Rousseau's *Confessions*, the I-Novel of Japan, and the Confessional Novel of Korea, Focusing on *Futon* by Tayama Katai and *Mansejeon* by Sang-seop Yeom

Tae-Hyeon Song
Ewha Institute for the Humanities, Ewha Womans University
52, Ewhayeodae-gil, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul 03760 Republic of Korea
E-mail: solte@ewha.ac.kr

Abstract The interest in the modern self, which originated in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, led to the birth of the "I-novel" in Japan and the "confessional novel" in Korea. Whereas Western naturalism captures others and the individual in relation to society, "Japanese naturalism" usually describes a writer's private life in a space that is unconnected to society. This practice comes from *Futon* (蒲 團) by Tayama Katai, which is regarded as "prototypical shishōsetsu." The fact that the beginning of the 20th century was the time when sovereignty was lost was an opportunity for the Korean confessional novel to be significantly differentiated from the Japanese I-novel. As a result of reflecting the historical reality of the ethnic community, the Korean confessional novel has not an extreme individualistic aspect but a socialized aspect instead. In *Mansejeon* (만 세 전), a typical confessional novel by Sang-seop Yeom, the inner side and sociality interact with each other, incorporated into a single subject of willingness to overcome the reality of colonization. Although *Confessions* by Rousseau gave the same task of forming the modern self to Japan and Korea, the Japanese and Korean writers carried out the task differently in the specificity of the historical and political situations faced by each country.

Key Words Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Tayama Katai; Sang-seop Yeom; I-Novel; Confessional Novel

Author **Tae-Hyeon Song** is Professor at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, South Korea. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Grenoble III, in France, and has published articles on French literature (Voltaire, Rousseau, Bachelard, Durand) and comparative studies between Eastern and Western cultures. Song has also written three books, *Great Adventurers of the Imagination, Image and Symbol*,

and *Fantasy*. He has served as the editor in chief of *The Journal of East-West Comparative Literature* (The Korean Society of East-West Comparative Literature). This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2007-361-AL0015).

Rousseau's *Confessions* and Self-Exploration

The essential element of "modernity" in modern literature is "the awakening of the modern self." A representative author who presented literature that explored the modern self is Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Through his *Confessions*, Rousseau attempted to reveal his true self. He developed a style of confession that makes a record of an individuated self. As Jean Starobinski observed, "Rousseau is the first and only one who has drawn a complete portrait of himself. For the first time, a human has drawn oneself as is" (224).

Of course, autobiography existed before Rousseau: *Confessions* by Saint Augustine and *Essays* by Montaigne are typical works. However, in the case of Augustine, a self is identified in terms of his relationship with God, and his personal experience is a significant means of revealing the history of salvation and God's grace. Meanwhile, although Montaigne attempts to explore his self, the intellectual self is noticeable in his case. The motto "What do I know? (Que sais-je?)" represents the main interest of self-exploration. Rousseau's *Confessions* has a characteristic that is different from the autobiographies of Augustine or Montaigne given that it explores "who am I, who is filled with the concern of modern consciousness and contradiction" (Trousson 193). Moreover, his autobiography seems to be differentiated from the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, which was Franklin's autobiography mostly covers his external and public lives, whereas Rousseau's *Confessions* attempts to take a journey into the inner self (Damrosch 444). In "Ebauches des Confessions," Rousseau states that he "should not record the history of the events themselves, but rather record the state of his own soul in accordance with the occurrence of the events" (1150). He aimed to reveal his inner self by facing not only the good-natured side of the self but also the ugly side.

Rousseau had a firm awareness that he was unique. "I am not made like any one I have seen; I dare believe I am not made like any one existing. If I am not better, at least I am quite different" (5). He makes a confession that reveals himself "exactly according to nature and in all its truth" (3). In *Confessions*, Rousseau explores his unique experience and traces the development of his own consciousness. To him, the self is the subject and target of exploration by the creator as well as the created. Rousseau does not faithfully reproduce a self that pre-exists objectively but forms a "self" through reflection on and writing about

himself. As Rousseau explores his own identity while writing the autobiography, he also creates his self, and then, he presents the self he creates to the readers.

Not only does Rousseau think that he is a unique human, he also emphasizes that his work *Confessions* is "a work which has no example, and whose execution will have no imitator" (5). Moreover, he expected this autobiography to be "a book of reference for a comparison that will be used first in the human studies" (3). However, contradictory to Rousseau's expectation, his book has not been used often in human studies; instead, it played a pioneering role for many Romantic writers after Rousseau in creating a unique self. As was noted by Gustave Lanson, a French historian and literary critic, Rousseau's *Confessions* opened the door to romanticism, which is essentially a display of the self (étalage du moi) (458). For example, as did Rousseau, English romantic writer William Wordsworth pursued the formation of a unique self throughout his lifetime and produced *The Prelude*, which is an autobiographical prototype, in the form of a "romantic quest" to explore the self through a journey. Meanwhile, the group of romantic writers who respected individuality determined that novels, a free literary genre, were more appropriate for meeting the inner needs of romantic literature than were poetry or plays, whose forms are limited, and thus developed the "personal novel" ("roman personnel") (Harkness 441–449), which reveals the self and emotions through a novel.

As with the vitalization of creative literature that emphasizes the self and individuality in the era of romanticism in the West after Rousseau, a new literature that emphasizes self and individuality was developed in the early 20th century in East Asia. Japanese and Korean writers attempted to honestly reveal their inner sides and, in this process, were significantly stimulated by Rousseau's *Confessions*. In an essay titled "The Self Discovered in Rousseau's *Confessions*" (1909), Tōson Shimazaki describes the shock that he received when he read *Confessions* for the first time in 1894: "In those days, I was suffering from various difficulties, and I was depressed when I encountered Rousseau. As I became involved in the book, I felt as it brought out a self [*jibun*] that I had not been hitherto aware of…I felt that through this book I was beginning to understand, though vaguely, modern man's way of thinking and how to view nature directly" (Suzuki 41).

Discovering the self by reading Rousseau's *Confessions* was possible for Shimazaki because he already had a critical mindset related to the self. In East Asia, the interest in the self, the "individual," and the "modern self" began at the end of the 19th century. In the beginning, this interest arose with regard to democracy and ideas of human rights, but it later spread into the literary and artistic domains. The Western thinker who received the most attention in this process was Rousseau; in the early 20th century in East Asia, Rousseau received the enthusiastic attention of many intellectuals to

the point that he was considered a writer who represented "modernism." Rousseau influenced the formation of the ideal of civil liberties through *The Social Contract* and influenced the formation of the modern self through *Confessions*; in particular, he had "a profound impact on the autobiographical novels of the Japanese Naturalists" (Suzuki 152). Hideo Kobayashi defines the I-novel, which is a literary genre that is representative of Japanese Naturalism, as "one's honest confession being transformed into a novel" and regards the Western novel that falls under such a definition as the "I-novel." Kobayashi argues that I-novels, including *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Goethe, *Oberman* by Sénancour, and *Adolphe* by Benjamin Constant, originate from the self-exploration of Rousseau's *Confessions* (Kobayashi 84-87).

The interest in the modern self, which originated in Rousseau's *Confessions*, led to the birth of the I-novel in Japan and the confessional novel in Korea. First, let us explore the Japanese I-novel, and then the Korean confessional novel.

The Japanese I-Novel *Futon* and the Individual Self

Through their encounters with concepts including the individual and the self, which were developed in the modern West, modern East Asian writers faced the task of forming a modern self. Because they considered the novel to be a representative literary genre that embodied the modern spirit, they gave privileged status to this genre. They believed that the novel was the most prominent medium that could directly reveal the truth of life, and they determined that the true self, the true individual, and the inner world of a writer formed the core of the modern novel. Tomi Suzuki observes that the new notion of the *shōsetsu* ("novel") as "the ultimate means of revealing the 'truth' (*shinri*) of life and the universe through the 'realistic representation' (*mosha*) of 'human feelings' or 'human nature' (*ninjō*)" spread rapidly among Meiji intellectuals (Suzuki 23). Exploring the individual and the self through a novel was a matter of great interest for the East Asian writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The trends in literary thought that led the West (particularly France) in this period were realism, naturalism, and symbolism. The Japanese writers who were the first and most active in following these trends of Western literary thought in East Asia were interested particularly in naturalism. In the process of accepting the naturalism of the West and redefining this idea, transformation took place in a Japanese style. Japanese naturalism considered the faithful reproduction of characters' private lives in novels and individual self-exploration to be of the utmost importance. However, the ideology that was mainly interested in the individual or the self in Western literature was romanticism, and Western realism and naturalism were the ideologies that resulted from an opposition to literature's bias toward individuals. Unlike the trends in Western literary thought, the Japanese literary world regarded Rousseauism as

representative of naturalism. For example, the author of *Ten Lectures on Literature in Modern Europe*, which was read often in the early 20th century in Japan and Korea, understands Rousseau's "return to nature" as a naturalistic ideology and introduces Rousseau as a figure who advocated naturalism (Kuriyagawa 198). Additionally, in *Sixteen Lectures on Thought in Modern Europe*, Rousseau is introduced as a "leading person on naturalism" (Nakazawa and Ikuta 56). The author of this work understood the respect for "nature as it is" and the exclusion of artificiality and technique as naturalistic elements and argued that Rousseau's *Confessions*, in which such elements were expressed literally, was a pioneering work of naturalism. Of course, the author was aware that Rousseau was associated with romanticism. Thus, the author inserted the fact that Rousseau, who is "the leading person of naturalism," is also "the father of romanticism" (Nakazawa and Ikuta 57). From the perspective of Western literary ideologies, Japanese naturalism was formed out of the awkward combination of the pursuit of the modern self and naturalism.

As the Japanese literary circle that developed "Japanese naturalism" pursued the concept of an independent individual, it developed the "I-novel" (*shishōsetsu*), which has been defined as a work that honestly records an author's own private life and experiences and a work in which the protagonist and author are the same person. It was believed that the true image of a self is most clearly revealed in the I-novel (Suzuki 2; Karatani 76). However, in fact "the voice and perspective of the protagonist in the works regarded as I-novels do not necessarily overlap with those of the narrator, who does not have to be identified with the author" (Suzuki 5). In view of this point, Suzuki states that "the reader's expectations concerning, and belief in, the single identity of the protagonist, the narrator, and the author of a given text ultimately make a text an I-novel" (6), and he redefines the I-novel.

The original I-novel is *Futon (The Quilt* 1907) by Katai Tayama (田山花袋, 1871-1930). A beautiful young female student called Yoshiko, who idolized Tokio's literary works, comes to Tokio, a lonely middle-aged writer who has a family, in order to study literature. Tokio forms a student-teacher relationship with the female student and keeps her at his own house for the first month and then at his sister-in-law's place, and, getting along closely with her, he becomes for her a teacher as well as a guardian. Yoshiko "added beautiful color to his bleak existence and gave him a sort of limitless strength" (Katai 48). However, when Yoshiko later gets a boyfriend (Tanaka), Tokio feels a great sense of loss and is anguished. He describes his state of mind at the time in the following manner: "He was sad, truly deeply sad. His sadness was not the sadness of florid youth, nor simply the sadness of lovers. It was a more profound and greater sadness, a sadness inherent in the

innermost reaches of human life. The flowing of moving waters, the withering of blossoming flowers-when encountering that irresistible force which is deep within nature, there is nothing as wretched nor as transient as man" (Katai 55). When Tanaka quits attending university and moves to Tokyo to study literature and live in the same city with his lover, Tokio, who is driven by "unreasonable jealousy and improper feelings of love" (Katai 69) ultimately meets with Yoshiko's father to discuss the matter and returns her to her hometown. Tokio goes into the empty room that Yoshiko used and smells the ribbon into which her hair oil was absorbed, having taken it out of the desk drawer.

> He then discovers a quilt that Yoshiko had always used and takes it out. The familiar smell of a woman's oil and sweat excited him beyond words. The velvet edging of the quilt was noticeably dirty, and Tokio pressed his face to it, immersing himself in that familiar female smell. All at once he was stricken with desire, with sadness, with despair. He spread out the mattress, lay the quilt out on it, and wept as he buried his face against the cold, stained, velvet edging. The room was gloomy, and outside the wind was raging. (Katai 96)

This novel, which vividly depicts the ugly inner side of Tokio's jealousy and distress, so strongly impacted many writers that it determined the direction of the I-novel and Japanese naturalism. Whereas Western naturalism captures others and the individual in relation to society, Japanese naturalism usually describes a writer's private life in a space that is unconnected to society. This practice comes from this work by Katai and is regarded as "prototypical shishōsetsu" (Fowler 16).

It is not true that there were no works in which sociality and self-confession were combined in the literary tradition of Japanese naturalism. *Hakai (The Broken Commandment*, 1906) by Tōson Shimazaki, which was published a year before *Futon,* presents the agony of a teacher who despites his father's commandment to never reveal his identity in Japanese society, in which social discrimination remained, eventually reveals that he is by birth of a low class (born into a butcher's family). After *Hakai* and *Futon* were published, they competed with each other in the Japanese literary world, and the result was that *Futon* achieved a complete victory. Later, Shimazaki published autobiographical novels of the same type as Katai's *Futon,* including *Harud,* an autobiographical novel that describes himself and the people surrounding him, and *Shinsei*, in which he confesses to having an affair with his niece. *Hakai* was also abandoned by the writer himself. After a change in direction by Shimazaki, *Futon*-type novels became the mainstream of the Japanese I-novel and modern literature.

By analyzing himself in *Confessions,* Rousseau attempted to show what natural man ("l'homme naturel") is in a corrupted society (Lanson 457). In addition to Rousseau's thought, the "I" in autobiographical novels by André Gide, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce, who emerged after naturalism, refers to an I that has gone beyond a self as an atomized individual and "that had already been fully socialized" (Suzuki 57). In this aspect, many Japanese critics evaluate that Japanese novels were led in the wrong direction by Katai. For example, Hideo Kobayashi argues that although Japanese I-novel writers advocated naturalism, they introduced the technique of European naturalism without understanding the social forces that had led to the creation of European naturalist novels (Kobayashi 87; Suzuki 57). Mitsuo Nakamura criticized that the I-novel developed a "distorted self" that seemed to be contrary to the "socialized self" in the modern European novel (Nakamura 43). According to Nakamura, the work that is the "monument" of the modern Japanese novel is *Hakai* by Shimazaki. However, with the publication of *Futon* (1907), "upright" growth, which advanced into true realism, was distorted. Nakamura argues that the success of *Futon*, which was the starting point of the I-novel tradition, blocked the achievement of *Hakai,* which is a novel of pure modern realism, and the easy success of *Futon* distorted the notions of both realism and literature (Suzuki 65).

Meanwhile, Kojin Karatani did not negatively evaluate *Futon* by Katai. He states that the reason *Futon* was sensationally received was that it depicted sexuality in a different way than it existed in Japan. He observed that many modern writers including Katai and Shimazaki had become Christians, and the institution of "confession" of the Christian tradition found the presence of sexuality by repression, "a sexuality which has been unknown prior to that time in Japanese literature" (79). He insinuated that the reason *Futon* had a bigger impact than *Hakai* by Shimazaki, which was much closer to a Western novel, was the combination of three factors: confession, truth, and sex (80). Karatani did not see this combination as a distortion of Western literature but rather, argued that the "power of overturn," which is a main factor of Western society, is reflected plainly in *Futon*. In *The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Fiction*, Edward Fowler emphasizes that the I-novel is not a distortion of naturalistic literature imported from the West but is rather based on the traditional Japanese way of thinking about literature (Fowler xvii).

Regardless of the negative or positive evaluations of the I-novel, the self that is socialized in the I-novel or the self in a society was not addressed properly, and thus it is ultimately difficult to deny the absence of sociality and the contentment of an individual self. The I-novel captures the anxiety or fear that occur at home in the relationship between a man and a woman and between parents and a child, but it rarely describes the anxiety or fear that occur through identity, status, and the gap between rich and poor. The I-novel can

be said to have reached a kind of "tacit agreement" that does not address social reality.

Japanese naturalist writers do not write about the individual in the context of society and the era, but instead narrow down their interest to themselves and their personal lives, portraying the writer as a "problematic individual." This is attributed to the period of Japanese nationalism during the early 20th century, when the emperor's power escalated, and the preparation for and execution of the Japanese imperialist invasion was underway. The new ideological trend in Japan of pursuing modernization, liberty, and civil rights was swept back by the emergence of nationalism and militarism. As a result, Japanese naturalist writers were psychologically disappointed, and their lack of interest in politics led them to delve into their own personal lives within a space that was closed off from social reality. Conversely, the Korean confessional novelists during the early 20th century could not restrict themselves to descriptions of personal life because they were suffering under the Japanese imperialist invasion and colonial regime. They wrote confessional novels about their internal struggles against the reality of colonization.

Mansejeon by Sang-seop Yeom and Awakening to the Reality of the Colony

Discovery and exploration of self was as important a task for modern Korean writers as it was for Western or Japanese writers. The style selected by many modern Korean writers to pursue a "deepening of a modern self" was the "confessional novel." The confessional novel was the main literary style of early modern literature, which Korean writers formed as they encountered *Confessions* by Rousseau or the Japanese I-novel on the foundation of the traditional confessional narratives of Korea. According to researchers in Korean confession literature, many writers published confessional novels from the 1910s to the 1930s. These novels acknowledged an inner side by using a variety of formats, including letters, dialogue, and wills, in order to pursue a true self and discover identity. Although the Korean confessional novel was formed alongside the Japanese I-novel, there are differences between them. The Japanese I-novel usually turns an author's direct experience into a novel very faithfully and uses third-person narration, which is customary (Suzuki 5). However, the Korean confessional novel generally gives a weak reproduction of an author's own experience compared with the Japanese I-novel and usually is written in the first person (Yu 38-39).

Mansejeon (*Before the Korean Independence Movement*, 1924) by Sang-seop Yeom (염상섭 , 1897-1963), which is regarded as "the true starting point of the Korean modern novel," is a medium-length novel that is evaluated as having "completed" a "confessional style" that was experimented with in an early trilogy (*Dark Night*, *New Year's Eve*, *A Tree Frog in Specimen Room*). This work, in which the first person narrator

recalls "the winter of the year before the independence movement in Korea" (Yeom, *Mansejeon* 7) draws a journey that begins at the point at which In-hwa Lee, who was studying in Tokyo, determines to return to Seoul after receiving news by telegram that his wife is seriously ill and that closes at the point when he eventually loses his wife and goes back to Tokyo. During his trip, In-hwa Lee keenly feels the tragic reality of the Joseon (Korean) people who were colonized by Japan. At the Shimonoseki ferry, the protagonist learns that Japanese people enjoy huge profits by luring and selling Joseon farmers to Japan and that Joseon workers are dying miserably due to harsh labor. As In-hwa Lee lands on Busan and sees that many buildings in Busan were taken over by the Japanese and renovated in a Japanese style, he feels sad about "the fate of poor people dressed in white." A Joseon *gat* merchant that he meets on the train tells Lee that he ties a topknot and wears *gat* because it lessens the suffering, even if he who does not speak Japanese is treated contemptuously; after hearing this, In-hwa Lee feels sorrow for that servile way of living. Meanwhile, he criticizes his own family. His brother, whom he meets in Gimcheon, expresses that he is very happy about the tripled price of his house despite the fact that his neighborhood is changing into a Japanese village. Their father is on the watch for a government position by joining a pro-Japanese group. This work itself reveals a cross-section of the terrorism of Japanese imperialism through a Japanese detective who follows and monitors In-hwa Lee throughout his trip, two young Joseon men who were terrified in front of Japanese military police, and a scene in which Japanese policemen look after four or five Joseon people who are tied up, including a woman with her baby on her back.

The image that best summarizes the reality of Joseon that In-hwa Lee witnessed is of a "cemetery." Specifically, he defines the colony of Joseon as "a cemetery in which maggots are crawling." His brother does not want to bury his family, including his parents, in the cemetery because of the consciousness of appearing decent in the eyes of others. However, In-hwa Lee captures the unconscious reason: "Because they are in the cemetery, they would not like to enter the cemetery" (124–125). In the context of this symbolism, the original title of the novel, *Cemetery*, is significant.

Mansejeon contains a structure that gives the meaning of "initiation." Initiation is a process of reaching a new birth, starting with the preparation phase through to the death of initiation and suffering (Vierne 13–54). Initiation transforms a beginner into a very different existence through the ordeal. In order to be a man in the true sense, the first (natural) life has to die and be reborn as a religious, cultural, and noble life (Eliade 158). Initiation leads one to recognize the spiritual and cultural value of the world and makes a beginner a responsible member of society. In-hwa Lee did not consider his trip from Tokyo to Seoul is not considered a process of initiation; for him, the preparation for initiation is absent. However, his trip has a characteristic of initiation even though

it was not intended. As he experiences the cruelty of colonial rule and moral corruption and sees people's helpless adaptation to the reality of colonization, he recognizes that Joseon is like a cemetery and feels that he himself is in "the middle of the grave" (Yeom, *Mansejeon* 159). He experiences "suffocation like maggots being fossilized in the grave of that insulated air" (159). As the death of his wife overlaps with the death of In-hwa Lee himself, it serves as a reminder of the death of In-hwa Lee who lived in Tokyo as an international student with no special awareness as the colonized. This does not end as a death but leads to a rebirth, and this rebirth is also associated with the rebirth of In-hwa Lee. As this gem of a novel, the letter In-hwa Lee sends to Shizuko, a cafe waitress he dated in Tokyo, in the last part of *Mansejeon*, is an "inner monologue" that compressively shows his death and rebirth. Lee refers to the death of his wife in the letter, which implies an end to the relationship with Shizuko: "My wife has ended the harsh life. However, I can never think that she is dead because she gave me a valuable lesson that 'you shall obtain yourself! You shall carve your way yourself !'" (160). The death of his wife leads to the new birth of In-hwa Lee. "Her body was remarried with soil, and because of this, it would say that it came to me to marry mentally and eternally" (160). A beginner comes into an existence that is completely different from the one prior to initiation after experiencing the ordeal and death of initiation. The trip resulting from the imminent death of his wife ultimately leads In-hwa Lee to realize the reality of Joseon and have a new life by escaping from the reality of the "cemetery." Here, it is confirmed that the self-realization of In-hwa Lee does not stay at an individual level but is connected to the awareness of the reality of the colony. As the colonized writer experiences oppressive colonial rule, he reflects seriously on his identity, regains his lost innocence, and creates the self that on its own embraces the reality of the colony.

Conclusion

The early 20th century in Korea and Japan was the period when the "modern self" received real attention. Although writers were accepting the naturalism of the West in this period, they were more interested in self-discovery; thus, Japanese and Korean writers attempted to discover the self while they spread naturalism. However, self-discovery in Western literature is closely related to romanticism, especially *Confessions* by Rousseau. At a time when the modern self or "romantic self" that was established by romanticism in the West was overly expressed, naturalistic writers criticized this excessive self-expression. Meanwhile, the trend of literary ideologies shows a similarity to the "compressed modernization" established in the social field by Korea and Japan. In other words, both countries formed a romantic self and spread a naturalistic ideology at the same time. In this

process, the Japanese I-novel and the Korean confessional novel were born.

Although the I-novel, which was developed as a tool by Japan to realize the modern spirit in the early 20th century when Japan was interested in the modern self, pioneered a unique stage in terms of showing a keen interest in the self, it is limited in that it does not guarantee sociality, and this lack appears to be related to the Japanese political situation of the time. In the first half of the 20th century, Japan was starting to carry out acts of imperialist aggression against its neighboring countries. The appropriate sociality that Japanese writers should have had during this time is associated with the substantial criticism that was leveled against Japanese imperialism. However, it is difficult for Japanese writers to publicly criticize Japanese imperialism. A Japanese thinker, Shosui Kotoku, criticized Western and Japanese imperialism and militarism in a book titled *Imperialism, the Monster of the 20th Century* (1901). Kotoku, who was also an antiwar activist who opposed the Russo-Japanese War, was indicted for his writing and eventually hanged. This event powerfully represents how serious the cost of his own society's criticism could be. (Many anarchists and socialists were arrested and prosecuted because of a plan to assassinate the Emperor Meiji in various places of Japan in May 1910, and of them, 26 people were punished. There is almost no evidence that Kotoku was associated with this plot, and the other 21 people were found to be completely unrelated to the event.) A considerable number of Japanese thinkers and writers chose to defend Japanese imperialism. D. T. Suzuki, a prominent Zen Buddhist scholar who contributed the most to introducing Japanese Zen Buddhism to the West, argued that, "Religion should, first of all, seek to preserve the existence of the state" (Victoria xix). In an article addressed to young Japanese Buddhists written in 1943, he stated: "Although it is called the Greater East Asia War, its essence is that of an ideological struggle for the culture of East Asia. Buddhists must join in this struggle accomplish their essential mission" (Victoria 151).

Even if the writers did not actively defend Japanese imperialism, the silence that came from their lack of sociality resulted in sympathy with Japanese imperialism and, furthermore, played a role in supporting it. Although the task of forming the modern self followed the introduction of the self-concept from the West, the main literary world of Japan, which was represented by the I-novel, pursued the "individual without sociality" and thus ultimately resulted in ignorance of the main problem of imperialism.

The beginning of the 20th century, when the Korean confessional novel was forming, was the time when Korea was occupied by Japanese imperialists. In the reality of the Japanese colonial era, Korean writers were suffering from an

identity crisis due to a victim mentality and self-humiliation. In order to overcome the situation, pursue the true self, and recover their identities, the writers wrote confessional novels that revealed their inner sides using various formats including letters, dialogue, and wills. The fact that the beginning of the 20th century, when the Western narrative form was flourishing in Korean literature, was the time when sovereignty was lost was an opportunity for the Korean confessional novel to be significantly differentiated from the Japanese I-novel. As a result of reflecting the historical reality of the ethnic community, the Korean confessional novel, unlike the Japanese I-novel, had not an extreme individualistic aspect but a socialized aspect. Ultimately, the reality of Japan, which was to keep silent in front of the "monster" of imperialism, and the reality of Korea, a country that lost its sovereignty due to imperialism, show a substantial difference in the autobiographical writings that seek the modern self.

For Sang-seop Yeom, the awakening of the self was "the essence of all products of modern civilization and has important significance" (*Individuality and Art* 189). Yeom is recognized as a representative writer who fully established the "inner confession" in Korean literature. He attempted to find his unique identity in the fictional space called the confessional novel. In *Mansejeon*, which is his typical confessional novel, the inner side acts as a mechanism of self-reflection and is established as an essential component of the narration. However, this inner side is integrated with sociality, the reality of colonization. As the inner side and sociality interact with each other, they are incorporated into a single subject of willingness to overcome the reality of colonization. In other words, he sought the possibility of overcoming colonial modernity by going through an "anthropological dialectic" (Durand 38) in which the social reality changed the inner side and the changed inner side reinterpreted the social reality. [For Gilbert Durand, the "anthropological dialectic (trajet anthropologique)" means "the ceaseless exchange taking place on the level of the imaginary between subjective assimilatory drives and objective pressures emanating from the cosmic and social milieu".] Given that independent modernity was sought through post-colonialism in *Mansejeon*, his confessional novel is differentiated from the Japanese I-novel, which usually illustrates a writer's private life in only a small space that is not connected to society. Although *Confessions* by Rousseau gave the same task of forming the modern self to Japan and Korea, the Japanese and Korean writers carried out the task differently in the specificity of the historical and political situations faced by each country.

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