

# A Forgotten Aesthetic Reportage in Colonial Korea 1920s-1930s

Sunyoung Park\*

1. Introduction
2. The International Rise of Reportage as an Experimental Aesthetic
3. The Colonial Development of Reportage in 1920s Korea
4. Representing the Factory Space in Early 1930s Labor Reportage
5. From Reportage to Reportage Fiction:  
Yi Pungmyŏng's Literary Practice
6. Conclusion

## 〈Abstract〉

This paper aims to rediscover the forgotten history of journalistic reportage in colonial Korea. Investigative eyewitness reports on underrepresented social settings, such as urban slums, factories, and penitentiaries, began to appear in colonial Korea from the mid-1920s, reaching their peak in the activist atmosphere of the early 1930s. Unlike in the West, however, in Korea reportage existed only in the margins of newspaper journalism, owing primarily to the constraints of colonial censorship, and it rather flourished in leftist magazines often in the unconventional forms of prisoners' memoirs, worker-correspondents' testimonial writings, and reportage-style fiction. Today reconstructing this elusive and yet recognizable tradition is important, I suggest, because it

---

\* Professor, University of Southern California

broadens and improves our picture of the reach, the formal variety, and the fertility of leftist culture in colonial Korea. Our literary establishment has been traditionally discriminatory toward the “lower,” typically non-fictional forms of documentary writing. Since the leftist writers have contributed so much to this kind of literature, our understanding of them is contingent upon our appreciation of the rich tradition of reportage in colonial Korea.

**Key words :** reportage, leftist journalism, proletarian literature,  
Yi Pungmyŏng and colonial Korea

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to rediscover the forgotten history of journalistic reportage in colonial Korea. Investigative eyewitness reports on underrepresented social settings, such as urban slums, factories, and penitentiaries, began to appear in colonial Korea from the mid-1920s, reaching their peak in the activist atmosphere of the early 1930s. Unlike in the West, however, in Korea reportage existed only in the margins of newspaper journalism, owing primarily to the constraints of colonial censorship, and it rather flourished in leftist magazines often in the unconventional forms of prisoners’ memoirs, worker-correspondents’ testimonial writings, and reportage-style fiction. Today reconstructing this elusive and yet recognizable tradition is important, I suggest, because it broadens and improves our picture of the reach, the formal variety, and the fertility of leftist culture in colonial Korea. Our literary establishment has been traditionally discriminatory toward the “lower,” typically non-fictional forms of documentary writing. Since the leftist writers have contributed so much to this kind of literature, our understanding of them is contingent upon our appreciation of the rich tradition of reportage in colonial

Korea.<sup>1)</sup>

The paper is organized in four main parts. I will start by providing a brief account of the international rise of reportage as an experimental aesthetic in post-World War I Europe. This initial discussion will help us situate colonial Korean reportage within the contemporary context of global literary modernity. I will then move on, in the second section, to tracing the initial spread of reportage in 1920s Korea, as the genre was first adopted by the writers of investigative reports of mainly sensational character. It was not until the 1930s, under the influence of the KAPF (Korea Artista Proleta Federatio: 1925-1935), that leftist writers began to explicitly theorize and appropriate the reportage as a form of socially engaged journalistic literature. The third section will examine the early-1930s labor reportage as the most prominent subgenre of leftist reportage. I will then take a closer look, in the fourth section, at the individual example of Yi Pungmyŏng, who distinguished himself for his creation of reportage-style labor fiction, which illustrates the fascinating cross-breeding of fictional and documentarian forms of writing. The paper will conclude with a brief reflection on the positive significance of reportage literature for our improved understanding of the leftist literary experience of colonial Korea.

---

1) A growing interest in the history of reportage in Korea is attested by a number of recent publications on the topic. In his 2005 study on the propagandistic literature from the total war period (1937-1945), for instance, Jung Sunt'ae has paid special attention to the war reportage written by Korean writers who were mobilized to visit the war fronts in China. And in her 2006 study of reportage in post-liberation Korea (between 1945 and 1948), Pak Jungsun has reevaluated the historical significance of reportage as a literary form that was particularly representative of the period's vibrant social activism as well as democratic aspirations.

## 2. The International Rise of Reportage as an Experimental Aesthetic

The rise of the reportage is best grasped, historically, within the broader movement of the European aesthetic avant-gardes of the 1920s. Along with other contemporary avant-gardes, the reportage movement too arose in reaction to a widely perceived “crisis of representation,” that is, a postwar disillusionment with established modes of representation. Rapid urbanization and the emergence of new forms of mass media added to a sense of crisis to which the surrealists, with their dream narratives and *tromp l’oeil* paintings, responded by radically questioning the credibility of realism as an artistic principle, along with its underlying belief in the transparency of language.<sup>2)</sup> The early adopters of reportage arguably shared this rebellious experimental spirit but differed in their response, as they rather sought to restore the lost credibility of representation by writing eyewitness experiential reports and accompanying them with photographic images.

The generic nature of reportage as an experimental aesthetic can be inferred from Egon Erwin Kisch’s famous preface to *The Raging Reporter* (*Das rasende Reporter*), the first collection of his daring investigative reports, whose publication in 1924 made the French term *reportage* famous in its own right (Segel 2). A journalist and World War I veteran, Kisch characterized the reportage as an eyewitness investigative report of absolute objectivity, which guarantees the immediacy of its truth as well as the possibility of its practice by amateur reporters:

---

2) See Peter Bürger’s theorization of the European avant-garde as a self-criticism of arts institutional autonomy as well as its established aesthetic principle of realism—that was pursued, ironically, within artistic autonomy in Bürger 20-27.

The reporter has no tendency to promote, has nothing to justify, and has no standpoint. He must be an unbiased witness and deliver unbiased testimony as reliably as testimony can possibly be given.... The good reporter ... would not write without having experienced. He is no artist, no politician, no scholar-he is perhaps one of Schopenhauer's 'dull people.' And yet his work is very important, simply by virtue of its subject matter. ("Preface" 513)

Reportage here is characterized as an "unbiased testimony" of a "simple truth" which would remain otherwise untold and unappreciated. In order to write reportage, Kisch suggests, one does not need any extraordinary qualifications; one should only know how to act as an impersonal medium for conveying facts, without channeling them through one's individual perspective. The reporter must not speak for himself, in a way, but rather let the facts speak for themselves. For this insistence on objectivity and the corresponding rejection of personal sentiments, reportage was akin to other contemporary aesthetic movements in the West, such as the New Objectivity Movement in Germany, which arose in reaction to the subjective arts of expressionism, and the documentary film movement led by John Grierson in Britain and North America in post-Depression years.<sup>3)</sup>

Despite Kisch's avowed ideal, in practice reportage could be neither absolutely objective nor completely free of artistry. The importance of the reporter's critical subjectivity was indeed acknowledged in Kisch's frequent dismissal of mainstream journalism as complicit, in his words, "in a world that is flooded with lies, in a world that wants to forget itself and therefore aims only at untruths" ("Dangerous" 92). Kisch was a committed communist for

---

3) For the documentary movement in American literature, journalism, photography, and cinema, see Denning, 118-120 and Scott.

much of his life: he was a member of the Red Guards, a revolutionary military organization that staged a failed coup in Austria, 1918; a member of both the Austrian and the German Communist Party; a founding member of the Association of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers in Germany; and a member of the International Brigades that fought to defend the Popular Front Government in the Spanish Civil War (Segel 20-69). Although he did not assume any didactic or dogmatic tones in his works of reportage, Kisch's social consciousness was often barely concealed beneath an apparent veneer of objectivity and lightheartedness. Vivid, witty, and at times humorous, his writings were also amply expressive of his individual creativity and imagination. He skillfully employed various narrative techniques for literary effect, which made some of his reportage read like detective fiction, and he would also promote the reportage as "a form of art and combat"(Segel 53).

Quasi-journalistic and quasi-literary, Kisch's inventive new style of reporting soon attracted much interest from both critical intellectuals and the commercial press, but it also drew criticism from such prominent critics as Walter Benjamin and Georg Lukács. These critics found the montage quality of reportage—its fragmentary and sensational representation of facts—to be complicit with the commodity fetishism of capitalist society. In his essay titled "The Author as Producer," for instance, Benjamin critiqued the photomontage, which he regarded as a sister genre of the reportage, for "transforming even abject poverty, by recording it in a fashionably perfected manner, into an object of enjoyment" (230). A sensationalist treatment of poverty, Benjamin argued, turns it into a commodity, making the struggle against poverty itself into an object of consumption (232). Lukács was even more wary of the "one-dimensional technique" of the new genre. He considered the "external" aesthetic of reportage to be superficial and, thus, antithetical to his literary ideal of realism as an aesthetic of totality, along with the "internal" aesthetic

of psychological modernist literature (43). For Lukács, individual facts should be represented in their historical continuum, not in fragmentation, as their separation from the total fabric of capitalist society could only reinforce people's alienation from the underlying truth of their life experiences.

Criticism such as the above did not prevent the reportage from enjoying a growing popularity among the cultural left both in Germany and, especially, in post-revolutionary Russia. The main appeal of reportage to Russian activists was its ideal of a writer as an active participant in reality as well as its claim to authentic and immediate truths. Possibly inspired by Kisch, the contemporary Soviet writer Sergei Tretiakov came to coin the idea of factography, literally "a literature of facts," whose art forms, among which the photo-essay was the most representative, were also variably called "reportage, factism, and documentarity" (Fore, "Soviet Factography" 6). Tretiakov was also known for conceptualizing and practicing the ethos of "the operating writer," who aims not only to inform but also to transform reality via a direct intervention into it (Benjamin 223). Through the New LEF (The Left Front of Arts) magazine that he edited, Tretiakov sought for a way to make arts directly participate in the ongoing revolutionary reform of Soviet society. He thus urged artists to join the workers and peasants in their workplaces and to produce artworks that would be conducive to social transformation (Fore, "The Operative" 101). At the same time, as part of factography, Tretiakov supported the worker-correspondent movement, which gave workers an opportunity to raise their voice in mainstream newspapers such as *Pravda*, turning them from their former roles as passive consumers into the new producers of revolutionary culture in the fledgling state of the Soviet Union.<sup>4)</sup> In factography, then, the barrier between the professional artist

---

4) For the detailed accounts of the 1920s Soviet worker-correspondent movement known as the *Rabvel'kor* movement, see Mueller and Gorham.

and the industrial worker was effectively blurred.

Stylistically a hybrid between literature and journalism, reportage was part of 1920s aesthetic avant-gardes. Its vanguard spirit resulted from the political disillusionment with conventional journalism in the wake of major historical events such as World War I in Europe and the Bolshevik Revolution in the Soviet Union. Instead of distancing themselves from mass culture, the advocates of reportage rather tried to endow mass culture with a critical tool, as they urged intellectuals and ordinary people alike to produce eyewitness investigative reports on the less represented dimensions of social reality. Prone as a genre to commercial appropriation and exploitation, reportage could also serve as a vehicle of poignant political criticism, and when it did, its populist appeal would only amplify its subversive significance. As is attested by the repeated exiling of Egon Kisch, reportage could indeed be “a dangerous literary genre,” and as such it would be received in the heated political environment of East Asia and Korea during the 1920s and 1930s.

### 3. The Colonial Development of Reportage in 1920s Korea

More than Kisch's, it was rather Tretiakov's more collectivist, socialist form of reportage that was adopted by leftist writers in East Asia as a new venue of development for the proletarian literary movement. Writers in Japan, China, and Korea saw the new genre of reportage as a tool for the bridging of theoretical knowledge and actual artistic practice, as the experiential emphasis of its writing promised to bring the artist in close touch with lived reality. And throughout the East Asian region, experimentation with reportage was accompanied by the rise of the worker-correspondent movement, in which documentary pieces about factories were increasingly written by actual workers rather than professional journalists.

It is important to note that, within East Asian countries, the practice of journalistic reportage typically preceded its adoption and theorization by leftist writers. In Japan, for example, before Kawaguchi Hiroshi championed *bodo bungaku* (reportage) as a new ideal artistic form for proletarian writers in the late 1920s, eyewitness documentary writings had already been in production since much earlier in the decade.<sup>5)</sup> The country's labor movement had given rise to such mature reportage literature as Hosoi Wakizō's *Jokō aishi* (*Pitiful History of Factory Girls*; 1925), an impressively detailed, non-fictional autobiographical documentation of the working conditions of factory women laborers. Likewise in China, the League of Left-Wing Writers officially adopted the label *baogao wenxue* (the Chinese pronunciation of the Japanese translation of reportage) only in 1930, and yet reportage-style writings on urban spaces, especially the scenes of public demonstrations, had been appearing at least since the May Fourth Movement in 1919.<sup>6)</sup> In both these countries, however, the production of reportage became more systematic once the leftist writers began to consciously adopt its practice. As had been the case in Europe, reportage writing assumed a more poignant significance only when its practice became embedded within the political goals of the cultural left.

In Korea too, the development of a reportage mode of writing was a gradual process. Its earliest practice can arguably be found in the travelogues of *Kaebyoŏk* (1920-1926). This magazine, the most widely read of its time, frequently published travel accounts of local regions and cities of the Korean peninsula. Aside from their commercial value as lighter readings, these publications had the nationalist motivation of constructing an imagined geography of the unified Korean nation (Ku 132). By projecting the imagery

---

5) For a historical account of modern Japanese reportage, as well as a collection of its representative works, see *Rūporutāju shū*.

6) For the modern history of Chinese reportage, see Laughlin.

of the many different regions of Korea sharing a common historical root and homogenous cultural traditions, the leftist-nationalist editors and writers of *Kaebŏk* sought to produce an alternative to the official geographical construction of Korea as Japan's new colony.

Another early form of reportage in Korea were the so-called visit reports (*t'ambanggi*: 探訪記), which were frequently published by newspapers partly as sensational journalism and partly as pieces of critical exposé. Starting from the mid-1920s, both the *Chosŏn ilbo* and the *Tonga ilbo* carried serial reports on urban slums, brothels, gambling houses, and other similarly seedy urban locales. A particularly popular destination seemed to have been the Chinese ghetto, which was especially known among Seoulians for its opium dens and the nightlife surrounding them. While these reports were initially short, dry, and factual, over the years more space was given to the journalist's creative autonomy, as pieces grew longer and more focused around an experiential account of settings and events. Much of the merit for this transformation was due to the popular magazine *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* (1927–1934), which was launched by the publisher of *Kaebŏk* after the colonial authority had revoked that magazine's publication license in 1926. *Pyŏlgŏn'gon*'s journalists would research their articles in disguise, roaming the city's poorer neighborhoods as dumpling peddlers, delivery men, beggars, and other local figures. When the magazine began publishing its so-called “investigative reports” (*t'amsagi*: 探查記) in 1927, Korean readers were for the first time presented with a literary style of journalism that was more readily recognizable as a form of reportage.<sup>7)</sup>

---

7) For some examples of the urban space reportage, see Songjak and Sŏlt'ae, “Pyŏnjang kija amya t'amsagi” [Report of an undercover investigation of night streets; 1927]; Sŏkt'anseang, “Sarinma, chasin'gwi ap'yŏn'gul taet'amsagi” [Investigative report on the homicidal opium dens of morphin addicts; 1927]; Ssang S., “Chŏnyulhal tae anmagul: yŏhaksang yuindan pongul t'amsagi” [Devil's place of terror: an investigative report

The investigative reports published by *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* typically read more like detective fictions than newspaper articles, with the reporters liberally employing story-telling techniques such as irony or suspense. A sensationalist and commercialist intent was evident not only in the choice of subject matter and writing style, but also in the modality of their production. Unlike in Europe, where reportage was often written by journalistic personalities or established writers, early reportage in Korea was a collective project initiated and coordinated by the publisher, who would announce it with much commercial fanfare. The members of a writing team were entertainers as well as journalists, so much so that, on at least one occasion, *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* staged a competition between two teams of reporters, inviting the readers to vote for the better investigative result.<sup>8)</sup>

*Pyŏlgŏn'gon*'s characteristic mix of sensationalism and social critique may be best appreciated by looking at one of its earliest investigative reports, which was titled “Overnight Undercover Investigation of the Headquarter of Snake Catchers: Inside the Mysterious Life of *Ttanggan* and *Kkakchŏngi*” (Songjak). In the piece's near-confessional opening, the journalist, whose pen-name is Songjak, declares himself to be “hesitant” and “low-spirited” upon his editor's order to investigate the life of “the subhuman social outcasts whom everybody shuns.” Traditionally, the terms “*ttanggan*” and “*kkakchŏngi*” had referred respectively to a snake catcher and to a young boy who served as his assistant. In 1920s Korea, however, both words would remind Seoul residents only of beggars, “the infamous blights of city streets,” and both were used mostly

---

on the house of female students' prostitution; 1927]; “A kija ūi sugi: Kasŏng koch'ŏ ta wŏnsŏng—k'ap'e munŏn e kugŏlgun” [Journalist A's report: Louder songs and more cries of resentment—beggars in café streets; 1931]; and “B kija ūi sugi: Kongga kongga kongga wa t'ogul e sanŭn paeksŏngdŭl!” [Journalist B's report: Plenty of empty houses and urban cave dwellers; 1931].

8) See the relevant advertisement in *Pyŏlgŏn'gon*, February 27, 1927, 79.

as insults. These traditional outcasts often engaged in theft and petty crime, and they typically dwelled in caves and other hidden quarters in the mountains surrounding Seoul. The report's subject matter was clearly meant to intrigue the casual urban reader, but it also invited a reflection upon the themes of low-level criminality and social marginalization.

Allegedly "not knowing where to begin," Songjak goes through a series of suspenseful trials and errors, variably disguising himself as a wealthy buyer of snakes for medicinal purposes, a student looking for reptiles for classroom experiments, and finally as a haggard emigrant returning from Manchuria. After bribing a beggar boy, he finally gains access to a house that serves as the local gang's headquarters. Inside, Songjak notes the sparse interiors, with few pieces of tattered furniture and piles of oil cartons that reek a strong and bizarre odor. The cartons turn out to contain the live snakes that the gang of catchers is waiting to sell to "the men and women of the sex industry and the well-to-do class." In passing, Songjak also reveals that homosexuality is prevalent among snake catchers, who often keep their young assistants as their lovers. His narrative goes on to detail long stretches of conversation and night drinking with the snake catchers, and it is presented in sections with titles such as "Snake-eating kisaengs and gentleman," "Sad songs and mad dances," and "The mysterious society of snake catchers."

There is a clear sensationalistic and exploitative quality to Songjak's report. By the end of the piece, however, a surprise of sorts awaits the reader. In the final section, titled "The snake catchers' perspectives on Korean society," the journalist relates the snake catchers' complaints about social changes under the colonial rule. During the late Chosŏn period, according to the gang's boss, snake catchers had been organized under the State Tribunal, who would employ them at times for clandestine missions of espionage and interrogation. Back then they were "discriminated but not starved," not least because they

could rely on the generous charity of common Koreans for the occasional giveaway of used clothes and leftover food. In recent years, however, “with the increasing economic hardship of the Koreans, the commoners have turned miserly, and ... more and more peasants and laborers have been forced by circumstances into begging, making [the snake catchers’] lot even harder” (85). The sale of the snake, which used to be the catchers’ monopoly, had also declined due to “the inroad of savvy Japanese merchants into the business.” “How could we,” says the boss, “reform our society? Others with fuller stomachs talk of this and that movement, but from our perspective, the lack of food is the most urgent concern. We hope that this problem will be resolved in such a way that there won’t have to be so many people like us ...” (85). With this comment, Songjak informs us, the conversation is over, and the report ends with the journalist cautiously stealing out of the house in the dead of the night.

Despite its obvious commercial function, Songjak’s report also had a critical discursive significance in exposing the undersides of colonial modernity in Korea. Against the mainstream perception of snake catchers as criminals and social plagues, the report eventually presents them as an alienated class of people whose feudal social role had been eroded in the process of modernization, and one whose plight was now neglected by the colonial government. By the end of the report, in an act of re-inclusion, the hardship of the snake catchers is explicitly compared to that of working-class Koreans, as both seem to be suffering from a widening class gap that is caused by imperial capitalism. And in terms of narrative, the endowment of the snake catchers with an articulate voice was in itself a subversive move within the very hierarchical colonial society.

The critical potential of the reportage was not lost on leftist intellectuals who, in the early 1930s, started to use the new literary genre in the pursuit

of their broader political goals. We will move on in the next section to observe the ways in which, in the new decade, the reportage was explicitly theorized as a political tool by the literary left. Before doing that, however, we should briefly remark upon the reason why, during the 1920s, Korean reportage was characterized by a heavily commercialistic and apparently apolitical intent. We are here referring to the constraints imposed upon the Korean publication space by the colonial authorities' watchful censorship. If war and revolution were the two most prominent themes in 1920s world reportage, themes of the kind could not be addressed by colonial Korean writers. Little experiential account of a public demonstration scene could be published in Korea, except for brief summary reports. The 1919 March First Movement, for instance, remained off-limits to Korean writers and publishers throughout the colonial period. Likewise, a nationwide public demonstration on June 10, 1926, on occasion of the funeral day of Sunjong, the last monarch of the Chosŏn dynasty, could be barely reported in the Korean language press of the time. The only exception to this was *Kaebŏk*, who on that occasion carried a somber piece of reportage titled "A Miscellaneous Record of Prison Life Around the National Funeral Day."<sup>9)</sup> The magazine was forced to close down only a month later, however, and in its stead the publisher launched *Pyŏlgŏn'gon*. Besides being financially viable, it seems, the less threatening, more lighthearted façade of *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* may have been the only viable strategy to keep publishing

---

9) "Kukchang chŏnhu ŭi yuch'ijang saenghwal chapki" [A miscellaneous record of prison life around the national funeral day; 1926] was the earliest example of prison reportage in Korea. Other examples of colonial prison reportage include: Yun Sŏngsang, "Yŏgamok pangmun'gi" [A visit report on women's prison; 1930]; Kim Sesŏng, "Yuch'ijang saenghwal" [Life in the detention center; 1931]; Ŏ Kwisŏn, "Kuch'igam saenghwal" [Prison life; 1931]; H.C.S. saeng, "Yŏkamok saenghwal" [Life in women's prison; 1931]; Ch'oe Rin, "Okchung hoesanggi" [Prison memoir; 1931]; and "Kamok ŭi hyangt'osaek: Pusan, Taegu, Sŏdaemun, Haeju, and Pyongyang" [The local characteristics of penitentiaries in Pusan, Taegu, Sŏdaemun, Haeju, and Pyongyang; 1931].

politically relevant content in the heavily guarded environment of late-1920s Korea.

#### 4. Representing the Factory Space in Early-1930s Labor Reportage

The early 1930s marked a relative peak in the production of Korean reportage literature, prior to what would be a veritable boom of the war reportage, sponsored by the state, during the 1940s. Distinctive of this period's production was a focus on the representation of the factory, which in part reflected the increasing industrialization of Korean society and its attendant rise in labor strikes and social struggles. Beyond this fact, however, the focus on the factory was also the result of a debate that was taking place in those years within the KAPF as well as within broader circles of leftist intellectuals. Critiquing their previous renderings of the industrial worker as an abstract, lifeless automaton, many proletarian writers came to see the factory reportage as a genre that could effectively revitalize their artistic as well as political practice.

The tenor of the Korean writers' debate was set by the 1928 Sixth Congress of the Comintern, which passed a resolution that urged all communist parties to adopt a new hard-line position to confront the rising threat of fascism as well as the impending collapse of global capitalism. The Sixth Congress also stipulated the principal task of communists in colonial societies to be that of "organizing the workers and the peasantry independently ... [so as to] free them from the influence of the national bourgeoisie" ("Programme"). In application of these directions, the Korean socialists shifted their priority from forging a united front with nationalists and moderate leftists to strengthening their alliance with industrial workers and peasants. They accordingly sought

to establish closer ties with the working masses, which they often did by infiltrating into sites such as evening schools, underground reading societies, and factories. When successful, the campaign armed the workers with a socialist worldview and had the effect of radicalizing their union movement.<sup>10)</sup>

Simultaneously, in a corresponding cultural move, the KAPF launched an aggressive campaign to “bolshelize” the proletarian cultural movement, i.e., to radicalize it on the one hand and popularize it among the working-class masses on the other. Following the successful example of the NAPF (Nippon Artista Proleta Federatio: 1928-1934), critics such as Pak Yŏnghŭi, Kwŏn Hwan, and Yi Hŏn’gu called for proletarian writers to engage more actively with industrial and agricultural workers. While acknowledging the achievements of existing labor fictions, they criticized the crudity of their proletarian protagonists, more of petit bourgeois writers’ fantasy than lifelike, flesh-and-blood figures, who would parrot the language of socialist ideology in a stilted tongue. As a remedy, the critics recommended the cultivation of reportage literature by both writers and worker correspondents. Kwŏn, for instance, urged the writers to improve the agitprop effects of their literary practice by incorporating factual materials such as strike reports in their fictions (Kwŏn 206).<sup>11)</sup> Like their Chinese counterparts, Korean proletarian writers seemed to have found in the new genre of reportage a solution for their dilemma over the existing gap between their theoretical knowledge and actual artistic practice<sup>12)</sup>

The internal debate of the literary left also concurred with a growing curiosity, among the reading public of the time, about the nature of life inside the factory. A public controversy over an unprecedented number of labor

---

10) On the leftist intervention into the labor movement between 1931 and 1938, see K. Kim 259-69.

11) For the early references to *pogo munbak*, see also Pak Yŏnghŭi (1931) and Yi Hŏn’gu.

12) For the Chinese critical debates over reportage, see Laughlin 13-19.

struggles, which had doubled from 102 incidents in 1929 to 205 in 1931, contributed to this new desire and journalistic vogue (K. Kim 194 and 312). As a quintessentially modern space, the shiny new factory symbolized economic development and social progress in the age of industrial capitalism. Unlike other modern urban spaces such as department stores, cafés, and theaters, however, the factory was generally off-limits to the public. While asserting its towering presence in the cityscape, the factory at the same time guarded the secrecy of its internal goings-on by enclosing its workers within tall walls and a strict surveillance. In this sense, the factory building could inspire the mystery of a Kafkaesque tower, much like a prison, into which a stream of workers disappeared daily.

One of the first in-depth reports on factory life was published in five installments in 1929 by the *Chunggoe ilbo*, a newspaper that included leftist writers such as Hong Myŏnghŭi and Kwŏn Hwan on its editorial board. Titled “An Investigative Report on the Kwangju Spinning Factory: the Sad Sorrows of Factory Girls,” the piece announced its documentary purpose with a characteristic mix of sensationalism and investigative zeal:

Recently all kinds of rumors have leaked out past the thick and high walls of the Kwangju Spinning Factory. The taller the rumors grow, the more the general public, let alone the girls’ relatives, come to desire to learn about the shadowy aspects of the factory life. I thereby reveal to the reader what I have investigated in and out during the many restless days and sleepless nights. (Usŏngsaeng 3)

By “rumors,” we later learn, the writer is referring to allegations concerning the brutal beating of strike leaders, the illegal detainment of workers, the

imposition of unjustified wage cuts, and other oppressive practices that were supposed to have taken place inside the factory. The article went on to confirm such rumors, and in so doing it provided an uncommonly forceful indictment of the financial and physical abuse of Korean working girls by the Japanese factory owner and supervisors, all of whose names it specified.

While investigative reports such as the above were generally successful in divulging the institutionalized abuse of factory workers, such pieces also typically suffered from the lack of an eyewitness account. Owing to the inaccessibility of factories to outsiders, journalists were often forced to rely on indirect sources of information such as police records and oral testimonies of workers or fired strikers.<sup>13)</sup> Although such restrictions were then (and today) rather common in factories across the world, they were enforced more strictly in 1930s Korea, where factory life remained unregulated by any labor legislation throughout the colonial period (Eckert 191).

A more vivid representation of life inside the factory, consequently, had to be attained in a narrative form other than the professional journalistic reportage. One obvious alternative was to solicit contributions from insiders, i.e., the workers themselves. Recalling the workers' correspondent movement in Germany, Russia, China, and Japan, leftist magazines such as *Pyŏlgŏn'gon*, *Hyesŏng*, *Che Ilŏn*, *Sim Kyedan*, *Sidae Kongnon*, and *Puin Kongnon* actively sought out for workers' testimonial writings that could serve a documentary function. While often introduced as a "diary, a "letter," or a "confession," these pieces almost always downplayed the individual writer's private thoughts or feelings, emphasizing instead the collective experiences of workers in the often dehumanizing settings of the factory.<sup>14)</sup> The writings exemplify what Laughlin

---

13) Kim Minam, a journalist, for instance, recorded his failed attempt to infiltrate into a factory in a student's disguise (M. Kim 4).

14) For example, in chronological order, U Sunok, "Ŏnũ chesa hoesa yŏgong ilgi" [Diary

called “the event and environment-oriented expression of collective consciousness that would characterize reportage” (Laughlin 19). Compared with the drier, relatively impersonal narrations of newspaper reports, the workers’ narratives read much more expressive and emotional because of their colorful, memorable descriptions of daily plights and abuses within the factory settings.

As attested by the following passage, excerpted from U Sunok’s “Diary of a Spinning Factory Girl,” the worker-correspondent literature often conveyed sadness, indignation, and rage in ways that would have been impracticable for a less involved outside observer:

August 9<sup>th</sup>, Sat. Clear. – I visited the hospital ward of Yongsun. Although her illness was nothing suspicious, the supervisor confiscated her letters to the family and would not let her return home. The five wards were completely filled with people. Those who had been pushed aside after losing their health to harsh labor were now fighting death in each room. Swollen, emaciated, and bruised with boils, each sick with various diseases, they together presented a hellish sight. My young colleagues, what sin did we ever commit except for working hard?! Even before we finish the dinner, [the supervisors] command us to go to sleep. If I turned

---

of a spinning factory girl; 1930); “Chitpalp’in chŏngmi yŏjjikkong ūi sogim ōmnŭn chabaek kwa hoso [A violated rice-factory girl’s confession and appeal; 1931] by an anonymous writer; Ch’oe Oksun, “Yŏldu sigan nodong ūl hago: pyŏngsang esŏ sinŭm hanŭn p’yeybŏng hwanja yŏgong ūi hasoyŏn” [After twelve hours of labor: a consumptive factory girl’s petition from her sickbed; 1931]; Yu Hŭisun, “Yŏjjikkong ūi hasoyŏn” [A factory girl’s petition; 1932]; “Nongch’on lep’o: ch’usugi nŭn wakkŏnman uri ūi churin sŏrum: sidŭrŭn nongch’on aehwa” [Agricultural reportage: sad stories from the declining countryside], in which five peasants each wrote a short account of their hardship; and the expurgated “Letter to the Editors” by an anonymous factory girl, *Sin kyedan* 7 (1933).

off the lamp but tried to read a bit in the faint light from the outside, they would yell at me, saying what business a factory girl could have with study. They prohibit us from reading even a page of a newspaper or a book, which they say would hinder our work and distract us. We can spend a lifetime here and never once hear a polite word. We are workers who sell our labor and considerable skills, but they treat us like prisoners, cursing at us, instead of trying to talk or reason [with us]. (73)

U Sunok's testimonial diary can be regarded as a work of reportage, despite its private form, in that it exposes the sufferings of female factory workers through her eyewitness account of their collective experiences. Testimonial reportage of this kind sought to counter the paternalistic rhetoric of colonial factory owners, whose business often relied on the exploitation of young women who had been trustingly sent to the factory by their peasant parents.<sup>15)</sup> And her testimony, replete with folksy expressions and the vivid description of agonizing bodies, would have been most effective in awakening the indignation of the readers of colonial magazines.

Women like U Sunok accounted for the majority of worker-correspondents. This phenomenon may be explained, in part, by the fact that contemporary magazines primarily relied on a female readership and, as a consequence, they actively sought for women contributors. Just as importantly, however, factory

---

15) When factory recruiters approached eligible girls' parents in rural areas, they would often promise "easy work, short hours, and a high wage," in addition to the girl's "education in feminine skills such as sawing and cooking," "occasional group trips," and "a help with dowry" (Ch'oe Sunok 61). Once the contract was signed, however, the girl practically became an indentured slave laborer who was bereft of any personal autonomy. For more detailed accounts of the life of Korean women factory workers during the colonial period, see J. Kim 75-100 and Yoo 95-160.

girls seem to have served as a “seductive trope” for the entire working class in the psyches of leftist male elites, whose editorial selection played a shaping role in producing this gendered body of worker-correspondents’ literature (Barraclough 347). In addition, throughout the colonial period, the censors seemed to have been stricter in screening writings by and about male factory workers, whom they deemed to be more threatening to the established order.<sup>16)</sup> In fact, with few exceptions, male factory workers’ testimonials are all but absent from the colonial archive.

The male factory worker’s experience was thus rarely covered by Korean reportage writers. Instead, it was a major theme in the writing of proletarian fiction. Creating a good portrait of a male factory worker, the hero of Marxist revolutionary history, was the lasting preoccupation of the proletarian writers of the KAPF. For most of its members, who were of a middle-class origin and had little labor experience, the task proved challenging. Yet some writers did manage to produce plausible and faithful fictional representations of the theme. We will turn to look at the works of one of these writers, Yi Pungmyŏng, within the next section. As a natural offshoot of the reportage movement, Yi’s literature came to occupy a unique place within the proletarian literary scene of 1930s Korea.

The production of labor reportage petered out after the 1935 disbanding of the KAPF. In succeeding years, documentary journalists turned to producing relatively neutral visit reports on faraway mountain regions, exotic seaside localities, or natural disaster-stricken areas.<sup>17)</sup> Later still, as the major periodicals

---

16) For example, an issue of *P’yŏlgŏn’gon* carried Kim Il-su’s “Diary of a Cigarette Factory Worker” alongside U Sunok’s “Diary of a Spinning Factory Girl,” but the first was expurgated (I. Kim). The title was followed by the editor’s one-line apology that the article could not be published for a “compelling” reason—a routine phrase to note a censor’s expurgation.

17) For this reason, Yi Wŏnjo criticized, in 1937, contemporary newspaper journalists for limiting their visit reports only to “mountains and beaches.” Citing the works of Andre Malraux and Antoine de Saint-Exupery, the critic expressed his hope for the

were mobilized for the military campaign around 1940, these sites were replaced by battlefronts and villages of nomadic tribes in Manchukuo, in an effort at inculcating in colonial Koreans a sense of partaking in the distant war and the imagined community of Japan's Pan-Asian empire. Produced under the encouragement and sponsorship of the colonial state, these conformist works of reportage were written by famous writers and had the more typical form of an observer's, rather than an insider's witness account. They ironically came to be seen, in the post-liberation era, as the most central examples of reportage literature during the colonial period. As I have shown in the last two sections, however, a thriving tradition of documentary journalism characterized the Korean cultural scene during the 1920s and 1930s. Compared with this earlier tradition, the war reportage of the 1940s was a rather sad example of domesticated colonial literature, which may reward deeper study for its complexity and ideological ambiguities.

## 5. From Reportage to Reportage Fiction: Yi Pungmyong's Literary Practice

Hailed by critics as "the only writer of a true proletarian origin" (S. Pak 306), Yi Pungmyŏng was perhaps the most accomplished creator of reportage-style proletarian fictions. His literary career peaked at the height of 1930s political activism, and it provides an effective illustration of the fertile crossbreeding of reportage and fiction writing during that decade.

Yi was born of humble origins, and in a particularly poor part of the country, in 1908. Already in his high teens he was a budding intellectual who, upon graduating from high school, chose to work at the Hamhŭng Nitrogen

---

appearance of a more serious and mature reportage literature (W. Yi).

Fertilizer Factory, then known as the biggest factory in East Asia, partly to make a living and partly to follow his socialist inspiration. He surged to literary fame in 1932, upon the publication of a series of stories that were enthusiastically received by critics of the proletarian camp. Having written some of his most memorable stories during the colonial period, Yi joined the communist North upon the 1948 national division, going on to have a successful literary career there until his death in 1988. Today still, Yi is regarded in North Korea as one of the most accomplished writers of his generation.<sup>18)</sup>

Characteristic of Yi's literary practice were his graphic descriptions of factory settings as well as his representations of workers' experiences in concrete and intimate details. Most of his works—such as “The Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory” (Chilso piryong kongjang; 1932), “The Ammonia Tank” (Ammonia t'aenkū; 1932), “A Factory Girl” (Yōkong; 1933), and “The Factory District” (Kongjang chidae; 1935)—are based on his working and living experience in the city of Hamhŭng, which he left only when he was arrested by the police for his union activity. In an essay titled “Absolute Support for Realism!”, Yi professed his first principle of creation to be that of “learning the reality” by exploring streets, slums, and factory areas (“Sasiljuŭi” 303). He also published “A Sketch from a Dark Night” (Ŏdum esŏ chuŭn sk'ech'i; 1933), supposedly a fictionalized reportage of a labor protest, and in its preface he claimed that the story was a “record of a true event.”(330).

In stories such as “The Ammonia Tank,” Yi took the reader beyond factory walls to witness, on the inside, an auditory world made of “the sound of hammering a hot red rivet, the thumping sound of throwing a pipe, the heave-ho cries of pole bearers, those of the pushers of a weighty machine, the

---

18) For Yi's biography, see the writer's own memoir (P. Yi “Kongjang”) as well as the editor's introduction and the chronology in Nam 459-474.

shouting of a supervisor, cursing, singing” (29).<sup>19)</sup> His narratives also seemed to portray the plight of real factory workers, such as the protagonist of “The Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory,” who in Hamhŭng were forced to handle sulfur ammonium without protective gear, suffering holes in their uniforms, skins, eyes and, through inhalation, their lungs (“Nitrogen” 1932). Given the all-determining power of the factory on the life of Yi’s worker characters, one may say that the factory—its space, sound, and movement therein—is indeed the main character in most of Yi’s works.

While not themselves works of reportage, Yi’s labor novels played a critical role, within the contemporary discursive context, as rare pieces of testimonial literature. Noteworthy in this respect is the complementary relationship between Yi’s stories and contemporary newspaper investigative reports about the Hamhŭng Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory. Opened in 1930 by the Japan Nitrogen Fertilizer company, which by itself accounted for 36% of the Japanese industrial capital in Korea (Kwak 46), the factory was a gigantic institution, “a kingdom of its own” within which over six thousand laborers worked and lived daily (“Kongŏp” 5). Its presence transformed the northeastern city of Hamhŭng into a then rare industrial city in Korea. The factory, however, was also notorious for its exacting working conditions and its inhumane disposal of sick, injured, and deceased workers. Since journalists could not provide a first-hand report on anything beyond its guarded gate, Yi’s labor novels had the significant role of informing the public of the perilous working environment within the infamous factory through a virtually unique insider’s testimonial account.<sup>20)</sup> It was in part because of this role, for example, that “The Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory” was selected to be translated and published, in 1935, in the prestigious Japanese leftist journal *Pungaku byōron*

---

19) See also Samuel Perry’s translation and analysis of the story (Perry 102-112).

20) In addition to the visit report cited above, see also “Hŭngnam.”

(Literary criticism).<sup>21)</sup>

Yi's literary example shows how, through the active crossbreeding of reportage journalism and fiction writing, the latter received concrete and vivid inspiration from the former. A comparison of late-1920s and early-1930s proletarian novels reveals the general transformation of the genre towards a more descriptive and factual direction. In the works such as Yi Kiyŏng's "Papermakers" (Chongi ttŭnŭn saramdŭl; 1930), Song Kyewŏl's "A Letter from the Factory" (Kongjang sosik; 1931), Han Sŏrya's "Sand Guard" (Sabang kongsa; 1932), Kim Namch'ŏn's "The Factory Literary Club" (Munye kurakpu; 1934), and Kang Kyŏngae's *Human Predicaments* (In'gan munje; 1934), the writers offered more closely detailed portraits of laborers, both male and female, based on their research or their own life experiences. Works of this kind would also often include factual materials, such as newspaper reports, strike pamphlets, workers' poems and contemporary folksongs about the factory life, in order to further enhance their reality effects. Reportage served as a pivotal catalyst in this literary development, as the KAPF critics, who promoted the genre, had hoped.

## 6. Conclusion

Stylistically hybrid between journalism and literature, reportage arose globally in the 1920s as part of the aesthetic avant-gardes. In the wake of

---

21) Yi first serialized the story in the *Chosŏn ilbo* in May 1932 only to be banned after two episodes. Its second publication attempt in the same newspaper in July 1933 also failed after only one installment. Its publication in Japan under the new title of "The First Battlefront" was made possible due to the more relaxed implementation of censorship in the imperial mainland. The Japanese original manuscript, however, had been lost since and can today be read only in the translated—and revised—version published in North Korea ("Nitrogen" 1958).

drastic social changes such as wars, revolutions, and the eruption of modern mass culture, the practitioners of reportage sought to contest established journalism by producing eyewitness investigative reports on underrepresented social events and settings. Affiliated with the cultural left from the beginning, reportage appealed to leftist revolutionaries worldwide for the photographic immediacy of its truth claim, its activist ideal of a reporter as a participant-observer, and its blurring of the division between professional journalists and lay writers. In colonial Korea, too, the production of reportage was largely a leftist cultural project. Initially appropriated for commercial purposes, and yet not devoid of critical relevance, by the early 1930s reportage was widely deployed in producing eyewitness accounts of forbidden spaces such as the factory and the prison. To complement the limit of professional journalistic reportage in covering these spaces, the leftists also cultivated various reportage-like literary forms, such as prisoners' memoirs, worker-correspondents letters and diaries, and reportage-style fiction. The outcome was a formally irregular but still substantial development of reportage literature in colonial Korea.

We may pause here and ask why the prewar colonial history of Korean reportage went forgotten. The first, rather obvious reason would be the anti-communist cultural policy of post-colonial South Korea, which was responsible for the banning of all leftist writings between 1948 and 1988. Another reason would be that reportage, being a non-canonical genre, is still understudied today. Yet another and possibly more relevant reason can be inferred, however, from our reconstructed history of colonial reportage. As we have seen, the Korean practitioners of reportage in the 1920s and 1930s produced, partly due to censorship, a body of literature that was formally complex and varied. This formal irregularity is likely to have made it difficult for later critics to readily recognize their literature as belonging to the genre. By rediscovering reportage at its birth, we can now observe the close resonance between its

historical origin and its contemporary manifestations as a democratic experimental aesthetic.

Today, a rediscovery of colonial reportage literature may contribute to reverting the skeptical, at times harsh evaluation of colonial leftist literature as a dogmatic and sterile artistic movement. As a distinctive form of factual writing, reportage was an experimental literary form that teetered between journalistic and literary writing, combining the rigor of documentation with an artistic flair. That the Korean proletarian writers took active interest in this form of writing attests to their spirit of innovation. The proletarian writers' achievements were many: they made the life experience of the working class, both men and women, a legitimate subject matter of modern literary arts; they contributed to the development of modern literary forms such as the reportage, the wall novel, and the satire; and they challenged the myth of the aesthetic autonomy of literature, reclaiming the literary work as a valuable medium for promoting social change.

Following the 1935 demise of the KAPF, its founding chairman, Pak Yŏnghŭi, once remarked, in his defeatist mood, that “gained was ideology and lost was art” (Y. Pak 550). Arguably, contrary to Pak's claim, art was not lost but rather had its ontological mode redefined in the proletarian cultural movement. Considering the current popularity of reportage in societies with a newly awakened democratic consciousness, we may also say, with a tinge of regret, that much art, including that of critical reportage, was lost in colonial Korea with the decline of that movement.

| Works Cited |

- “A kija ūi sugi: Kasŏng koch’ŏ ta wŏnsvng-k’ap’e munjŏn e kugŏlgun”  
[Journalist A’s report: Louder songs and more cries of resentment-  
Beggars in café streets], *Chungang ilbo* Nov. 27, 1931: 2+.
- An, Sŭngghyŏn. Ed. *Ilche kangjŏmgi han’guk nodong sosŏl chŏnjip* 1933-1938  
[Collected works of colonial Korean labor literature]. 3 vols. Seoul:  
Pogosa, 1995.
- “B kija ūi sugi: Kongga kongga kongga wa t’ogul e sanŭn paeksŏngdŭl”  
[Journalist B’s report: Plenty of empty houses and urban cave  
dwellers], *Chungang ilbo* November 28, 1931: 2+.
- Barraclough, Ruth. “Tales of Seduction: Factory Girls in Korean Proletarian  
Literature.” In “Proletarian Arts in East Asia: Quests for National,  
Gender, and Class Justice.” Ed. Heather Bowen-Struyk. Spec. issue of  
*positions*, 14. 2 (Fall 2006): 345-372.
- Benjamin, Walter. “The Author as Producer.” *Reflections*. Ed. Peter Demetz.  
Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 1978, 220-238.
- Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Mchael Shaw. Theory and  
history of Literature. Ser. 4. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota  
Press, 1984.
- “Chitpalp’in chŏngmi yŏjjkkong ūi sogim ōmnŭn chabaek kwa hoso” [A  
violated rice-factory girl’s confession and appeal] by an anonymous  
writer, *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* April 1931: 28-29.
- Ch’oe, Oksun. “Yŏldu sigan nodong ūl hago: pyŏngsang esŏ sinŭm hanŭn  
p’yebyŏng hwanja yŏgong ūi hasoyŏn” [After twelve hours of labor:  
a consumptive factory girl’s petition from her sickbed]. *Sidae kongnon*  
1 (Sep.1931): 60-62.
- Ch’oe, Rin. “Okchung hoesanggi” [Prison memoir]. *Hyesŏng* Mar. 1931: 116-

- Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso, 2000 [1997].
- Eckert, Carter. *Offspring of the Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996.
- Fore, Devin. "Soviet Factography: Production Art in an Information Age," *October* 118 (Fall 2006): 3-10.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Operative Word in Soviet Factography," *October* 118 (Fall 2006): 95-131.
- Gorham, Michael. "Tongue-Tied Writers: The Rabsel'kor Movement and the Voice of the 'New Intelligentsia' in Early Soviet Russia." *Russian Review* 55. 3 (1995): 412-429.
- H.C.S. saeng. "Yŏkamok saenghwal" [Life in women's prison]. *Hyesŏng Mar*. 1931: 89-91.
- "Hŭngnam chojil kongjang ūi chikkong saenghwal t'amsagi: taejabŏl e ppalinŭn 6000 nodongja" [An investigative report on the Korean Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory in Hŭngnam: 6000 laborers exploited by the big corporate capital]. *Chosŏn ilbo*, Sep. 14, 1931: 4 and Sep. 15 and 20, 1931: 3+.
- Jung, Sunt'ae. "Ch'ongnyŏkchŏn sigi chŏnjaeng munhangnon kwa chonggun munahk: *Pori wa pyŏngjŏng* kwa *Chŏnsŏn kibaeng ūl chungsim ūro*" [The discourse on war literature and the reportage in the total war era: on *Barley and Soldier* and *A Travelogue from the Battlefield*]. *Tongyang chŏngch'i sasangsa* 5, 2 (2005): 131-153.
- "Kamok ūi hyangt'osaek: Pusan, Taegu, Sŏdaemun, Haeju, and Pyongyang" [The local characteristics of penitentiaries in Pusan, Taegu, Sŏdaemun, Haeju, and Pyongyang]. *Tonggwang* Nov.1931: 46-52.

- Kim, Sesŏng. “Yuch’ijang saenghwal” [Life in the detention center]. *Hyesŏng* Mar. 1931: 84-86.
- Kim, Janice C. H. *To Live to Work: Factory Women in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Kim, Iisu. “Mo chŏnmaeguk namgong ūi ilgi” [Diary of a cigarette factory worker]. *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* Mar. 1930: 73.
- Kim, Kyŏngil. *Han’guk nodong undongsa 2: Ilcheba ūi nodong undong 1920-1945* [History of the Korean labor movement 2: labor movements under imperial Japan]. Seoul: Chisik madang, 2004.
- Kim, Minam. “Chilso piryo kongjang t’ambanggi, kongjang nae chamip i silp’ae e kwihago” [A visit report on a nitrogen fertilizer factory: my failed attempt to enter the factory]. *Chungang ilbo* Feb. 7, 1932: 4+.
- Kim, Sesŏng. “Yuch’ijang saenghwal” [Life in the detention center]. *Hyesŏng* Mar. 1931: 84-86.
- Kisch, Egon Erwin. “Preface to *The Racing Reporter*” (1925). *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. 512-513.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “A Dangerous Literary Genre” (1935). *The Raging Reporter: A Bio-Anthology*. Trans. and Ed. Harold B. Segel. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1987: 91-92.
- “Kongŏp toshi Hŭngnam ‘Chojil’ t’ambanggi: Sin’gyŏng ūl chagŭk hanŭn kikyē wa ‘tŏnnel’ esŏ sŏkpyŏlhanŭn 5000 chikkong” [A visit report on the Korean Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory in Hungnam the Industrial City: Nerve-racking machines and 5000 workers who disappear into tunnels]. *Chosŏn chungang ilbo* Apr. 14, 1934: 5+.
- Ku, Inmo. “Kukt’o sullye wa minjok ūi chagi kusŏng: kŭndae kukt’o kihaengmun ūi munhaksajŏk ūiŭi” [Pilgrimage of the nation and the construction of national self-identity: the historical significance of

- modern travelogues]. *Han'guk munhak yŏn'gu* 27 (Dec. 2004): 128-152.
- “Kukchang chŏnhu ūi yuch'ijang saenghwal chapki” [A miscellaneous record of prison life around the national funeral day]. *Kaeb'yŏk* July 1, 1926: 79-89.
- Kwak, Kŏnhong. “1930 nyŏndae ch'oban Chosŏn chilso piryo kongjang nodongja chojik undong” [Early-1930s labor union movement in the Korean Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory], *Yŏksa yŏn'gu* 4 (Oct. 1995): 35-86.
- Kwŏn, Hwan. “Chosŏn yesul undong ūi tangmyŏnhan kuch'ejŏk kwajŏng” [A concrete proposal for the Korean art movement]. *Chunggo ilbo* Sep. 12, 1930. Rept. in Vol 4. *K'ap'u pip'yŏng charyo ch'ongsŏ* [Collected works of KAPF criticism]. Ed. Im Kyuch'an and Han Kihyŏng, Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1990. 192-213.
- Laughlin, Charles. *The Aesthetics of Historical Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Lukács, Georg. “Realism in the Balance.” *Aesthetics and Politics*. Trans. and ed. Ronald Taylor. New York: Verso, 1998 [1977], 28-59.
- Mueller, Julie Kay. “A New Kind of Newspaper: The Origins and Development of a Soviet Institution, 1921-1928.” Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1992.
- Nam, Wŏnjin. Ed. *Yi Pungmyŏng sosŏl sŏnjip* [Selected stories of Yi Pungmyŏng]. Seoul: Hyŏndae munhak, 2010.
- “Nongch'on lep'o: ch'usugi nŭn wakkŏnman uri ūi churin sŏrum: sidŭrŭn nongch'on aehwa” [Agricultural reportage: sad stories from the declining countryside]. *Che Ilŏn* Oct. 1932: 39-45.
- Ŏ, Kwisŏn, “Kuch'igam saenghwal” [Prison life]. *Hyesŏng* Mar. 1931: 86-88.
- Park, Jungsun. “Haebanggi munhwa undong kwa rŭp'orŭt'aju munhak” [The

- post-liberation cultural movement and reportage literature], *Ömunhak* 106 (Dec. 2009): 369-392.
- Pak, Sünggük. “Yi Pungmyöng ssi üi *Ch’ojin* e taehayö” [On Yi Pungmyong’s *The First Battle*]. *Chosön chungang ilbo*. Oct.13, 1935. Rept. in Vol. 8 of *K’ap’u pip’yöng charyo ch’ongsö* [Collected works of KAPF criticism]. Ed. Im Kyuch’an and Han Kihyöng, Seoul: T’aehaksa, 1990. 306-311.
- Pak, Yöng hüi. “Chosön p’ürolet’aria yesul undong üi chakküm” [The past and present of the Korean proletarian art movement]. *Tonga ilbo*. Jan. 4, 1931. Rept. in Vol 4 of *K’ap’u pip’yöng charyo ch’ongsö* [Collected works of KAPF criticism]. Ed. Im Kyuch’an and Han Kihyöng, Seoul: T’aehaksa, 1990. 221-229.
- Perry, Samuel. “Aesthetics for Justice: Proletarian Literature in Japan and Colonial Korea.” Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 2007. 102-112. *Ruporutāju sbū*. 2 vols, *Nihon puroretaria bungaku sbū* 33 and 34. Tokyo: Sin nihon shuppansha, 1988.
- “The Programme of the Communist International” of the Sixth Congress. July/August 1928. *Marxists Internet Archive*. Mar. 11, 2011. <<http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/6th-congress/index.html>>.
- Sabharuwal, K.R. “Indo üi kamok saenghwalgi” [A record of life in an Indian prison]. *Hyesöng* Mar. 1932: 88-95.
- Scott, William. *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.
- Segel, Harold B. Trans. and ed. *The Raging Reporter: A Bio-Anthology*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1987.
- Sökt’anseang. “Sarinma, chasin’gwi ap’yön’gul taet’amsagi” [Investigative report on the homicidal opium dens of morphin addicts]. *Pyölgön’gon*

- Feb. 1927: 64-78.
- Songjak. “Kkakchŏngi ro pyŏnsin chamip haya p’osaggun ūi sogul e irya tongbak” [Overnight undercover investigation of the headquarter of snake catchers], *Pyŏlgŏn’gon*, July 1927, 75-85.
- Songjak and Sŏlt’ae. “Pyŏnjang kija amya t’amsagi” [Report of an undercover investigation of night streets]. *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* Jan. 1927: 62-69.
- Ssang S. “Chŏnyulhal tae anmagul: yŏhaksaeŋ yuindan pongul t’amsagi” [Devil’s place of terror: an investigative report on the house of female students’ prostitution]. *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* Mar. 1927: 87-89.
- Usŏngsaeng. “Kwangju chesa kongjang imyŏn t’amsagi 1: nunmul ūl chaa naenŭn yŏgongdŭl ūi aehwan” [An investigative report on the Kwangju spinning factory 1: the sad sorrows of factory girls]. *Chungoe ilbo* Jun. 21, 1929: 3+.
- U, Sunok. “Ŏnu chesa hoesa yŏgong ilgi” [Diary of a spinning factory girl]. *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* Mar. 1930: 72-73.
- Yi, Hŏn’gu. “P’uromundan ūi wigi” [A crisis of proletarian literary circles]. *Che Il sŏn* Feb. 1933, 18-21.
- Yi, Pungmyŏng. “Ammonia t’ankŭ” [Ammonia tank]. *Pip’an*, Sep. 1932. Rept. in *Yi Pungmyŏng chakp’umjip* [Selected works of Yi Pungmyŏng]. Ed. Yi Chŏngsŏn. Seoul: ChimANJI, 2010. 39-46.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Chilso piryo kongjang” [Nitrogen fertilizer factory]. *Chosŏn ilbo*, May 29 and 31, 1932. Rept. in *Yi Pungmyŏng chakp’umjip* [Selected works of Yi Pungmyŏng]. Ed. Yi Chŏngsŏn. Seoul: ChimANJI, 2010. 29-37.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Chilso piryo kongjang.” [Nitrogen fertilizer factory]. 1958. Rept. in *Yi Pungmyŏng sosŏl sŏnjip* [Selected stories of Yi Pungmyŏng]. Ed. Nam Wŏnjin. Seoul: Hyŏndae munhak, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Kongjangga” [The factory district]. *Chungang* Apr. 1935. Rept. in Vol. 3 of An Sŭngghyŏn, ed. *Ilche kangjŏmgi han’guk nodong sosŏl chŏnjip*

- 1933-1938 [Collected works of colonial Korean labor literature]. Seoul: Pogosa, 1995. 139-163.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Kongjang ũn na ũi chakka suõp ũi taehak iõtta” [The factory was my university for literary studies]. *Cb'õngnyõn munbak*. Oct. 1957. Rept. in *Yi Pungmyõng sosõl sõnjip* [Selected stories of Yi Pungmyõng]. Ed. Nam Wõnjin. Seoul: Hyõmunhak, 2010. 439-455.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Sasiljuũ chõldae chiji” [Absolute support for realism]. *Cbosõn chungang ilbo*, July 11, 1935. Rept. in Vol. 8 of *K'ap'u pip'yõng charyo cb'ongsõ* [Collected works of KAPF criticism]. Ed. Im Kyuch'an and Han Kihyõng, Seoul: T'aehaksa, 1990. 303-305.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Õdum esõ chuũn sk'ech'i” [A sketch from a dark night], *Sinin munbak*, Mar. 1933. Rept. in Vol. 3 of An Sũnghyõn, ed. *Ilche kangjõngi han'guk nodong sosõl cbõnjip 1933-1938* [Collected works of colonial Korean labor literature]. Seoul: Pogosa, 1995. 330-341.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Yõgong” [A factory girl]. *Sin'gyedan*. Mar. 1933. Rept. in Vol. 3 of An Sũnghyõn, ed. *Ilche kangjõngi han'guk nodong sosõl cbõnjip 1933-1938* [Collected works of colonial Korean labor literature]. Seoul: Pogosa, 1995. 40-52.
- Yi, Wõnjo. “Pogo munhak ũi taemang” [Great expectations for reportage]. *Cbosõn ilbo*. Aug. 11, 1937: 26+.
- Yoo, Theodore Jun. *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health 1910-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Yu, Hũisun. “Yõjikkong ũi hasoyõn” [A factory girl's petition]. *Puin kongnon*. Apr. 1932: 64-68.
- Yun, Sõngsang. “Yõgamok pangmun'gi” [A visit report on women's prison]. *Samch'õlli*, Nov. 1930, 51-53.

## 근대 르포르타주 문학의 잊혀진 역사

박 선 영  
(남가주대학교)

본 논문의 목적은 근대 르포르타주 문학의 잊혀진 역사를 복원하는 데 있다. 도시의 빈민가, 공장, 감옥 등 일반인에게 잘 알려져 있지 않은 장소를 기사가 방문하여 현장의 사건들과 그 안의 생활상을 조사 보도하는 르포르타주 문학이 “탐방기”라는 근대 저널리즘의 한 형태로 조선에 출현한 것은 1920년대 중반부터이다. 이후 보다 발달된 장문 형식의 “탐사기”를 비롯하여, 르포르타주 문학은 수기·회상기·기행문·통신문학·르포 소설 등의 다양한 형태로 발전하였다. 언론의 검열이 엄격했던 식민지 조선에서 이 현장 보도 문학의 발전을 주도한 것은 신문이라기보다 <개벽>, <별건곤>, <혜성>, <제일선> 등 좌파 계열의 잡지들이었다. 이같은 르포르타주 문학의 근대사는 그 형식의 복잡성과 논픽션 문학을 경외시해온 평단의 관습 때문에 지금까지 잊혀져 왔으며, 또한 최근의 연구에서도 “보도문학”이라는 역어가 30년대 후반 전쟁기 중군 기행문들을 중심으로 논란이 되었던 까닭에 그 이전의 좌파 문인들의 성과가 묻혀 버리는 경향이 있었다. 잊혀진 르포르타주 문학의 근대사를 복원함으로써, 우리는 근대 실험 문학의 일종으로 볼 수 있는 르포르타주 형식을 도입, 발전시킨 카프계 및 여타 좌익 문인들의 창의성과 생산성을 재인식할 수 있다.

주제어 : 르포르타주, 근대 저널리즘, 보도문학, 프로문학, 노동문학, 이북명

논문접수일 : 7.7 / 심사기간 : 7.20~8.5 / 게재확정일 : 8.10