Politics of Literary Materiality: Yun Ihyŏng and Postmillennial South Korean Literature

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Journal of Korean Studies, Volume 27, Number 2, October 2022, pp. 329-352 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press

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In the 1990s, South Korean literature underwent a crisis of relevance due to the changing materiality of cultural production as shaped by globalization, neoliberalism, and technological saturation. Nevertheless, the postmillennial decades have witnessed an efflorescence of new styles and voices in the literary field. Abroad, South Korean literature in translation has achieved unprecedented success in Anglophone publishing. At home, #MeToo has converged with structural critiques against the literary institution, animated by online social movements and new paradigms for understanding relationships between politics, affect, and everyday life. This article begins by exploring these phenomena through the framework of "literary materiality," understood as a set of contradictions about tangible and intangible properties distributed across intransitivity of signs, book-as-thing, codes and networks, material conditions of writerly life, and entities that confer and mediate literary value. The article goes on to examine the case of Yun Ihyŏng, whose oeuvre and activism have mobilized against the culture of literary commodification operating immanently in and across these forms. This article argues that her attempt to claim moral autonomy from the South Korean literary system is a promising vector in the ongoing struggle to disalienate literary culture in the age of neoliberal globalization.

Keywords: materiality, neoliberalism, political literature, feminism, affect, South Korea, Yun Ihyŏng

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Journal of Korean Studies 27, no. 2 (October 2022)
DOI 10.1215/07311613-9859863

In the short story "Rose Garden Writing Machine" ("Rojŭ kadŭn rait'ing mŏsin") by Yun Ihyŏng (b. 1974),[1] Ibi, an aspiring writer, learns about a word processor that her friend Mongsik has been selected to beta test. The device offers stylistic variations of an inputted piece of writing, which transform the original by adding novel nuances and expressions. The story also gives attention to material realities of writerly life that go beyond the technological apparatus. Examples span from personal property to institutional affiliation, including Mongsik's book collection, his workspace and living conditions, and whether the writers have been recognized by the literary establishment. They even extend to what Jacques Rancière has called "materialist primacy of the signifier,"[2] as we find examples of opaque expressions in the converted texts that, like "mute stones," exhibit the intransitivity of things. In the age of neoliberal globalization, Yun's story is emblematic of a set of negotiations that can be found underway across South Korean literature, between genre fiction and "serious literature" (*pon'gyŏk munhak*), print and digital, labor and art, aesthetics and politics, humanism and posthumanism. Moreover, the work helps us track Yun's own transformation into a writer confronting the inequities in South Korea's literary system. This article seeks to explore some of these negotiations and their relationship to what I refer to as "literary materiality" to better understand a crucial turning point in the idea of politics in South Korean literature today.

What do I mean by *literary* materiality as opposed to *textual* materiality? As this special issue demonstrates, textual materiality is a capacious concept. It can include the thingness of the print medium and properties of print that exceed its purely semantic qualities, such as layout, typeface, or colophon. In the face of material variability across "works," debates about how a literary work's unity is constituted and sustained often take the form of Aristotelian distinction between "the substantive" and "the accidentals."[3] One might say, following Terry Eagleton, that the desire to preserve an enduring substance is the desire to locate in the aesthetic artifact the myth of autonomy that the middle-class wanted to cling to in a modern capitalist society.[4] Alain Pottage claims that from a copyright perspective, what allows a literary work to be owned and sold by its author is that it is being imagined as a "transcendently intangible form" by suppressing the "vitality" of the thingly properties of the book.[5] Pottage also draws from Ernst Kantorowicz to illustrate how the concept of artistic authorship was derived from the papal authority ("as a power to create something out of nothing") and resulted from "a cascading of capacities," beginning from the prerogatives of a legislator ("conceded ex officio") to the abilities of the artist ("enjoyed ex ingenio").[6] Kantorowicz's point helpfully suggests that the *author-work-book* triad in thinking through textual materiality must also include *institution*; even in the modern context, the authority of the writer does not purely derive ex ingenio, but through networks of institutional recognition that confer prestige, pedigree, and value on embodied texts as they circulate. Beyond showing that notions of authorship and literary work are historically shaped and legally maintained myths, these

scholars point to how contradictions of literary materiality recapitulate deep-seated anxieties about the contingency of human and artistic sovereignty in the modern era. In the twenty-first century, such contradictions are felt across the immanent intransitivity of signs, books, and other textual objects as things, codes, and networks that enable the experience of literature across thousands of lit screens, writerly bodies without which there would be no new literature, and local and global institutions that recognize texts produced by those bodies as holding literary value. In the domestic context of South Korea, literary materiality is sustained by a host of entities and functions that are inherently hierarchical, such as the *Sinch'un munye* debut system, primary school to university education, memorials and festivals, and public seminars sponsored by corporate entities.[7]

Literary materiality also provides a useful framework for understanding developments in South Korean literature in the past two decades. Since the 1990s and the putative end of the Cold War, the sense of crisis about literature's diminished sociohistorical relevance, perhaps most grimly described by Karatani Kojin as the "apocalypse of literature," has given way to an efflorescence of activities at home and abroad.[8] The 2000s saw the emergence of writers moving beyond well-worn conventions of realism to embrace the possibilities of genre, fabulism, speculative fiction and extending the limits of the literary imaginary beyond the nation-state and historicity. During the 2010s, Sin Kyŏngsuk (b. 1963), Han Kang (b. 1970), and P'yŏn Hyeyŏng (b. 1972) enjoyed critical and commercial success in the Anglophone world, claiming their place in the market of global literature. But when Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* won the 2016 Man Booker International Prize, the translation was met with vocal disapproval by some. One might characterize such grievances as growing pains of a historically marginalized national literature entering "the world republic of letters."[9] Yet this triumphalist narrative cannot dispel concerns that South Korean literature has now been subsumed deeper into the logic of capitalism, this time as an exoticized commodity in the depoliticized "Global Lit" machine, which turns the celebration of ethnolinguistic difference into a profitable, feel-good spectacle.[10] The entrepreneurialization of literary export further complicates our understanding of materiality by introducing translator-translation-agent into the mix, not to mention other profit/prestige-seeking entities (academia included) that mediate the circulation of literary texts. In addition to this condition of estranged textual materiality of translation, there is also the estrangement of text from the medium of print, as literature is digitized and circulated online to compete with other forms of technoculture.

Since the postmodern turn of the late 1990s and early 2000s, South Korean literature has been self-reflexively addressing these developments, while remaining critically engaged with social issues stemming from globalization and neoliberalization. Yun Ihyŏng's oeuvre stands out in that she has combined a speculative-fabulist tendency with what has become, since the mid-2010s, a devout and vocal commitment to political projects. While embracing the techno-mediated daily life

in South Korea, Yun's works do not slip into the sleek, nihilistic abyss found in the celebrated works of postmodernist Kim Young-ha (Kim Yŏngha, b. 1968).[11] Whether Yun's fiction is framed as a postapocalyptic fantasy or set in everyday spaces of contemporary South Korea, it has tended to gravitate toward the realm of interpersonal intimacy while exploring how the personal intersects with the political. Part and parcel of the global fourth-wave feminist movement, her politics constitute a critical response to intersecting effects of patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism in South Korean society,[12] a discursive turn that can be observed across contemporary feminist scholarship and criticism. This discourse pushes the idea of the political beyond procedural democracy, collective action, and mass protest to consider intricacies of affect, boundaries of everyday life, and how the lines between art and politics are policed. Yun has been outspoken about the #MeToo movement and, more recently, the copyright controversy linked to the prestigious Yi Sang Literary Prize, in which she announced that she would "put down the pen" (*chŏlp'il*) to protest unjust practices within the South Korean literary system.

The significance of Yun's act cannot be fully understood without pushing the analysis of society and culture beyond the constraints of Marxist materialism and constructivist understandings of language, power, and subjectivity. A new materialist approach, which allows us to "track the complex circuits at work whereby discursive and material forms are inextricable,"[13] seems all but imperative when South Korean literary culture, conditions of technological immersion, and politics of everyday life are more entangled than ever before. This is to say that the feminist turn toward affect should be understood neither as a purely discursive phenomenon nor as being reducible to technological, economic, or biological forms of materiality in which literary culture is embedded. It recognizes that structural change still requires mobilization and confrontation, but also that speech acts, when amplified through social media, can give rise to new assemblages and embodied intensities primed for praxis. In Yun's case, her vocal critique of the literary field has brought to light underlying structural conditions that prop up the sacred myth of aesthetic autonomy often at the expense of the marginalized. If the power to create "transcendently intangible form" worthy of mass circulation comes not solely ex ingenio but through institutional recognition, refusing this recognition is a way to question this very system. Moreover, Yun Ihyŏng's act demonstrates how politics of literary materiality in the age of neoliberal globalization calls for something more than formal, stylistic, or narrative innovation, or even a widespread recognition and circulation of works from the margins. By the article's end, I will show how Yun's *chŏlp'il* exemplifies a form of freedom within a "zone of indetermination" that interrupts the generalized boundary between literature and politics.[14] Moving against the grain of the culture of literary commodification, it alerts us to aesthetic and political possibilities of the current historical conjuncture.

LITERARY MATERIALITY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Thinking about contemporary politics of literary materiality must include an account of how writerly existence is economically maintained; and for any South Korean author who came of age in the 1990s and early 2000s, their formative years would have been marked in some way by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Even after the IMF-backed recovery of 2000, the middle class found itself substantially depleted, and jobs that had once provided security and upward mobility became fewer and farther between, replaced by part-time and irregular positions (*pijŏnggyujik*) in an expanding gig economy. This neoliberal aftermath would give rise to a new crop of authors who seemed no longer beholden to established protocols for verisimilitude, including Pak Min'gyu (b. 1968), Kim Chunghyŏk (b. 1971), P'yŏn Hyeyŏng (b. 1972), Hwang Chŏngŭn (b. 1976), Kim Miwŏl (b. 1977), Kim Aeran (b. 1980), and Han Yuju (b. 1982). Prominent critic and publisher Lee Kwang Ho (Yi Kwangho) has called this phenomenon "zero-gravity" (*mujungnyŏk*) in a nonpejorative sense; freedom from realism and historicity allowed these writers to pursue "autonomous aesthetics" and "independent construction of one's morals." Their fictional world offered "post-historical and post-realist imagining of de-nationality," which was able to subsume "new media, scientific imagination, and extreme fantasy based on sub-genre grammar and allegorical elements."[15] This move toward denationalized and posthistorical modes of narrativity did not mark a complete break from literature's entanglement in the politics of the personal and the local/national; all of the authors above have in some way addressed post-IMF socioeconomic realities in and outside their fiction.

The translation and broader circulation of some of these authors were helped along by new material circuits of globalization and virtualization. As Jenny Wang Medina has shown, Korean literature in the 2000s became a key cultural asset in state policy embracing globalization. This entailed a process by which literature became "cultural content" (*munhwa k'ont'ench'ŭ*) that could be commodified and exported. Along these lines, South Korea would "append literary production to the advances of digital and popular media" to repackage Korean literature as "K-Literature."[16] There was, then, an evident contradiction in these developments. On the one hand, top-down institutional forces were pushing national branding of literary works to boost South Korea's cultural capital on the global stage. On the other, many authors were already writing as though they had been emancipated from the center-periphery dilemma. How we evaluate literary works from Korea today must in some way address this inherently conflictual process by paying heed to conditions underlying their genesis, accumulation, and disavowal of meanings as they move through geohistorical space-time.

At the level of content, the 2000s also saw a privileging of the transnational (a quality akin to the de-national),[17] as works staged major characters and events of the novel beyond the territorial limits of the nation-state. Lee Hye Ryoung (Yi Hyeryŏng)[18] and Theodore Hughes[19] have diagnosed this turn as symptomatic

of South Korea's "arrival" as a developed and democratized nation-state. For Lee, novels by Kim Young-ha, such as *Black Flower* (2004) and *Empire of Light* (2006), feature male characters who are variously emasculated and demobilized. In Lee's assessment, Kim's fiction seems to be less mourning the failed promise of the sovereign subject and more manifesting the very futility of these enlightenment projects. The downfall of the enlightenment subject has also manifested itself through the rise of the cyborg. Hughes, like Lee, sees forms of alterity as animated by the legacy of Cold War–era struggles; but importantly for Hughes, the terms of alterity are also set by conditions of virtuality as the subject is materially linked to information networks. In *Empire of Light*, about a sleeper agent from North Korea who has assimilated into South Korean society, the protagonist is tracked by the National Intelligence Service with a bracelet so that he becomes a kind of cyborg who must answer to demands of securitization and also, paradoxically, remain permanently in flux, his memory "embodied in a series of continuous relays between the activities of the brain, the movements of the body, and a constantly developing technology."[20] Such networks, of course, are not limited to state targets; they constitute the very fabric of everyday digital communications.

In short, the triumph of global capitalism or the technological interpenetration of everyday life has not necessarily led to a disengagement from the social or an abatement of critique. Yet as the materiality of Korean literary works is reproduced as commodified literary content, circulating globally in translation (*Empire of Light*, for instance, has been published in at least ten languages), literature continues to be framed as spatial property available for capitalist capture.[21] In "World Lite," a scathing critique of the current state of global Anglophone literature, editors of the US journal *n+1* have argued that institutions that profit from and celebrate famous novelists also perpetuate literature's political irrelevance:

> [Global Literature] has its own economy, consisting of international publishing networks, scouts, and book fairs. It has its prizes: the Nobel, of course, but more powerful and snazzier is the Man Booker, and the Man Booker International. Its political arm is PEN. And it has a social calendar full of literary festivals, which bring global elites into contact with the glittering stars of World Lit. Every year, sections of the dominant class fly from Mexico City to have Julian Barnes sign books in Xalapa, or from Delhi to Jaipur to be seen partying with Mario Vargas Llosa.[22]

Here, contemporary literature's materiality includes global networks of production, dissemination, and recognition. The editors claim that what enables the transformation of literature by this multi-armed apparatus into pure celebrity spectacle is that "Global Lit necessarily lacks any oppositional project of form (as . . . international modernism did) or of content (as international socialism did)." This lack of opposition is also what allows one to treat literature "as a self-evident autonomous good," which is also a by-product of Karatani's apocalypse of modern literature and postmodernism's emancipation of literature from political projects.[23]

We also observe this problem in Hwang Jongyon (Hwang Chongyŏn)'s admonishment about the cost of absolute freedom for literature. Drawing from Hegel's remarks on the end of Romantic art, Hwang describes the artist standing "above consecrated forms" and moving "freely of his own account, independent of subject matter and mode of conception in which the holy and eternal was made visible to human comprehension."[24] Hwang warns that complete artistic autonomy also means "one cannot do anything"; art must be "connected to something"; postmodern literature should "find something worth sacrificing its freedom for."[25]

"World Lite," published in 2013, mentions no Korean authors, but later that year, "Korean Lit Comes to America" appeared in *The American Prospect*, in which Kim Seong-kon, the president of the Literature Translation Institute of Korea (LTI Korea), stated, "[Korean authors] should constantly read other foreign writers, so they can learn what the main issues and concerns are among famous international writers." This quest for "more universal themes" to appeal to foreign readers and critics alike has shaped the selection process, in which "foreign publishers are consulted first on what books LTI Korea will subsidize."[26] LTI Korea's investment in a range of activities, including workshops, classes, and visits from foreign publishers, in the name of literary nationalism arguably paid off when Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 2016. Despite the response of general euphoria among Korean literature enthusiasts and the Korean public, this event has also been met with ambivalence. First, there were reports of errors, omissions, and stylistic unevenness in Deborah Smith's translation.[27] Second, there were the pains of assimilation and misreading; as Daniel Y. Kim points out, certain familiar themes may have allowed the novel to be incorporated into the "framework of Anglo-American feminism" or speak to more "ecopolitical concerns."[28] Third, there have been questions about the role Orientalism and the profit-motive played in legitimizing the aesthetic value of Han's novel. In line with the Bourdieuan critique leveled in "World Lite," Dominic O'Key argues that the Booker Prize's self-transformation into the Man Booker International Prize was a "new centralisation" disguised as "globalisation,"[29] seeking to bring in translated literature from far flung cultures as though they were "rare and fabulous creatures."[30] O'Key even reads Smith's capitalization of literary nationalism as a form of "translator-agent-entrepreneurialism."[31] Rightly or wrongly, Han's success in the Anglophone world has fed back to bolster her prestige in South Korea; while she had already been a critically acclaimed writer, now she has become something of a national hero.

The case of *The Vegetarian* demonstrates that, on the one hand, literary materiality in the age of globalization comprises a sprawling network of publishers, media entities, booksellers, lit blogs, university classrooms, YouTube channels, and countless other culture workers around the world, all acting as arbiters of the literary and commercial value of Korean literature as world literature. On the other hand, select cultural institutions, such as the Man Booker Prize and LTI Korea, exercise outsize power in this process, with the combination of

prestige, capital, and institutional legitimacy to negotiate at the gates of the world republic of letters. The fact that profit is being made in the process of translating literature should not be seen, in and of itself, as somehow deplorable, especially when it brings renewed attention or new swathes of readers to deserving authors. What is more problematic, however, is when we find ourselves thinking that "merely to write or read literary books is to enlist, aesthetically and politically, on the side of the angels."[32] Problems multiply when searching for "rare and fabulous creatures"; we use these texts to have our preoccupations lazily mirrored back or to greedily assimilate them into literary modes we are familiar with, absent the work of seeing how the text's "local history is embedded in 'multiple scales of geography' and the nexus of overlapping transnational histories, which is inclusive of [our] own."[33]

If the Man Booker Prize's recognition led to Han Kang's elevation in status, the recent controversy surrounding poet Ko Un (Ko Ŭn, b. 1933) provides a contrasting perspective on how the global discursive flows can shape an author's international reputation in unpredictable ways. For years, Ko had been considered a top-tier candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature, until poet Choi Young-mi (Ch'oe Yŏngmi, b. 1961) called out his pattern of sexual harassment in her poem "Beast" ("Koemul," 2017).[34] Ko's works were withdrawn from textbooks, and a commemorative installation honoring the poet was removed from Seoul's Metropolitan Library. The need to excise not only the offending person from the culture but also the material productions that are imbued with their (offending) personality sheds light on our assumptions about the connection between the artist, their work, and the materiality of things that possess intangibly coalesced properties of both.[35]

Ko Un's swift removal from the literary pantheon is also an example of what some have decried as "cancel culture" (*k'aensŭl k'ŏlch'yŏ*): the phenomenon in which an individual, often a public figure, loses supporters, fans, sponsors, or employment due to something they have done (or not done). Debates are ongoing about whether this phenomenon represents a salutary turn toward an expanded public sphere or a dangerous devolution into mob mentality. Meredith D. Clark has noted that moral panic about cancel culture tends to elide the fact that, before the term was misappropriated by elites, "canceling" was a strategy in the Black vernacular tradition for withdrawing one's attention, presence, time, and money from those whose "values, (in)action, or speech" were intolerably offensive. In other words, it was a way for the marginalized to assert their sovereign control over their own emplacement within a set of unfavorable social relations, through the strategy of "total disinvestment."[36] "Cancel culture," though its current manifestation is unthinkable without the materiality of hyperconnectivity, is also an extension of something more fundamental about our social existence that has now been recoded and commodified by proprietary networks; while the broadcasting trope of "cancellation" follows a categorical binary (you are either on air or off), human relations have always been in flux and dynamically uncertain. The

#MeToo movement sweeping across South Korean society—widely considered to have been sparked by Choi's "Beast"—has empowered ordinary women to perform sovereign claims of disinvestment while simultaneously rethinking the permeable and shifting boundaries of their everyday social existence in ways that exceed the limits of identitarian attachments.

The #MeToo movement in Korea has also led to an invigoration of literary culture illustrating how the social power of literature can be expanded through information networks. Readers were able to leverage the controversy surrounding Cho Namju's (Cho Nam-joo, b. 1978) *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* (2016) by posting "proof shots" (*injŭngsyat*) of the novel on social media accounts, fusing commercial image-culture and politics of representation, the book as physical thing and as virtual commodity-sign. Hashtag activism shows how feminists are bringing together older forms of public protest and virtually mediated forms of solidarity.[37] While the book's status as an international bestseller can be attributed partly to the globalization of #MeToo, we should remember that internet activism has been a major component of mass feminist mobilization within South Korea at least since 2015.[38] Even during literature's crisis of relevance in the 1990s, it was feminism, according to scholar Kwŏn Myŏnga (b. 1965), that managed to restore literature's vitality and "reconstruct its political potentiality." Feminism's social influence has been so profound that it is now "difficult to even discuss the topology of literature, art, and culture in South Korea without accounting for it."[39] The next section explores how works of feminist scholarship and criticism have examined the power of affect, the boundaries of everyday life, and the discursively maintained border between the aesthetic and the political as a sustained response to the socioeconomic transformations of neoliberalism.

RETHINKING THE POLITICAL IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM

The subject of the #MeToo movement allows us to turn again to the situated materiality of writerly bodies at their local sites of production. This section does not focus on #MeToo exclusively but, rather, traces a broader shift in the analysis of the politics of everyday life under way since the neoliberal restructuring of the 2000s. The shift unfolded in the wake of literary and critical discourses mourning older enlightenment-centric forms of political subjectivity that understood the social function of literature as a mediating agent, between fragment and totality, individual and collective, repetition and rupture.[40] To be sure, the shift does not mark the end of politics as collective mobilization; if #MeToo has partly been a response to how hyperconnectivity has facilitated the victimization of women through illicit surveillance technology, women have also struck back using social networks, where "collective experiences of an offending party's (or their proxy's) unjust behavior" could be "discussed, morally evaluated . . . through collective reasoning of culturally aligned crowds."[41] But the new paradigm offers a productive

synthesis of the aesthetic of the personal that dominated the literature of the 1990s and a class-inflected feminist perspective on affect, which is a response to later neoliberal developments. Rather than bemoaning the phenomenon of atomization of the postdemocratization era as an ideological cul-de-sac, it has found in the realm of everyday affects the resources to animate new political capacities.

Kwŏn Myŏnga, who for twenty years has been examining the relationship between feminism, fascism, and (post)colonialism, is a key figure in this turn. Her work has focused on the concept of affect through a three-volume series that began with *Infinite Political Loneliness* (2012)[42] and *Obscenity and Revolution* (2013)[43] and culminated with *Terror of the Female Swarm, Gendered Affect* (2019).[44] These works emerged from a scholarly collective "aff-com: life-research-writing interface"; the group's self-description tellingly emphasizes the immanence of technology (life/work as "interface") alongside the overlapping functions of life and intellectual/creative labor.[45] Her critique shows how modern Korea, embedded within global capitalist, sexist, and racist formations, has enthroned a particular form of legitimate political subjectivity at the expense of marginalized others. By allowing us to focus on the materiality of the body, its inherent foreignness to itself, the contradiction of its givenness and its radical unknowability (as Deleuze quotes famously from Spinoza, "We do not even know what a body is capable of . . . nor the extent of our power"),[46] affect analysis also enables new forms of political animation, recognition, contestation, and solidarity. Kwŏn has called for an expansion of the study of affect beyond Marxian modes of sociocultural analysis, highlighting how feminist lives simultaneously embody theory and praxis by conjuring the figure of the "in-your-face woman" (*matchang ttŭnŭn yŏja*).[47] Particularly inventive is Kwŏn's translation of "affect," a notoriously slippery notion even within affect studies, into *pudaekkida*: (1) to be harried by someone or a situation, (2) to unexpectedly come in contact with a number of people, (3) to run into and collide with something, (4) to suffer a shared experience with someone, (5) to suffer from some discomfort in the stomach (usually from a hangover). In addition to being a colloquial expression, its associations illustrate its fecund political potentiality more vividly than its clinical English counterpart. The translation emphasizes instantly recognizable materiality of our shared struggles in society and the ways in which these experiences overlap with bodily (and by extension, psychic, emotional, and intellectual) responses.

More specifically, *Infinite Political Loneliness* explores affects of "sorrow, loneliness, love, panic, and unease" to better understand how the meaning of the political has evolved in South Korean society. Kwŏn's work is responding to a commonly repeated criticism of the younger generation as being marked by neoliberal political apathy, in contrast to the "abundance of political pathos" that enabled the 386 generation to lead the nation toward democratization.[48] Kwŏn puts forth the idea of "life radius" (*sam ŭi pan'gyŏng*) and argues that the political consists in the struggle to push oneself ("with one's whole body") beyond this delimitation. This is because determining who belongs within or

without the radius of one's life contributes to how the boundaries of one's community are constituted.[49] Kwŏn is notably interested in economic challenges faced by contemporary women writers, linking their struggle for survival and intellectual or creative fulfillment to the plight of trailblazing feminist intellectuals like Na Hyesŏk (1896–1948) and Chŏn Hyerin (1934–1965). One illustrative case is screenwriter Ch'oe Koŭn (1979–2011), whose suicide drew debate about the plight of irregular workers in the neoliberal economy.[50] Kwŏn's focus on the creative class of women is remarkably free from bourgeois anxiety that often marked the protest movement of the 1980s, which then had to be exorcised through organic collaboration with the working class or material (sometimes bodily) sacrifice. Under the current neoliberal order, she is arguing, there are precariats to be found across the arts, the culture industry, and the academy, not just on the factory floor. The knowledge of shared affective burden of precarious life, rather than one's class position or educational pedigree, may have the power to productively relax identitarian attachments.

That Kwŏn's concept of "life radius" bears similarity to Rancière's notion of "distribution of the sensible" is probably no accident. Rancière also searches for the meaning of the political outside norms of institutional democracy. He claims, "Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution"[51] (in South Korea, procedures formalized into a system of governance after the June Democratic Struggle). Rather than calling such a formation politics, he calls it *the police*, which is not so much a state apparatus but "an order of bodies that defines the allocation of the ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying. . . . It is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not."[52] In other words, politics is that which rearranges or disrupts the existing distribution of the sensible. While Rancière tends to emphasize speech ("the sayable") and vision ("the visible") in his formulation and rarely discusses "affect" as such, he is writing from a tradition in which "the aesthetic" encompasses bodily ways of being in the world that certain strands of enlightenment discourse sought to bracket. We see this in Rancière's famous defense of the politics of literature and its capacity to upset or rearrange this order: what is being transformed through literature is not the material base of the world in the Marxian sense, but "the forms of visibility a common world may take" and, in turn, "the capacities that ordinary bodies may exercise in that world."[53] For Rancière and Kwŏn both, the idea of *bodily capacity* (i.e., the materiality of the human) shows how the aesthetic and the political can overlap and enact themselves within the realm of the everyday.

In a similar vein, critic Chang Ŭnjŏng (b. 1984) has called for a rethinking of the discursive boundary that polices the aesthetic and the political. Chang has brought to light the exploitation of labor within the literary field.[54] Her recent essay "Our 2010s" collects events of social significance from the decade and

links them to events that have transpired in the early 2020s, including discrimination against the trans community, COVID-19 deaths suffered by the disabled and the elderly, deaths of delivery drivers from pandemic-induced increases in order volume, and sexual exploitation of minors on Telegram.org.

> As of March 23 [2020], there are 8,961 confirmed cases of Covid-19; fearing infection, we wear masks, wash our hands frequently, install hand-sanitizers everywhere, practice social distancing, and substitute attending classes by going online; yet, in this online world, there are 25,000 viewers participating in the victimization of minors who are being sexually exploited. Is not the reality of women citizens' lives, indeed, a disaster that is not granted the recognition of a disaster? From the 2016 movement to shut down Soranet with its 1 million members, the 2018 case involving Burning Sun and celebrities' group chat, day in and day out, we [women] still experience firsthand, with shaking hands, the nightmarish wretchedness of what we call "the everyday."[55]

While the breathless recit eventually focuses on South Korean society's failure to keep women and minors safe, this critique of gendered violence is derived from a broader political investment in the plight of the socially marginalized, whose suffering has not been granted "recognition of a disaster." She links these instances of violence, discrimination, and neglect to even earlier incidents: the Taegu subway fire of 2003, the Yongsan Tragedy of 2009, the Sewŏl Ferry tragedy of 2014, and the Kangnam station murder of 2015. For Chang, South Korean society of the past two decades has been "collapsing, burning, drowning, and bleeding"; she asks, "What does it mean to 'do literature' in this kind of world?"[56]

To be sure, what Chang laments in her essay is not the complete absence of political engagement by the literary community. (The Yongsan Tragedy,[57] for instance, resulted in the June 9th Declaration of Writers later that year.) Nonetheless, Chang calls out literary critics who insisted on positioning the role of the literary critic as, first and foremost, "selecting published works in recognized journals for discussion."[58] For such critics, the autonomy of this process was fundamentally separate from the realm in which "literary figures hit the streets demonstrating their discontent with the government."[59] Chang sees such attitudes reflected in the common critical response to *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*, which suggests that "literature doesn't do that. It does not enter into political reality, and should remain autonomous."[60] On the other hand, Chang sees a more positive development in the creation of "304 Public Reading," established to commemorate the loss of 304 lives in the sinking of the MV *Sewol* due to the government's corruption, incompetence, and willful neglect. There, literary figures—who sometimes call themselves "workhands" (*ilkkun*)[61]—do not limit their readings to works published in journals but "take seriously the reality at the scene of the public reading, and record the spatio-temporality of the moment to choose to 'assemble to speak' and 'write-live.'"[62] Note how the move to link "writing" and "living" resembles Kwŏn's description of aff-com as "life-research-writing"; moreover, Chang's

understanding of politics aligns productively with Kwŏn's "life radius." To overcome the dubious partition between literature and politics, Chang claims, "what had to change was the self, and the very method by which I related to the other [*t'ain*]."[63]

Kwŏn and Chang's analyses more than suggest that the materiality of writerly lives led by women in positions of socioeconomic and sexual precarity is an overlooked condition of production for South Korean literary culture. By bringing together their insights, we can understand how technological saturation of daily life and the material realities of neoliberal precarity produce affective burdens more acutely felt by gendered subjects. These same conditions, it bears repeating, have also helped shape new bodily capacities and possibilities of shared action. Scholar Jiyeon Kang has shown how "politics of captivation" in online forums draw in viewers and mobilize an "interpretive community" whose opinions on events and social issues quickly outstrip established political scripts or norms. Kang emphasizes that, especially for the younger generation in South Korea, online spaces are not a "virtual domain divorced from actual physical places" but part of "organic experiences" that weave across "private, interpersonal, and public activities."[64] While such interpretive communities can easily become a breeding ground for conspiracy theories and hate groups, they can also bring about a redistribution of the sensible and animate new material capacities for thinking, feeling, and acting.

Though author Yun Ihyŏng is of an older generation, her response to #MeToo in South Korea points to a similar form of "captivation":

> The Kangnam murder case occurred in 2016 when I was 41. I was among the countless "women" who were born that day. I hit the books. It was joyful and stupefying. I was almost always angry. I met amazing women. Enthralled and in shock, I changed many things about myself. Shrines collapsed, idols were shattered, and in the clearing, I began to reconstruct my value system. On October 20th, I was on Twitter during my cab ride home and burst into tears. It was the beginning of a long, merciless journey. I was seeing the world I'd been living in in its raw naked form. I couldn't think about dedicating myself to writing. The only pledge I could muster was that I wouldn't invest writing with more significance than necessary.[65]

This is an account of a political awakening; it also vividly describes how the materiality of hyperconnectivity can reshape the very meaning of the political. Yun becomes awash in intense, conflicting, and transformative affects ("joyful," "stupefying," "angry"). The awakening unfolds via social media, but it also transforms her everyday relationships with people and books, and pushes her to rearrange core values and priorities. Her writing—by then Yun was already a decorated author—becomes of secondary importance. It is even more remarkable that the above quote is part of her response to winning the prestigious 2019 Yi Sang Literary Prize. A year later, Yun would be in the news again, this time for her

denunciation of the institution that sponsored the award. Authors Kim Kŭmhŭi (b. 1979), Ch'oe Ŭnyŏng (b. 1984), and Yi Kiho (b. 1972) had declined the prize in early 2020, while collectively condemning *Munhak sasang*'s unfair copyright policy.[66] Upon learning about the three writers' refusal of the prize, Yun published a lengthy statement on Twitter. While she wished to return the prize, she had already enjoyed its benefits and privileges. Having signed the contract, Yun could not legally extricate her work from it. She spoke of "shame and humiliation" that came with this realization and stated she "could no longer function within or trust the literary world." Nor did she wish to unknowingly contribute to "the unreason, criminality, and violation of rights" of that establishment.[67]

Yun's declaration should not have come as a surprise to readers who had been paying attention to her fiction, which had long been invested in the plight of culture-industry precariats. By and large, Yun's works have drawn praise for their fusion of genre conventions and representation of posthuman subjectivity. Scholars have also examined Yun's exploration of contemporary social issues affecting women and other minority groups, even in works that appear more speculative-fabulist than realist. Still, there has been a tendency to keep the analysis of her literary works and activities of political engagement separate. In the next section, I bring these elements together by focusing on two interrelated themes in her fiction: literary materiality in the age of networked-media saturation and how creative production continues to be embedded within and constituted through the social and the interpersonal. I go on to show how Yun's resistance against the literary establishment demonstrates the viability of human freedom as a political-aesthetic concept even as our everyday lives are overdetermined by material and capitalist processes.

LITERARY MATERIALITY AND THE REAFFIRMATION OF HUMAN AUTONOMY

"Big Wolf Blue" ("K'ŭn nŭkdae p'arang," 2007), the title story of Yun Ihyŏng's second collection, is a macabre fable about P'arang (破狼)—"wolf of destruction"—a computer-programmed wolf designed by a group of close friends in 1996; in 2006, when there is a zombie outbreak, this virtual wolf takes on physical manifestation to rescue its "parents" from turning into zombies. Despite its speculative conceit, "Big Wolf Blue" is grounded in the everyday sociopolitical reality of contemporary South Korea. The main action of the story unfolds on the eve of and in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis. Yun significantly sets the genesis of P'arang on a day of a campus protest in 1996, which the friends participate in only half-heartedly before leaving to see Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*. A decade later, the friends are leading disappointing lives. A precariat of the culture industry, Sara produces review content on books, films, TV dramas. Chaehyŏk works for an advertising agency that is exploiting a rock band consisting

of Indonesian migrant workers. Chŏnghŭi solicits creative content for a company that produces corporate newsletters. It is revealing that the granularity of Yun's work can track the broader culture industry in which literary production is situated; indeed, Sara, when she is not freelancing, writes online fiction that combines "space opera and chick lit"—a clear nod to Yun Ihyŏng's own genre-blending narratives.

At first glance, "Big Wolf Blue" appears to be a critique of political complacency found among Yun's own generation: Ayŏng, the sole survivor among the group, wonders toward the end, "Where did we go wrong? Should we have hit the streets like those other people and fought? . . . I thought if you really sincerely loved something, you could change the world with that. I thought what was fun and interesting could save us."[68] Yet the embrace of globalization and hyperconnectivity is not being dismissed wholesale here. The same global forces of consumption, postmodernism, and cultural hybridity—"what was fun," in Ayŏng's words—played a formative role in Sara's (as well as Yun's) eclectic imagination. When P'arang arrives too late to save three of its parents, the wolf devours them, incorporating their sorrow, disappointment, and anger, and becomes a beastly vessel—or medium—of collective remembering and mourning. By depicting P'arang not only as an agent of carnage but as a guardian who protects Ayŏng from zombification, the story gestures toward the possibility that cultural productions can be dis-alienated from their commodity status by bringing together the lived materiality of people's suffering, grievances, and loss.

If "Big Wolf Blue" transforms generational malaise into an apocalyptic carnival, "Rose Garden Writing Machine" introduces the possibility of annihilating human creativity at the site of literary production itself. As shown above, the eponymous machine "converts" text into different styles of prose. Mongsik describes this function as a translation, rewriting, then embellishment, before eventually settling on the computer jargon "conversion" (*pyŏnhwan*); the story thereby demonstrates an interest in the relationship between textuality and code, writing and computing technology. That the eloquent machine is not networked enhances its aura of the enchanted artifact in an age of the Internet of Things, like a haunted arcade that runs without electricity. Yet, Yun eventually privileges the human in the human-machine assemblage; more specifically, it is the human subject's embeddedness within a social world of curiosity, care, and reciprocity that ends up shaping how the "enchanted materialism" of the device is channeled.[69]

The names of the writing machine's conversion features—like "fence hopping," "de-thorning," or "fragrance zoom-in"—call to mind what Rancière refers to as the intransitive materiality of signs. The opacity of terms and tropes threatens to erode the creative sovereignty of Mongsik, since it introduces unknown signifiers into the system of meaning. Mongsik's friend Ibi agrees that the process of the social has always been embedded within the novel's heterolinguality; in order to cultivate a diversity of perspectives and sensibilities, "writers read other writers, go online, converse, come to realizations, work other jobs, go digging around

everywhere, usually only to come up empty-handed."[70] Another threat of the machine, then, is that it could supplant the author as a creative locus of linguistic ingenuity and their mediating role of representing and reproducing the social. Initially, Ibi tries to have Mongsik destroy the machine. This mood of mischief then gives way to that of sincere intimacy; in a letter from Ibi to Mongsik, written on the machine (but without conversion), she encourages him to use it to his benefit. The letter is full of tenderness, uncertainty, generosity, and hope—standing in stark contrast to an earlier citation of Ibi's creative writing, which is described as "drowning in maggots and languor."[71] Indeed, the evening's encounter transforms Ibi's aesthetic sensibility—one might also say, bodily capacity—which shapes her attitude toward her friend, their relationship, and the meaning of writing itself: "I really like your writing. You say it's fake [*katcha*], that it's not yours, but this is one of the things an author does—they turn what's fake into something real, and if you think about it, there is no such thing as pure originality. Still, this is something we can do: to make something that didn't exist before and put it out there in the world."[72] Ibi's concession to technology's interpenetration into the creative process is balanced by the grace of her (human) blessing that gives Mongsik the courage to more confidently wield the machine's powers.

Mongsik's eventual debut and the related improvement in Ibi's quality of life may be read by some as insufficiently critical of structural conditions; for instance, Yun's story does not level any critique against the logic of the literary system as such. "Rose Garden" appeared in 2011, well before #MeToo in Korea. And reading Yun's statement, "I Am a Woman Writer" ("Na nŭn yŏsŏng chakka imnida"), published over a year before Choi Young-mi's "Beast,"[73] one comes away wondering if she would not handle the story's conclusion somewhat differently today. The statement was made in response to the culture of sexual harassment and assault in the literary field. In it, Yun acknowledges her own complicity via inaction, especially as someone who has probably enjoyed a level of protection as the daughter of an esteemed male author (Yi Cheha, b. 1937). Her condemnation goes beyond structures of gendered hierarchy, calling into question, for example, the common etiquette in which editors address writers as *ssi*, while writers respond to editors as *sŏnsaengnim*, regardless of age. Yun eventually moves from the question of sexism to the line that separates literature from nonliterature. (Why is it that there are so many people doing literature in South Korea, she asks, and yet, the vast majority of them feel excluded from *Han'guk munhak*?) Yun observes that what makes these problems difficult to address is the accepted conventional wisdom that literature somehow exists outside the realm of morality. Over three years before her declaration of *chŏlp'il* on Twitter, we see Yun's uncompromising political sensibility fully formed.

Her latest short-story collection, *Little Hearts Club* (*Chagŭn maŭm tonghohoe*),[74] demonstrates continued investment in these issues without completely letting go of speculative-fabulist narrativity. The story "Sua" (2019), for example, explores the potential for Harrawayan solidarity across cyborg and gendered

subjectivity, a theme she explored in an earlier story, "Danny" ("Teni," 2013). In the same vein, the short allegorical piece "History" ("Yŏksa") engages the problem of embodiment seen in a host of earlier stories such as "Duel" ("Kyŏlt'u," 2011) and "Travels of Kun" ("K'un ŭi yŏhaeng," 2013). And like "Big Wolf Blue," it explores the provocative idea of history as embodied memory experienced across fractured bodies. ("Don't forget . . . this pain, this scent, the wind seeping through nostrils, that you, we, have been torn apart into pieces.")[75] The conceit of the book's title story, originally published in 2017, is disarmingly plain by comparison: Kyŏnghŭi is an aspiring writer who belongs to a humble literary club of mothers ("with zero connection with the literary establishment").[76] As in many of Yun's earlier works, the group consists of those in the culture industry, all presumably employed as "irregulars," and their social identity is primarily determined by their gendered familial roles. As the members set out to join the public demonstration against President Park Geun-hye, the more central political question is whether Sŏbin, who has contributed substantially to the club's publication (but is not a mother), "belongs" in the group. This theme of inclusion/exclusion resonates at the level of both Kyŏnghŭi's personal relationships and Park's national impeachment drama, dealing with the question of who we choose to keep in or out of our everyday lives and why. The hope of reconciling one's fractured subjectivity ("We're bilinguals. Our words are half ours; the other half belongs to those who torment us."),[77] whose objective correlative appears in Yun's more speculative works as grotesque or uncanny forms of posthuman embodiment, is here located amid the more mundane realm of overlapping political and interpersonal relations. Crucially, in "Little Hearts Club," this process of reconciliation cannot neglect the shared conditions of production in which Sŏbin's energies have been invested, regardless of whether she is a mother; again, Yun returns us to the social and collaborative dimension of creative life.

"Our 2010s," published in the webzine *Piyu* the same month Yun declared *chŏlp'il* (and also the work from which Chang Ŭnjŏng's aforementioned essay draws its title), deals directly with the problem of sexual harassment in the culture industry.[78] The short story revolves around Serin, who made an experimental film called *Swarm* in 2004. A #MeToo case erupts embroiling the film's main actor, and Serin's work suffers the fallout. Shortly after Serin's suicide, Kyuhŭi, a mentee and coinhabitant of Serin's, posthumously accuses her of theft, extortion, and abuse. The story is tracking how Yusil and her friends struggle to come to terms with Serin's memory in light of this revelation. It is also concerned with how the convolutions of #MeToo demonstrate the limits of the victor-victimizer binary: the accused actor, for example, was an exploited adjunct; Serin is portrayed as a gifted female director struggling in a male-dominated industry; even Yusil's third-grade daughter accuses a girl she assaulted of having been verbally abusive, then savagely lashes out at her mother when she tries to better understand what happened.

"Our 2010s" also explores the relationship between memory, mediation, and textual materiality in the age of #MeToo:

~~They met in 1999.~~ Yusil cancels out the thought in her mind. Recalling might make it unforgivably beautiful so before it becomes too pretty she strikes a line through it. ~~They befriended each other through blogging, went to the same school. Ŭnbi wanted to become a writer. [ ] enjoyed acoustic music, and Aeryŏng, the only one of the group to major in the sciences, liked to draw and wanted to design games. On December 31, 1999, they met up in Sinch'on for drinks and had a simple party. At eleven, they gave one another blessings. An hour later, the world is coming to an end, and we're gonna go out in style.~~ There are victims. [ ]'s incident hasn't been resolved, and Kyuhŭi too is a victim.[79]

The use of strikethroughs calls into question how textual materiality in a hyperconnected society shapes personal and collective memory, especially in the context of "cancel culture." The brackets used to refer to the actor who is never named in the story accrue greater emotional significance as we learn he was once part of Yusil's group of friends. The brackets also stand in tension with the strikethroughs (often utilized on Korean websites), which still allow "the past" to remain legible. (The next stage of "cancellation" might be a more complete disavowal and, eventually, erasure.) Taken together, the strikethroughs and the brackets problematize the binary logic of "canceling" by invoking the ghost of the palimpsest's residual materiality and by illustrating how the latter's aesthetic of accretion can only be approximated by the print format. In other words, Yun's work is both deeply sympathetic to the politics of #MeToo and attuned to the emotional, moral, and philosophical complications they entail. Online discourse has the power to shape the limits of what is allowed to be said or felt, even to oneself, as Yunsil polices her own sentimental reflection. Yet, Yun is neither a technological determinist nor a postmodern nihilist; literature remains a medium that can outstrip the material and discursive constraints of a hyperconnected capitalistic world by animating a subjectivity that takes social responsibility as seriously as the claim to artistic and individual autonomy.

Believing in literature's power to renegotiate the material and discursive constraints is not the same as believing in literature as a social institution that seeks to maintain its structures of hierarchy and means of production. As I have illustrated, Yun's belief in the former can be found across her diverse yet remarkably unified oeuvre; her misgivings about the latter eventually cohered into vocal solidarity with #MeToo and against the South Korean literary establishment. Yun's rejection of the idea that literary figures exist on an extramoral plane is reminiscent of Bruce Robbins's call to academics that they move beyond preaching from a position of assumed superiority to pursue concrete forms of collaborative action on their own turf.[80] But Yun's act of *chŏlp'il* deserves special attention for its sacrificial and symbolic significance. Her act offers a way out of what Hwang Jongyon described as the trap of postmodern literature, that art must be "connected to something," that it "must find something worth sacrificing its freedom for." On the one hand, Yun's

act relinquishes her freedom as an author within a hierarchical system; on the other, it succeeds in expressing freedom in Henri Bergson's sense, an act that captures with "such intimate intensity the uniqueness of our situation and our position within it" so that the act is incorporated into the very process of our change, both expressing and transforming us.[81] If there is for every living entity "'a fringe' of freedom, a zone of indetermination that elevates it above mere automated responses to given stimuli,"[82] Yun may have found a way, despite the formidable discursive and material constraints, to leverage her personal biography, creative works, and institutional positionality to express a kind of moral freedom that is authentically her own.

Yun's affirmation of human autonomy is especially significant for having come from an author aesthetically drawn to posthuman imaginaries. In response to the continuing prominence of new materialist discourses today, Paul Rekret has persuasively cautioned that such ontological speculations may be dangerously obfuscating the ways in which the dualist logic of possessive individualism continues to shape labor's abstraction and conversion into property, "as a means to preserve wealth and the associated league of unfreedoms to which the 'free' subject of labour is compelled."[83] Within this problematic, Yun's act might be seen as an attempt to negotiate across the overdetermining materiality of tangible and intangible realms of production, acquisition, appropriation, and circulation by challenging our understanding of work, ownership, and artistic autonomy. The act simultaneously resists capitalism through the classic refusal to work and discursively intervenes on how the concept of "art work" has been inscribed into legal and cultural systems to exploitive, even violent, ends. "Not working, it occurred to me, was the only way to protect my work," she wrote on Twitter. "Therefore, I will give up my status as author [*chakka*]." Here, she is claiming an intangible yet authentic connection to her oeuvre and affirming that an author's actions in life affect what their work means, and that this authorial capacity exceeds any legal or institutional systems of recognition. Her act is "cancellation" both in the absolute and the dialectical sense; it is absolute as a strategy of "total disinvestment" from the system, an exercise of one's sovereign claim to cut ties from a problematic set of social relations, which is overdetermined by capitalism and patriarchy. But it is also sublation; by suspending her authorial status as prescribed by the system without any guarantee of restoration, Yun may be mobilizing new capacities, both through the works she has already written and in the discursive realm "outside" the system. "Now that I plan to permanently stop writing," she declared, "I have earned back a little of the right to speak." Even without returning, she remains free to help bring change to material conditions that constitute the literary field. If she does return, one hopes it will be to another kind of system, in which the very terms of what constitutes the literary will have shifted. For now, by giving up her status as author, she is keeping the question of what it means to be a writer relevant and alive.

NOTES

I want to thank the special issue editors Ksenia Chizhova and Olga Fedorenko and the anonymous reviewers for their illuminating comments. I would also like to thank all the participants of the "Textual Materiality in Korea" workshop, especially Steven Chung and Dahye Kim, whose feedback during and after the workshop proved invaluable for developing the ideas in this article.

1. Yun I., *K'ŭn nŭkdae p'arang*, 95–144.
2. Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 5.
3. Greg, "Rationale of Copy-Text," 21.
4. Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 9.
5. Pottage, "Literary Materiality," 424.
6. Ibid., 410.
7. "Areas for distribution may be extensive," Kwŏn Myŏnga writes, "but [the system] oversees vast realms" (*Yŏja tte kongp'o*, 71–72).
8. J. Hwang, "After the Apocalypse of Literature," 102–25.
9. Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*.
10. Blumenkranz, Gessen, and Savaal, "World Lite."
11. For an in-depth discussion of Kim's paranoid epistemology of South Korea's media-driven society, see Shin, "Beyond Representation and Simulation," 261–89.
12. Yoon, "Between Patriarchy and Neoliberalism," 45–64.
13. Coole and Frost, "Introducing the New Materialisms," 27.
14. The term "zone of indetermination" is derived from Henri Bergson and explicated later in this article (*Mind-Energy*, 17).
15. K. Lee, "Cultural Hybridity in Contemporary Korean Literature," 44–45.
16. Wang Medina, "At the Gates of Babel," 399.
17. Transnational and de-national narratives may manifest distinct aesthetics but share the common goal of overcoming the discursive limits of the national imaginary.
18. H. Lee, "Transnational Imagination and Historical Geography of Twenty-First-Century Korean Novels."
19. Hughes, "'North Koreans' and Other Virtual Subjects."
20. Ibid., 108–9.
21. Cheah, "World Against Globe."
22. Blumenkranz, Gessen, and Savaal, "World Lite."
23. Ibid.
24. J. Hwang, "After the Apocalypse of Literature," 112.
25. Ibid., 113.
26. Ferhman, "Korean Lit Comes to America," 83.
27. C. Yun, "You Say Melon, I Say Lemon"; and Parks, "Raw and Cooked."
28. D. Kim, "Translations and Ghostings of History," 380.
29. O'Key, "Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*," 13.
30. Ibid., 15.
31. Ibid., 16.
32. Blumenkranz, Gessen, and Savaal, "World Lite."
33. D. Kim, "Translations and Ghostings of History," 393.

34. For English-language coverage of the scandal, see Bo, "#MeToo Poem that Brought Down Korea's Most Revered Poet."

35. Indeed, Choi's poem also plays on the trope of bodily defilement by describing the voluminous output of "En" (stand-in for Ko), as being faucetlike, and the poetry that comes out as "shit water," which "the piteous masses unknowingly drink up."

36. Clark, "DRAG THEM," 88.

37. Kang H., "Chŏlp'il, mundan ŭi wigi."

38. Ibid.

39. Kwŏn, *Yŏja tte kongp'o,* 85.

40. See Kim M., "Pigŭkchŏk segye insik ŭi hoebok ŭl wihayŏ"; and Hwang C., *Piruhan kŏt ŭi k'anibal*.

41. Clark, "DRAG THEM," 89.

42. Kwŏn, *Muhan hi chŏngch'ijŏk in oeroum*.

43. Kwŏn, *Umnan kwa hyŏngmyŏng*.

44. Kwŏn, *Yŏja tte kongp'o*.

45. Scholar and critic Ham Ton'gyun also recognizes the aff-com series as demonstrative of how quickly and widespread affect (*chŏngdong*) is being adopted as a concept in South Korean literary studies ("Han'guk munhaksa ttonŭn Han'guk hyŏndaesi," 73–79).

46. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 226.

47. Kwŏn, *Yŏja tte kongp'o*, 6–7.

48. Kwŏn, *Muhan hi chŏngch'ijŏk in oeroum*, 18–19.

49. Ibid., 19–20.

50. Kwŏn goes on to elaborate that in 2009, there were 180,000 workers in the creative industry. Among them, 63 percent earned less than 1 million KRW per month (*Muhan hi chŏngch'ijŏk in oeroum*, 45–46).

51. Rancière, *Disagreements*, 28.

52. Ibid., 29.

53. Rancière, *Politics of Literature*, 30.

54. Even as a prominent critic, Chang had earned an average of only 460,000 KRW per month for the past eleven years (Yi, "Maedang 5,000-wŏn ŭi sam").

55. Chang, "Uri ŭi 2010-nyŏndae," 9.

56. Ibid., 11.

57. In January 2009, residents occupied an abandoned building in Yongsan to protest urban redevelopment. Five protestors and a police officer died during the clash.

58. Kwŏn Myŏnga similarly seeks to expand the definition of criticism (*pip'yŏng*), as a form of entering the scene of action to encounter a "you" that resides beyond the uniqueness of the "I." Criticism must go beyond "conferring aesthetic value" or "adhering to regulation"; it must reach "an existential realm" of dialogue through intersubjective affective encounters (*Yŏja tte kongp'o*, 376).

59. Chang, "Uri ŭi 2010-nyŏndae," 13–16.

60. Ibid., 18.

61. Kim C., "Immal ro kiŏk haja '304-nangdokhoe.'"

62. Chang, "Uri ŭi 2010-nyŏndae," 20.

63. Ibid., 22.

64. J. Kang, "Internet Activism Transforming Street Politics," 752.

65. Sin, "SF, p'ant'aji, riŏllijŭm aurŭnŭn tach'aeroun chakka Yun Ihyŏng."

66. Kim Y., "Kim Kŭmhŭi, Ch'oe Ŭnyŏng iŏ Yi Kiho chakka do Yi Sang Munhaksang 'pannap.'"

67. The full declaration can be read online: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qcs47mFXSVq9Ie3jty3Kg3PlvbMIYK93NrIen4e_sHY/edit (accessed May 31, 2021).

68. Yun I., *K'ŭn nŭkdae p'arang*, 138.

69. The phrase "enchanted materialism" comes from Jane Bennett's characterization of vital materialism (Coole and Frost, "Introducing the New Materialisms," 9).

70. Yun I., *K'ŭn nŭkdae p'arang*, 255.

71. Ibid., 233.

72. Ibid., 266.

73. Yun I., "Na nŭn yŏsŏng chakka imnida, 193–200.

74. Yun I., *Chagŭn maŭm tonghohoe*.

75. Ibid., 350.

76. Ibid., 10.

77. Ibid., 12.

78. Yun I., "Uri ŭi 2010-nyŏndae."

79. Ibid.

80. Robbins, "Sweatshop Sublime," 94.

81. Grosz, "Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom," 146–48.

82. Ibid., 149.

83. Rekret, "Critique of New Materialism: Ethics and Ontology," 233.

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