Yi Hŭisŭng, comp., *Kugŏ taesajŏn* (Seoul: Minjung Sŏrim, 1982), 2601.

9. This concept of filial piety is proclaimed as such in the first chapter of the *Hsiao Ching* (The Book of Filial Piety): "The duty of children to their parents is the fountain whence all other virtues spring, and also the starting-point from which we ought to begin our education." See Ivan Chen, tr., *The Book of Filial Duty,* Wisdom of the East (London: John Murray, 1908; reprint, 1920), 16.

10. Kim Tuhŏn, *Han'guk kajok chedo yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Seoul Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 1969), 652.

11. Yi Kwangsu pointed out the deplorable practice of trade in young women in contemporary Korea in his essay "Chosŏn kajŏng ŭi kaehyŏk" (Reform of the Korean Family) in *Maeil sinbo,* 14–22 December 1916. See *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip,* (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1962), 1: 490.

12. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 228.

13. The precept is included in the first chapter of the *Hsiao Ching* and reads: "Our body and hair and skin are all derived from our parents, and therefore we have no right to injure any of them in the least. This is the first duty of a child." See Chen, *The Book of Filial Duty,* 16.

14. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Power Trips and Other Journeys: Essays in Feminism as Civic Discourse* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 145.

15. See Yi Chaesŏn, Kim Haktong, and Pak Chongch'ŏl, *Kaehwagi munhagnon* (Seoul: Hyŏngsŏl Ch'ulp'ansa, 1988), 50–59; also see Cho Yŏnhyŏn, *Han'guk hyŏndae munhaksa* (Seoul: Sŏngmungak, 1969), 65–66.

16. See *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip,* 1: 490–94.

17. See *Yi Kwangsu chŏnjip,* 17: 40, 42–43.

18. Kim Soch'un, "Chang'yu yusŏ ŭi malp'ye: yu'nyŏn namnyŏ ŭi haebang ŭl chech'ang'ham," *Kaebyŏk,* no. 2 (July 1920): 52–58. Another article by Kim Kijŏn, also known by his pen-name, Myohyang sanin, echoes same concern; see Myohyang sanin, "Chongnae ŭi hyodo rŭl pip'anhayasŏ: kŭmhu ŭi puja kwangye rŭl sŏnŏnham," *Kaebyŏk,* no. 4 (September 1920):17–26.

19. The writer's real name has not been identified.

20. Ch'ang'hae kŏsa, "Kajok chedo ŭi ch'ŭngmyŏngwan," *Kaebyŏk,* no. 3 (August 1920): 23–28.

21. *Yŏjagye* was published in August 1917 by the Association of Korean Women Students in Tokyo, for which Na Hyesŏk served as general secretary. The magazine ceased publication in 1920, with five issues in total, and is considered to be the counterpart of *Hakchikwang,* the organ published by the association of Korean male students in Japan. See Sŏ Chŏngja and Pak Yŏnghye, "Kŭndae yŏsŏng ŭi munhak hwaltong," in *Han'guk kŭndae yŏsŏng yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Asea Yŏsŏng Munje Yŏn'guso, Sukmyŏng Yŏja Taehakkyo, 1987), 198–201.

22. For a detailed analysis and a translation of the story, refer to my article "Creating New Paradigms for Womanhood in Modern Korean Literature: 'Kyŏng'hŭi' by Na Hyesŏk," *Journal of Korean Studies*, vol. 10 (forthcoming).

23. The story is included in Kim Sangbae, ed., *Kim Myŏngsun, kkumim ŏpsi sarannora* (Seoul: Ch'unch'ugak, 1985), 135–40.

24. An article in *Kaebyŏk* reports an actual incident of a woman who committed suicide in defiance of her parents' pressure to marry against her will. See Myohyang sanin, "Chosŏn yŏja ŭi kŭmhu haengno," *Kaebyŏk,* no. 3 (August 1920): 29–33.

25. The phrase, "the personal is political," which became the slogan of the American feminist movement in the early 1970s, was the title of an article written by Carol Hanisch. See Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political," in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation,* edited by Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: Old Chelsea Station, 1970), 76–78.

26. The grounds for divorce are encapsulated in the so-called Seven Vices, a set of negative female traits, which included disobeying parents-in-law, producing no son, committing adultery, jealousy, carrying a hereditary disease, talkativeness, and larceny.

27. For a discussion of the social ills of concubinage in Korea, see Kim Tuhŏn, *Han'guk kajok chedo yŏn'gu,* 479–80.