

The Untimeliness of “Zainichi”

Literary History and the Construction of Coherence

I would like to begin with the very origins of Zainichi literature. This is the place to start, not for the purpose of narrating Zainichi literary history from beginning to end, but because the contested historical boundaries of Zainichi literature are emblematic of the ways that literary histories and taxonomies create the very categories they purport to represent.

In the first place, it should be noted that I apply the term *Zainichi literature* anachronistically. In subsequent chapters, I discuss colonial writers such as Yi Kwangsu and Kim Saryang under the rubric of Zainichi literature, projecting a certain continuity onto a period of the past that predates even the coining and circulation of the term *Zainichi* in reference to Koreans in Japan. The context in which these figures wrote is radically different from that of the postwar writers treated in this book. However, it should also be noted that *Zainichi literature*, as a translation of “*Zainichi*” *bungaku*, the bracketed term most commonly used in Japanese-language discourse today, is also anachronistic when applied to writers like Kim Sökpöm and Kin Kakuei, who debuted in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. At the time their writing was usually categorized as *Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku*, with no quotation marks, and specifying *Chōsenjin*, a subset of those who identify as Zainichi today. Among the writers treated in this book, only Yū Miri’s career overlaps with the widespread usage of the more flexible and loosely defined “*Zainichi*” *bungaku*, and Yū is better known for her deeply ambivalent stance toward the Zainichi framework than her unproblematic inclusion within it.

Why, then, use the term *Zainichi* at all? I certainly do not wish to imply any sort of consistency across the work and careers of Yi Kwangsu, Yū Miri, and everyone in between. Nor is my purpose here to argue that these writers share a

totalizing characteristic or experience in which a coherent Zainichi (or even Korean) identity could be grounded. This notion is to be thoroughly dismantled. I do not mean to delineate a literary genealogy or history, much less a new set of boundaries through which to distinguish what is Zainichi and what is not. Rather, I use *Zainichi* as an ingress into the provisional and contested nature of the literary categories that emerged and faded across the times and spaces explored in this book. If there is anything consistent throughout this history, it is the inconsistency of the terms *du jour*. The bracketed “*Zainichi*,” with its visible acknowledgment that the word does not refer to anything in an ontologically stable sense, captures this as well as any term could.

In this chapter, I trace the history of how the literary production of Koreans in Japan has been categorized, paying specific attention to how the terms for such categories have implied or imposed a coherence that never existed. Unraveling these terms reveals the violence of the representational logic of literary taxonomy, particularly at the intersection of empires. Throughout this history, the language denoting “Zainichi” literature and its antecedents has been overdetermined by intersecting imperial language politics. It has borne the indelible traces of the Japanese empire and its postwar reverberations, as well as the global hegemony of the English language and, in the Cold War context, the United States. Intersectional analysis is necessary to tease out the mutually constitutive and contradictory imperial demands to which these categories were forged as a response. Yet at the same time, the categories themselves enact a similar form of violence, flattening out internal difference and excising the voices within that threaten their ostensible coherence. I will unpack the incoherence of Zainichi literature along three lines: its contested colonial origins, the “thirty-eighth parallel in Japan” that fissures the genre ideologically, and the suppressed intersectional difference that has created a semblance of coherence despite these fundamental divides.

ETHNIC, NATIONAL, REGIONAL: ZAINICHI LITERARY TAXONOMY AND COLONIAL MODERNITY

Perhaps the most overtly policed set of boundaries defining Zainichi literature are historical. Even the seemingly simple question of when Zainichi literature begins is highly contested.¹ Just as the Anglophone academic division of labor between Japanese and Korean studies placed Zainichi literature traditionally within the purview of Japanese (language) literature, there is a stark divide between prewar (*kindai*, modern) and postwar (*gendai*, contemporary) literary studies in Japanese academia that makes 1945 a sort of default starting point for Zainichi literature. Still, the elision of continuities between pre-1945 imperial Japan and its post-1945 reconfiguration has been subject to many powerful critiques.² Korean colonial subjects of the Japanese empire and the processes by which they became Zainichi in the postwar have often been at the center of such critiques.

It is curious, then, that established narratives of Zainichi literary history tend to go out of their way to exclude colonial-period Japanese-language writing by Koreans. Kawamura Minato, one of the main progenitors of the standard generational narrative of Zainichi literature, even admits to this arbitrary exclusion up to a point:

If we were to define 'Zainichi Korean literature' [*Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku*] in a broad sense, it would include all literary works by Koreans who are 'in Japan' [*zainichi*]³ (or Japanese nationals of Korean descent), without any restrictions on what language they use, the content of their works, or the names of the authors. In the broadest sense, even works penned by writers like Yi Kwangsu and Yun Tongju while they lived temporarily in Japan would be Zainichi Korean literature. . . . However, the term Zainichi Korean literature, as it is used, has a much more limited connotation.⁴

Kawamura goes on to explain that the genre as defined in the narrower sense only includes those who write Japanese-language texts under a name that is easily parsed as Korean, about Zainichi Korean characters who confront the problems of Zainichi Korean society.⁵ As John Lie has described these arbitrary exclusions, "Narrow is the gate to Zainichi-ness."⁶

By this reasoning, Kawamura includes in his history of Zainichi literature two "forerunners" (*kōshi*) of the genre, Kim Saryang and Chang Hyōkju, who were active in the Japanese metropolitan literary establishment (*bundan*) in the final years of the colonial period. However, he only discusses them in order to establish that they are properly categorized outside Zainichi Korean literature. Kim, who eventually returned to Korea and pursued a Korean-language writing career in the postwar period, is better thought of as a writer of "ethnic literature" (*minzoku bungaku*), whereas Chang, who is known for collaborating with the empire and eventually naturalizing as a Japanese citizen under the name Noguchi Minoru, is an exemplar of "colonial literature" (*shokuminchi bungaku*).⁷ Thus, even if these two writers meet the long list of requirements to have their works considered Zainichi Korean literature, they are nevertheless excluded. The basis for this exclusion seems to be their belonging to other literary categories, which are implicitly presumed to be mutually exclusive.

A sympathetic reading of the laborious process by which Kawamura and other proponents of a narrowly-defined Zainichi literature achieve a coherent object of study via exclusion is that without this winnowing, the category ceases to mean anything in particular.⁸ However, as Song Hyewōn shows in her much more expansive literary history of the Zainichi community, the gatekeeping through which the canon of Zainichi Korean literature was defined had a powerful influence on whose texts were read, circulated, and preserved.⁹ In this way, Zainichi literary history demands a reorientation: away from what the category is, and toward what the category does.

To better understand this impetus to exclude or at least marginalize colonial writers within the history of Zainichi literature, I begin by comparing the

historical conditions and literary rubrics under which Yi Kwangsu and Kim Saryang wrote fiction. Both made their careers in the period of Japan's colonial rule over the Korean peninsula, 1910–45, when all of Korea was officially and literally *zainichi*: “in Japan.” Both were bilingual, having studied and lived in Japan proper (*naichi*), and published in both Korean and Japanese, sometimes—but not always—about the experience of being Korean and living in Japan. Both writers were deeply concerned with language throughout their careers, and contributed to public dialogues on the place of Korean language and literature within the Japanese empire and the world at large.

Again, this is not to suggest that the two writers are “the same,” nor even that the boundaries of *Zainichi* literature should be redrawn to be inclusive of more colonial Korean writers. Instead, I wish to explore the process by which Kim is situated comfortably, if somewhat liminally, within the category of *Zainichi* literature, whereas it is beyond the pale to consider Yi within that frame. In Kawamura's terms, Kim is a “forerunner,” while Yi is listed as a ridiculous example of the kind of writer who would be included if the definition of *Zainichi* literature were expanded *ad absurdum*. The politics of this distinction, as well as its material consequences, reveal themselves through a closer examination of the ways the careers of Kim and Yi overlap and depart from each other. Thinking through the ways these writers are included or excluded from *Zainichi* literature and other literary rubrics illustrates the intersections and entanglements of multiple imperial hegemonomies that created the conditions under which not only *Zainichi*, but also Korean and Japanese literatures, were formed.

As is well known, in the wake of its forced opening to the West in the nineteenth century through the signing of unequal treaties with the United States and other empires staking claims in East Asia, Japan embarked on a rapid and transformative process of modernization on Western terms. This included radical reforms of the Japanese language in order to conform to Western standards of vernacular literature. Japan's speedy industrialization and militarization, initiated as a defense against European and American imperialisms, soon enabled it to compete in the race to colonize its Asian neighbors. And in fact, its program of expansionist colonialism was pursued in part as proof of its advanced civilization and equality with the West, as protection against the colonization that Japan had so recently feared.

Perhaps the most tangible sign of Japan's “catching up” to the West was its defeat of a Western power in the Russo-Japanese war (1904–05), which resulted in the protectorate status of Japan over Korea. This disrupted Korea's own accelerated process of becoming a modern nation-state and led in turn to formal colonization in 1910. The years around the turn of the twentieth century on the Korean peninsula, from the establishment of the Great Korean Empire (*Taehan Cheguk*) in 1897, to the Protectorate Treaty in 1905, to annexation in 1910, were a tumultuous period of ever-changing relationships and interactions with empires both Asian and Euro-American. As with other areas colonized during this period,

Korea's colonization happened under the global imposition of Western capitalism, which functioned rhetorically in part by organizing the world into a hierarchy of more and less civilized. However, by distancing themselves from an Eastern cultural tradition centered on China in order to enact reforms aimed at "civilization and enlightenment," early Korean nationalist thinkers (including Yi Kwangsu) ended up playing into the hands of Japanese imperialists, who used these efforts to demonstrate Korea's relative lack of civilization and need for protectorate status.¹⁰ Similarly, in lending their support to a kind of self-orientalizing pan-Asian discourse, these same thinkers had their anti-Western ideas co-opted by the Japanese empire.¹¹ This made it almost impossible to effectively articulate resistance to both imperialisms at once. As a result, the forging of a colonial-modern Korean national identity was inextricably bound up with the cooperation and competition of Eastern and Western imperialisms. This is one reason to view colonial and postcolonial Korea as a site of intersecting imperialisms. That is, a single-empire framework is inadequate for articulating the structure of Korean oppression.

Nowhere was this more evident than in debates on modern vernacular language and literature. Even beyond Korea, the early history of modern literature in East Asia is in many ways tantamount to the story of how what we now call literature came to be called literature in the asymmetrical process of translation. More specifically, it is the story of the emergence of literature as a conceptual framework, simultaneously with the production and definition of the terms *bungaku* (Japanese) and *munhak* (Korean). Intellectuals and literary figures on both sides of the straits raised the question of how to conform a largely sinographic writing tradition with Western norms of vernacular (national) language. At the same time, the violent process of creating sinographic "equivalents" for Western terms for modern concepts was ongoing across East Asia.¹² As with the territorial occupation and eventual annexation of the peninsula, it is impossible to tell the story of the colonization of the Korean language and literature without reference to a complex triangulation between Western and Japanese imperialisms, by turns oppositional and mutually reinforcing.

Here the case of Yi Kwangsu is instructive. Yi is broadly considered the single most important pioneer of modern Korean literature and the vernacular style in which it is written to this day. As with his Japanese contemporaries, Yi's primary motivating factor in developing a modern literary style was to improve the cultural and emotional refinement of the people, thereby strengthening the nation. In 1916, Yi laid out his thoughts on literature in an essay titled "Munhak iran hao" ("What is Literature?"), published in *Maeil sinbo*, the Japanese Governor-General's Korean-language daily. The essay discusses *munhak* in general, which Yi defines explicitly as a translation of the English term "Literature" (which appears in roman characters in the essay), but focuses specifically on *Chosŏn munhak* (Korean literature), which he defines as "literary works written by Korean writers in the Korean script."¹³ Due to the strictness of this definition, and the fact that the vast majority

of “literary works written by Korean writers” prior to this period were produced in literary Chinese, Yi makes the provocative claim that Korean literature “has no past, only a future.”¹⁴

Though largely focused on the dichotomy between what he viewed as the backward Chinese literary tradition that had heavily influenced Korean literature of the past (to the extent that it ever existed) and the modern European literature that it should emulate in the future, the essay, simply by virtue of the colonial context and government organ in which it was published, cannot completely escape the crucial third term of Japan. The byline for the essay’s installments even notes that Yi is writing “from Tokyo” (*Tonggyōng esō*), highlighting the fact that the author, if not the piece itself, is literally *zainichi*.

In one of the few moments in which Yi mentions Japan at all, it is to emphasize his central point that literature, and the concomitant development of vernacular language, is above all a national project. He writes:

Ever since Yamada Bimiyō launched the unification of the spoken and written language (*genbun itchi*) movement about three decades ago, Japan has been using vernacular writing in literature, science, politics, essays, etc. This kind of development greatly influences a nation’s culture. Therefore, new literature must be written in the purely contemporary everyday vernacular, which can be understood and used by anyone.¹⁵

I take up the issue of vernacular style in greater depth in chapter 2, but the key point to recognize here is that despite writing in Japan, from a moment of Japanese colonization, in a Japanese imperial publication, and in a vernacular style patterned after the very *genbun itchi* blend of sinographs and native phonetic script that he mentions here (or perhaps because of these very factors), Yi frames the Japanese case as a model to be emulated in the quest to become more Western and less Eastern, rather than a hegemonic power to be resisted in the quest to become more Korean and less Japanese.¹⁶

From its inception, then, Korean literature (*Chosŏn munhak*) could only come into being in a language that was heavily influenced by Chinese, Japanese, and European languages (via Japanese). It was formed both at and by the intersection of empires. And it consequently struggled to articulate its position outside the binary terms of East and West, Japanese colonizer and Korean colonized, despite the imbrication of all of the above.

Eventually, however, the national literature as civilizing mechanism that Yi called *Chosŏn munhak* and conceptualized as the literature of the Korean ethno-nation (*minjok*) would come to refer to the literature of the state (*kukka*), which is to say the Japanese empire. Soon after Yi penned “Munhak iran hao” and serialized his first full-length novel (*Mujōng*, 1917), thousands of Koreans took to the streets on March 1, 1919, demonstrating against Japanese colonial rule. The March First Movement, as it is known, resulted in thousands of casualties as Japanese

forces violently repressed the demonstrations. The years that followed, however, saw a shift from “military rule” to the period of so-called “cultural rule,” in which Japanese colonial policy shifted from a strategy of governing through brute force to cultural assimilation. A central pillar of the Japanese assimilation program was education reform, particularly a greater push toward Japanese language use.¹⁷ In the 1930s, as the Japanese empire expanded rapidly into the Asian continent and the South Pacific and war efforts intensified, the assimilation of Korean subjects into Japanese imperial ideology took on greater urgency. This resulted in yet another change in strategy, from *dōka* (assimilation) to *kōminka* (imperial subjectification). Under this regime the burden was shifted: rather than Japan teaching Koreans how to be properly civilized Japanese citizens, Koreans themselves were now tasked with making the effort to become loyal Japanese subjects.¹⁸

War mobilization and imperialization would eventually lead to what Korean literary histories designate “the dark period” (*amhūkki*). These years, corresponding to the early 1940s, were characterized by oppressive censorship, the shuttering of publication venues (including nearly all Korean-language magazines and newspapers), greater pressure to use the Japanese language in both public and private life, and few opportunities to write literature other than pro-war propaganda. However, this same period saw a “Korea boom” in mainland Japan, which included the entry of Korean writers into the Japanese-language literary mainstream.¹⁹ In many ways, imperialization efforts simultaneously erased and maintained ethnic difference between mainland Japanese and colonial subjects. That is, full and equal status as Japanese citizens—perhaps even fully-formed “Japaneseness”—was extended to colonial subjects at the official level as part of an effort to reduce ethnic tensions and strengthen the empire as a whole at a time of expansionist war, though in practice discrimination continued and ethnic difference had to be maintained in order to continue justifying Japanese colonial domination of the peninsula and other occupied areas.²⁰

Under these conditions, *Chosŏn munhak* (Korean literature) did not cease to exist so much as it was refigured as a regional literature (*chihō bungaku*), comparable to that of Kyushu, Okinawa, Hokkaido, and other peripheral areas of the empire. The ideological project of building the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in the late 1930s and early 1940s was a concrete manifestation of the utopian pan-Asianism put forth by Japanese imperialist intellectuals as a means of “overcoming” Western modernity. Within this framework, regional literatures such as *Chōsen bungaku* (*Chosŏn munhak*) maintained their particularity, but only within the generality of Japanese imperial-national literature, or *kokumin bungaku*.²¹ Once again, Korean literary identity was constituted by the intersection of Japanese and Western imperialisms. Resistance to one was easily co-opted by the other.

For this brief historical moment near the end of the colonial period, the distinction between the two literatures now taxonomized as Zainichi literature and

modern Korean literature essentially collapsed. Japanese-language Korean writers like Kim Saryang and Chang Hyökju, the two most successful in the Japanese *bundan* (elite literary sphere), explicitly situated themselves within the category of Korean literature pioneered by Yi Kwangsu and others who would later be canonized in modern Korean literary history. These same writers, who have been viewed ambivalently within Korean literary history due to perceived or actual pro-Japanese collaboration, were already or would soon be writing in Japanese as well. Little distinction could be made between the two groups. Moreover, the language used to distinguish between Japanese and Korean—"naichi" versus "Chōsenjin"—demonstrates the anachronism of projecting the distinction between "Japanese" and "Korean" into the past. At this particular moment, all of these writers and thinkers were Japanese, or at least literally *zainichi* (in Japan). In fact, it was only through a radical reconfiguration of the relationships among language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality in postwar Japan and the Koreas that *Zainichi* could emerge as a relevant category at all.

"THIRD NATIONALS": FORMER COLONIAL SUBJECTS AND THE INTERSECTIONAL COLD WAR

The epistemological upheavals brought about in the wake of 1945 gave rise to new categories and terms for (now former) colonial subjects, including *Zainichi* Koreans. The tension surrounding these terms was and is emblematic of many of the larger social and political tensions underlying this historical shift. Namely, the question of how to deal with the presence of former colonial subjects in Japan—a situation that had been a matter of course in the previous decades—was now suddenly viewed as a problem by both Japanese and occupation authorities. In this way, the assumption that Koreans do not belong in Japan (embedded in the term *Zainichi*) was enabled by a radical shift from a multicultural empire to ostensibly homogenous monoethnic (and, no less importantly, monolingual) nation-states in Japan and the Koreas in the postwar. This shift necessitated an equally radical forgetting of the "intimacies" and "terms" of the past.²²

These ruptures, like those accompanying Korea's transition into modernity, occurred at the intersection of empires. Furthermore, this intersection is paradoxically reflected and elided by the terms, such as *Zainichi*, that emerged in this period. It is impossible to articulate the newfound need for the discursive category of *Zainichi* without reference to the simultaneously antagonistic and mutually reinforcing quality of US and Japanese imperialisms. More specifically, the years immediately following the unconditional Japanese surrender in 1945, when *Zainichi* first came into use, were characterized by rupture and reordering across the region, with the collapse of the Japanese empire on the one hand, and the rise of Cold War (neo-)imperialism on the other. Yet as the postwar experience of Koreans in Japan attests, many of the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic hierarchies

and hybridities that emerged in the colonial period endured in the subsequent decades. Much of this paradoxical rupture within continuity was a direct result of decolonization on the peninsula and deimperialization in the Japanese archipelago occurring under military occupation by Allied forces. Because the original strategic goals of these occupations were so quickly subsumed within broader Cold War currents, many of the existing political tensions in the region stemming from the Japanese empire were deliberately forgotten at the official levels, leaving the cultural realm to piece together the haunting, fragmented narratives of empire and war.²³

In the same way, this intersectional structure created broader obstacles to representing Korea itself, whether *Zainichi* or otherwise, largely because Korea as such ceased to exist. The two divided states that would come to correspond with Chōsen and Kankoku (Chosŏn and Hanguk in Korean) were established under occupations that rested on the foundations of the ruined Japanese empire. Thus, the term *Zainichi* and its underlying logic of ethnic homogeneity came into use precisely at the moment it could no longer refer to a unified ethnic homeland. Korea could not be named without naming its own splintering, its lack of internal coherence. Here again, the very language used to describe Koreans in Japan bears the indelible mark of the intersectional imperial conditions under which it was produced.

This language serves as an ever-present reminder of the necessarily incomplete processes of deimperialization and decolonization in Japan and Korea respectively as a result of Cold War military occupation. Less than two weeks after Japan's unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945, US forces began arriving on mainland Japan to begin the occupation.²⁴ Soon after, on September 8, 1945, US forces landed at Incheon to occupy the Korean peninsula below the 38th parallel. Notably, both of these spaces—and many more across the Asia-Pacific region—fell under the umbrella of the Allied occupation of Japan, including its colonial territories. The empire was parceled out for occupation, largely by US and Soviet forces, but in most cases, the colonies were not returned immediately to precolonial sovereignty. Some never would be.²⁵ The Korean peninsula is arguably in this latter group, as the territory was returned to Korean sovereignty only in the form of two competing states on either side of the dividing line established by the occupation itself (and, of course, following a devastating civil war).

This is perhaps the most conspicuous, but far from the only example of how the politics of the nascent Cold War dictated the direction of the occupation of Japan as well as its former colonies. In *naichi* Japan, the so-called "Reverse Course" of 1947 saw the priority of the occupation shift from war accountability and reform to political stability and anti-communism. Koreans who remained in Japan proper after the war (over two million at the time of the surrender, and approximately six hundred thousand at the formal conclusion of the occupation) were perceived to have leftist sympathies, and were subject to increasingly repressive policies as a

result. Perhaps the most consequential such policy was the 1947 Alien Registration Law, which required non-Japanese nationals residing in Japan to register and specifically included former colonial subjects in this category. Thus, long-term Korean residents of Japan proper, who were still technically citizens of Japan, faced pressure to “repatriate” to the peninsula despite significant obstacles to doing so.²⁶

One problematic term that emerged in this period, in the context of the occupation of Japan, was *daisangokujin* or “third national.” Today this word is used derogatorily, much like *Zainichi* itself. Likely coined by Japanese translators for occupation authorities, the term was used to refer to Koreans and other formerly colonized people who remained in Japan in order to specify that they were non-Japanese. Presumably, the *san* or “third” in the term alludes to the fact that its referents were also non-American, with the United States and Japan constituting the two nations from which a third must be distinguished. The term’s existence is indicative of the fact that the position of former colonial subjects of the Japanese empire could not be articulated except in reference to the intersection of Japanese and Western hegemonies. They were not Japanese, and not American, and their situation demanded that they grapple with both of these realities simultaneously.

Moreover, the emergence of this category in the postwar is evidence of the Japanese empire’s ultimate failure to make good on its promise (or threat) that Koreans and other colonized subjects could become Japanese. The ultimate betrayal of this promise would come in 1952, when the San Francisco Peace Treaty (signed between Japan and the United States) formally revoked Japanese citizenship from Koreans in Japan, and, for lack of a unified sovereign Korea in the midst of the Korean War, rendered them stateless. Yet perhaps more suggestively, the treatment of Koreans in Japan as an intractable problem indicates a buy-in on the part of American forces to the newly arising notion that Japan (and Korea) were ethnically homogenous, in both descriptive and prescriptive senses.²⁷

This constitutes yet another moment, then, in which Western imperialism (now in the form of American Cold War neo-imperialism) both competed with and enabled Japanese imperialism, leading to intersectional obstacles to representation. Under US occupation, Japanese intellectuals and cultural figures quickly came to see themselves as part of the global “colonized,” even using the plight of Koreans and other subjects formerly colonized by the Japanese empire as a framework for understanding their new position.²⁸ This mutual experience of colonialism, broadly conceived, opened up pathways to solidarity between Japan and the areas formerly under its imperial control—at least as these Japanese thinkers saw it.²⁹ However, it was their broad conception of colonialism, unable to account for important historical differences between Japan and Korea, that created an impossible situation for Koreans within these new coalitions. To call attention to the legacies of Japanese imperialism was to undermine this newfound solidarity (or at least to open oneself to such an accusation), leading to immense difficulty in balancing the need to mount critiques of both Japanese and US imperialisms at the

same time. This double bind created the kind of representational impossibilities that are characteristic of intersectional incoherence.³⁰

Essentially, Zainichi Koreans faced the same dilemma as their colonial-period counterparts. With their citizenship status alienating them from Japan and now the Koreans (Kankoku and Chōsen), and as *daisangokujin* doubly removed from the center of power represented by American occupation authorities, writing in Japanese became the only path to representation within the broader global power structure. At the same time, however, writing in Japanese constituted a reverberation of colonial language policy under the banner of assimilation and imperialization. Particularly with opportunities to publish in Korean still extant via the newspapers and magazines put out by North Korea-backed Zainichi political organizations, it was easy to see Japanese-language writing as a sort of erasure of Zainichi Korean language, culture, and identity. Zainichi writers struggle to navigate this conundrum to this day, though perhaps none more than the second generation, who found themselves both more accepted by the Japanese literary establishment and less connected to the Korean language than anyone previously in their position. It was under these conditions that *Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku*—Zainichi Korean literature narrowly defined—truly emerged.

THE DECEPTIVE COHERENCE OF ZAINICHI CHŌSENJIN BUNGAU

If there were ever a historical period for which, either in the moment itself or in present-day hindsight, the meaning of “Zainichi” was stable and representative of a concrete and internally unified politics, it is the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this time writers like Kim Sōkpōm, Ri Kaisei, and Kin Kakuei, an all-male trifecta recognized in the scholarship as the core of second-generation Zainichi literature, achieved career breakthroughs.³¹ Ri Kaisei even received the first Akutagawa Prize to be awarded to a Zainichi writer, while the other two were nominated. It is also arguably at this moment that such a thing as a Zainichi writer began to exist. Isogai Jirō argues as much in his version of the generational narrative of Zainichi literary history: “It was in the mid-1960s that the term *Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku* began to circulate, and that it began to take shape as a distinct genre within Japanese-language literature.”³²

However, the historical context in which this genre came to exist shows just how unrepresentative *Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku* was of the broader Korean community in Japan.³³ This follows naturally from the way that the genre was narrowly defined through the exclusion of those who did not conform to its stringent ideological and patriarchal norms. But what is even more striking is that even within the second-generation trifecta, there is in reality very little consistency on which to found a coherent genre, much less a claim to a coherent community whose lived experience it could represent.

In fact, in many ways the emergence of the narrowly-conceived notion of Zainichi Korean literature coincides with a broader contestation surrounding the representation of Koreans in Japan in a more straightforwardly political sense. Representation was difficult to achieve within the framework of nation-states, but the Zainichi community did have political organizations to turn to for support, recognition, and advocacy. Nevertheless, these organizations could not escape the Cold War context and the logic of ethnic homogeneity under which they were conceived. The history of Zainichi organizational politics is also deeply intertwined with the language politics of Cold War Japan and the Koreans.

The first of these organizations was the League of Koreans in Japan,³⁴ which was instrumental in building a visible presence and ethnic consciousness for Koreans in Japan in the early years of occupied postwar Japan. One of their stated organizational goals was Korean-language education for Koreans remaining in Japan, specifically in preparation for eventual return to the Korean peninsula. They built over five hundred Korean schools between 1945 and 1947 before they were ultimately dissolved by occupation forces in 1949 due to their leftist leanings.³⁵ The disbanded League of Koreans was succeeded by the United Democratic Front for Koreans in Japan (known as Minsen or Minjŏn),³⁶ founded in 1951 and operating largely underground and in concert with the Japanese Communist Party. However, Korean leftists' relationship with the JCP in the postwar was reminiscent of the colonial period, with the JCP insisting on inter-ethnic and international unity with the goal of achieving revolution in Japan, thus downplaying problems of ethnic hierarchy and discrimination.³⁷

Thus, when the North Korean state began making overtures to Koreans in Japan as a means of building support for North Korean–Japanese diplomatic relations, supporters of Minsen were reorganized under the banner of The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (abbreviated Chŏngryŏn or Sŏren).³⁸ Unlike previous organizations, Chŏngryŏn saw its members as overseas nationals of the North Korean state, and refrained from intervening in Japanese domestic politics, purposely cutting ties with the JCP. It did continue its predecessors' preoccupation with the repatriation of Koreans in Japan, however, hence its central role in the mass repatriation of over ninety thousand Koreans to North Korea between 1959 and 1984.³⁹ Beyond the repatriation project, Chŏngryŏn was the dominant presence in Zainichi organizational politics in the early postwar decades. It provided crucial financing and K-16 education for Koreans who often faced discrimination at Japanese banks and schools, though this ironically excluded poorer Zainichi Koreans.⁴⁰ It was only the middle class who could afford to avoid assimilating into Japanese society through private Korean-language schooling. Also of note, Chŏngryŏn provided venues for Korean-language publication through newspapers and magazines.

Meanwhile, the South Korean-aligned equivalent of these organizations, The Republic of Korea Residents Union in Japan (Mindan),⁴¹ had a much less turbulent

history due to its non-communist (even anti-communist) political orientation. Mindan was established in 1948 and still exists in more or less the same form today, albeit with different goals and broader support. Because the overwhelming majority of Zainichi Koreans were on the political left and supported North Korea, Mindan failed to garner much support from the community in the early postwar years.⁴² Compared to Ch'ongryŏn, which had the full backing of the North Korean state, Mindan received little support or even attention from the South Korean government. Its relevance grew, however, with the normalization of Japanese–South Korean relations, which brought increased demand for travel and cultural exchange between Japan and South Korea.

The normalization talks of the early 1960s, though they eventually brought about greater rights and representation for Zainichi Koreans, were in many ways indicative of the barriers to representation erected by Cold War politics, partially due to the factionalism they generated within and between the Zainichi organizations. Notably, normalization was brokered by the United States in order to enable further cooperation between its two major allies in the region, particularly as the Vietnam War was ramping up. One of the sticking points that engendered mass popular resistance to the treaty in Korea was the perception of favoritism in how the two countries were expected to participate in the American war effort in Vietnam: South Korea by sending troops (the second-most of any foreign power behind the United States), and Japan by fulfilling lucrative military contracts. South Korean critics of the agreement even likened it to Western “connivance” in enabling Japan to establish a protectorate over Korea in the lead-up to colonization, pointing once again to the by turns collaborative and competitive relationship between Japanese and Western imperialisms on the peninsula.⁴³ In Japan, on the other hand, resistance to the treaty stemmed from the aftermath of massive leftist resistance to the renewal of Anpo (the US–Japan Security Treaty) in 1960. The normalization treaty with South Korea was seen as a further entrenchment of American (neo-colonial) domination of Japan.

The position of the Zainichi community within this conflict was complicated. Opposition to the treaty was one of the few issues that brought Mindan and Ch'ongryŏn together. Although Mindan officially supported the treaty, adopting the position of the South Korean state, several of its grassroots sub-organizations participated in demonstrations against the treaty.⁴⁴ They objected on the grounds that the agreement did not go far enough to establish a permanent status in Japan for Zainichi Koreans and that South Korean negotiators had failed to give Koreans in Japan a seat at the table, in addition to broader concerns about the failure to resolve the ongoing issues of Japanese colonialism and American hegemony. Ch'ongryŏn, of course, opposed the treaty due to its recognition of the southern regime as the only legitimate sovereign entity on the peninsula. Thus, the Japan–South Korea normalization process underscored the lack of political representation for Koreans in Japan within a framework of nation-states arranged according

to the Cold War world order. As the division of the peninsula was calcified by Cold War politics, the organizational divide between Mindan and Ch'ongryŏn became a proxy for the division to map onto the Zainichi community, what Ri Yuhwan has called "the thirty-eighth parallel in Japan."⁴⁵ Both organizations wished to claim the whole community, just as the states they supported wished to claim the entire peninsula. However, the reality was a splintered community, whose internal divisions were as malleable as its external boundaries.

Nevertheless, the 1965 normalization did clarify that the divided Korean peninsula was a more or less permanent state of affairs with which the Zainichi community would have to cope. The treaty expanded the rights of Koreans in Japan in the sense that it allowed them to adopt South Korean nationality, rendering them no longer stateless per se. Though sometimes referred to as citizenship, this new status did not allow Zainichi Koreans to vote or receive social benefits in South Korea, and as foreign nationals, they were barred from those privileges in Japan as well. And of course, what had perhaps been the closest status akin to citizenship for Zainichi Koreans, membership in Ch'ongryŏn, became a much more marginal position with the door to official diplomatic relations with North Korea now closed.⁴⁶

This being the case, it is unsurprising that many younger Koreans in Japan began to conceive of Zainichi identity as a sense of hybridity or in-betweenness, and Zainichi politics as oriented toward the domestic affairs of Japan. Demographic shifts taking place in the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrate the popularity of these ideas among the Zainichi community. Upon the establishment of Ch'ongryŏn in 1955, an estimated 75 percent of Koreans in Japan held *Chōsen-seki* status, the de facto stateless nationality that refers to the defunct unified Korean peninsula. By 1969, only a few years after normalization, those with *Kankoku-seki* status (South Korean nationality) had become the majority.⁴⁷ The latter were more likely to attend Japanese schools, use Japanese names, marry Japanese spouses, and eventually obtain Japanese citizenship, either for themselves or for their children, such that today the default lifestyle for most Koreans in Japan is to "pass" as Japanese.⁴⁸

And yet, it was precisely at this moment that a retrenchment of anti-assimilation rhetoric and a kind of stateless ethnonationalism arose in place of the "ideology of return."⁴⁹ Without the prospect of Korean reunification on the horizon, Zainichi intellectuals saw allegiance to either of the divided states as problematic, and return—which had been until recently the *raison d'être* of Zainichi politics—impossible. Yet at the same time, assimilation and integration into Japanese society were also seen as beyond the pale. This set of dual impossibilities, in many ways self-imposed by Zainichi thought leaders themselves, is what John Lie has called "Zainichi ideology."⁵⁰

One of the main proponents of Zainichi ideology is Kim Sōkpōm, the subject of chapter 4. In the dominant generational history of Zainichi literature, Kim is

the quintessential "1.5-generation" figure: technically second-generation as he was born in Japan, but more closely aligned in age to the first generation. Kim's point of view on many political and cultural issues similarly straddles the generational divide. For instance, on the question of eventual return versus assimilation into Japanese society, Kim's position is perhaps the most stridently anti-assimilationist of any Zainichi intellectual alive today. He famously and publicly excoriated Ri Kaisei, his fellow Zainichi elder statesman and poster child for the second generation, for adopting South Korean citizenship in 1998. Kim argued that Ri's decision legitimized the division of the peninsula, and that Koreans in Japan were uniquely positioned to maintain a sense of identification with one Korea—hence his decision to maintain *Chōsen-seki* status to this day.⁵¹ Though Ri's position is clearly the more popular among the Zainichi community, Kim's is dominant within the Zainichi bundan, once again demonstrating the gap between *Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku* and the people it is read as representing.

Of course, the strident anti-Japanization—and in fact anti-citizenship—position of Zainichi ideology as Kim Sōkpōm espouses it has been subject to criticism, especially since the 1990s. Ri's rebuttal to Kim's open letter held that adopting South Korean citizenship granted him some measure of power in shaping peninsular politics, whereas *Chōsen-seki* status precluded any such participation.⁵² In the context of Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy, a softening of South Korea's stance toward the North in the late 1990s and early 2000s, this could even help move the peninsula toward actual reunification, as opposed to the strictly imaginary unified Korea enabled by the maintenance of the *Chōsen-seki* designation.

However, even as Ri and Kim disagreed publicly and vehemently on the question of *Kankoku-seki* versus *Chōsen-seki* status, both would have agreed that naturalization, the adoption of Japanese citizenship, was an unacceptable choice. In this way, both were out of sync with a growing proportion of the Zainichi community itself. By the mid-1990s, an estimated two hundred thousand Koreans had become Japanese citizens.⁵³ Even among those who did not choose to naturalize, the vast majority of the Zainichi community found it was perfectly acceptable, if not outright necessary as a defense against discrimination, to assimilate into Japanese society in various ways. Perhaps most consequentially, by the 1990s the younger generation overwhelmingly used Japanese names and spoke only Japanese.⁵⁴ This meant that for most members of the Zainichi community, "passing" became a sort of default mode of living in Japan. As such, it is not an uncommon story for Zainichi Koreans to have discovered their Korean identity in late adolescence or young adulthood.⁵⁵ It was only by declaring one's "real name" (*honmyō sengen*) that Koreans made their ethnicity known, and in doing so joined the ranks of the Zainichi.⁵⁶

However, as Kang Yun'i has shown, the binary opposition of *honmyō* (real name, qua Korean name) and *tsūmei* (passing name, qua Japanese name) is more useful for delineating exclusionary boundaries between those Zainichi Koreans

with a proper ethnic consciousness and those without (according to those with the power to define what that means) than it is for describing the lived experience of those navigating this terrain.⁵⁷ The emphasis placed on “real names” within the Zainichi community is derived from the history of *sōshi kaimei*, the Japanese colonial policy that required Koreans to adopt a surname and allowed them to change their given name. Irrespective of debates on how exactly *sōshi kaimei* functioned in practice, the policy is remembered as the theft of Korean names, pursued in tandem with the suppression of the Korean language writ large.⁵⁸ It would not be unfair to say that *sōshi kaimei* as the essence of colonial oppression has been tied so tightly to Zainichi identity itself that the use of “real names” has become the ultimate litmus test for commitment to ethnic causes. Given the reality that the use of Korean-sounding names exposes Zainichi Koreans to discrimination and possibly even bodily harm, “the positioning of ‘real names’ in binary opposition to *sōshi kaimei*, as the presumptively ‘good’ choice between real names and passing names, is an oppressive burden to place on those who confront these issues.”⁵⁹ Especially when taking into account the growing number of Zainichi Koreans whose “real names” are not Korean-sounding,⁶⁰ the insistence on the use of typical three-character Korean names and other modes of resistance to assimilating into Japanese society is a key sign that the Zainichi bundan is out of sync with the community at large.

Perhaps not coincidentally, it was the philosopher Takeda Seiji, who self-consciously uses a Japanese-sounding pen name, whose groundbreaking “*Zainichi*” to *iu konkyo* (*The Foundations of “Zainichi,”* 1983) mounted the first widely-cited critique of Zainichi ideology.⁶¹ The book is organized around the three major authors of second-generation Zainichi literature—Kim Sōkpōm, Ri Kaisei, and Kin Kakuei—further cementing their status as the central trifecta of the genre. However, unlike most Zainichi critics to this point, Takeda clearly prefers Kin Kakuei (who also insisted on the Japanese reading of the characters in his name) to Kim and Ri. Takeda sees in Kin a pioneer of a different kind of thinking about what it means to be Zainichi, rooted not in the ethnic essentialism and diasporic nationalism of Kim and Ri, but rather in the experience of dislocation and hybridity embodied by the not-quite-Japanese yet not-quite-Korean quality of the name “Kin Kakuei” itself. Kin’s position vis-à-vis the Zainichi bundan is therefore undisputed, if somewhat marginal or transitional.⁶²

But perhaps the primary way in which Kin’s career represents a sort of turning point in Zainichi literature and criticism is in the introduction of intersectional concerns beyond ethnicity alone into his work—and, importantly, the criticism this garnered. For Kin these concerns took the form of living with and writing about a speech disability, and having a real impairment co-opted as metaphor for ethnic oppression. Zainichi critics did not simply ignore or downplay the aspect of disability in Kin’s writing in favor of ethnic concerns, but in fact used his attention to disability as evidence of his failure to be properly engaged with ethnic issues.

For Kin's detractors, ethnic consciousness could only be demonstrated through the active elision of intersectional concerns. This pattern continued, arguably more conspicuously, in the Zainichi bundan's response to the rise of women to canonical status. In this way, Kin's career heralded the bundan's increasingly fraught relationship with the younger generation of Zainichi writers, until eventually it was the bundan's relevance that decreased, and the closely-guarded boundaries of *Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku* that began to fray.

The ways the Zainichi literary establishment has been forced to accommodate writers like Yi Yangji and Yū Miri (the subjects of chapters 6 and 7 respectively) shows how issues of intersectionality are intimately linked to questions of literary taxonomy. It was only through the suppression of internal difference that *Zainichi Chōsenjin bungaku* could emerge as a coherent category in the first place. Perhaps it would not be going too far to say that intersectional difference is suppressed in the process of creating any such coherence. But what cannot be overlooked here is that the erasure of internal difference is a particularly fraught exercise for a community that cannot even be named without referring to its own intractable division—the internal thirty-eighth parallel. As shown above, even the three authors discussed as undisputedly Zainichi within the standard generational literary history of the genre could hardly be further apart in terms of their attitudes toward Zainichi identity and its outlook toward the (imagined) homeland. And this does not even begin to unpack the massive corpus of popular literature, writing by Zainichi women, and other writers and texts that were excluded from Zainichi literature proper in order to create the sense of stability and coherence on which the standard history relies.⁶³

It is the forced reckoning in recent years with these previously suppressed voices, I would argue, that has ushered in the “brackets era,” by which I mean the period in which “Zainichi” (「在日」) is written almost exclusively in quotation marks—brackets in Japanese orthography. Once again, the change in the way the genre or community is named reflects a broader shift, in this case a turn from ethnic nationalism toward a more flexible definition of what Zainichi literature is and what it is for. The question for the past few decades has been whether Zainichi literature can continue to exist as such without being exclusive in the manner of Zainichi ideology.

THE BRACKETS ERA: ZAINICHI AS FLOATING SIGNIFIER

As noted at the outset of this book, there are perils to “Zainichi,” the bracketed and abbreviated mode of naming the Korean community in Japan, which might more properly be called *Zainichi Chōsen-Kankokujin*. Yet as I have already suggested, and as the complex history of terminology and language politics enumerated above indicates, the latter term—presented almost exclusively *without*

brackets—suggests a reified subject position that has never existed. Indeed, in explanations and caveats preceding the use of the bracketed moniker in Japanese, scholars typically point to the need to acknowledge the fluidity and constructed nature of the category of “Zainichi” as the motivation for presenting the term in this tentative fashion.⁶⁴

This caution around the use of the term “Zainichi” is certainly in part a response to the increased volume of voices pointing to problems with the term itself, even beyond its potentially pejorative usage. At the same time, various alternatives proposed by these voices and others come with their own set of problems and inaccuracies. “*Zainichi*” *Korian* has become a standard way of referring to the community of Koreans in Japan without privileging one side of the divided peninsula or the other, though it brings with it the problems of the English-language terminology from which it is derived. That is, if the advantage of *Korian* over *Kankoku-Chōsenjin* is its circumvention of the division, then the disadvantage lies in that same circumvention. The “thirty-eighth parallel in Japan” does not disappear simply because it is not named. *Korian* is also a concession to English-language hegemony. The notion that the anglophonic way of naming Korea is somehow neutral belies the long history of Eurocentric language politics outlined above.

Another alternative, proposed by the popular Zainichi writer Kaneshiro Kazuki, is “*Korian-Japanīzu*,” which drops the “Zainichi” entirely.⁶⁵ Kaneshiro’s position is that Zainichi, even outside its pejorative usage, implies non-belonging in Japan. This is because the word’s literal meaning implies that a Korean presence in Japan is somehow anomalous, else *zainichi* is merely redundant. There are no “zainichi Nihonjin” (在日日本人, Japanese in Japan). There are no “zaikan Kankokujin” (在韓韓国人) or “zaizen Chōsenjin” (在鮮朝鮮人). In this way, the very word Zainichi implies a logic of ethnic homogeneity within the Japanese state (as well as the Koreas), a conflation of ethnic identity with nationality or even citizenship.⁶⁶ “*Korian-Japanīzu*” provides the language for imagining a multiethnic Japan, and a population of Koreans within it who are there to stay, as opposed to merely displaced and destined for return to Korea where they belong. In this way, Kaneshiro’s proposed language represents a radical break from the standard thinking implied by most of the terminology applied to the Zainichi community. Of course, as with *Zainichi Korian*, *Korian-Japanīzu* is borrowed from anglophonic discourse, in this case specifically from a model of American hyphenated multiculturalism, bringing with it all the problems that have been thoroughly critiqued in the American context.

It should also be noted that Kaneshiro himself has expressed dissatisfaction with the term, on the grounds that it still pigeonholes him and his writing into a particular rather than universal category. He has echoed the sentiments of so many other minor, postcolonial, and marginalized writers before him in

expressing his desire to be read primarily as “human” rather than through a lens based on any subcategory.⁶⁷ In the end, rather than an objection to the term *Zainichi* in particular, it is this desire to break free of any taxonomical literary framework that Kaneshiro shares with other major writers of his generation, the so-called “third generation” or “new generation.” As mentioned previously, both he and Yū Miri, discussed in chapter 7, drew the ire of their elders within the *Zainichi* bundan by declining to have their work included in the “*Zainichi*” *bungaku zenshū* anthology.⁶⁸

Clearly, at least according to standard narratives of *Zainichi* literary history, this new generation, with its embrace of “in-between,” “both-and,” and “neither-nor” identities, and its attention to social concerns outside ethnicity, is more aligned with Kin Kakuei than with Kim Sōkpōm and the mainstream of *Zainichi* ideology. Kin, while less willing to reject *Zainichi* identity outright, wrote profusely about the generally human and the desire for universality, which Kaneshiro’s push to be read as “human” echoes. Interestingly, the same could be said of Kim Sōkpōm, though his attitude toward the relationship between the particular (always, for Kim, taking the form of the *minzoku*, or ethnonation) and the universal contrasts with that of Kin—in part, I would argue, due to Kin’s proto-intersectional view of particularity and difference. Arguably, the central thread running through the work of Yi Kwangsu and Kim Saryang is also the negotiation of the universal and the particular.⁶⁹

In one sense, then, the “new generation” is not doing anything new. What I would like to emphasize here is that the so-called third generation began to point out the problems with existing terminology and to search for alternatives precisely because its standard-bearers were situated in positions of internal difference from the previous generations’ almost exclusively elite male representatives. At the same moment that issues of gender, class, and even the distinction between “pure” and “popular” literatures came to the fore, the ostensible coherence of *Zainichi* literature as a genre (and the *Zainichi* community more broadly) came into question. However, the history of *Zainichi* literature and of Koreans in Japan in general, when viewed through these kinds of intersectional lenses, reveals that this coherence was always an illusion. The appearance of coherence in the pre-“brackets era” was made possible by the *suppression* of internal difference rather than its absence. It was not that counter-narratives emerged in this historical moment, but rather that they became conspicuous and impossible to ignore. Thus, what appears to be a collapse of the genre and community’s cohesion in fact retroactively calls into question the entire generational narrative that has dominated *Zainichi* literary historiography.

Still, there are contextual factors changing the landscape for the new generation, compared to the historical conditions faced by their elders. Japan signed onto the UN Refugee Convention in 1981, necessitating an update of its immigration

laws in order to be in compliance. The immigration reforms of 1981 created a “special permanent resident” status extended to those with *Chōsen-seki* nationality as well as those who had adopted *Kankoku-seki* status. With this new designation (and further reforms enacted to comply with UN human rights treaties) came expanded rights, including access to social welfare programs.⁷⁰ A mass movement in the 1980s to refuse to be fingerprinted, as was required for all resident aliens, also forced Japan to drop this requirement for Zainichi Koreans.

However, perhaps an even larger factor in shifting Zainichi identities and outlooks than the lay of the land in Japan is the increasingly international orientation of Zainichi literature. The impact of this internationalization can be felt particularly strongly in the careers of Kaneshiro and Yū, and, not for nothing, is ultimately what brought me (and possibly my readers) to this discourse in the first place. Part of this internationalization is a return, of sorts, to increased engagement with the Korean peninsula. Yi Yangji was perhaps the first Zainichi writer to attract an audience in Korean translation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Her Akutagawa Prize-winning novella *Yuhi*, the subject of chapter 6, narrates a failed “return,” in which the titular character, like the author herself, studies abroad in Seoul in order to reconnect with her roots, only to find that the sense of belonging she seeks eludes her even in her ethnic homeland.⁷¹

Not long after, around the turn of the century, the Zainichi community began to garner attention in English-language discourses as well. Yū Miri’s *Gold Rush* (1998) became the first full-length novel by a Zainichi writer to be translated into English, in 2002, followed by Kim Sōkpōm’s *The Curious Tale of Mandogi’s Ghost* in 2010.⁷² Yukisada Isao’s film adaptation of Kaneshiro’s *GO* in 2001 was screened widely at international film festivals and was Japan’s submission for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2002 Academy Awards. Today, with Min Jin Lee’s *Pachinko* (2017) achieving bestseller status and translated into over twenty languages and adapted for streaming television, and with Yū Miri’s *Tokyo Ueno Station* winning the 2020 National Book Award for Translated Literature, the existence of the Zainichi community is as close to common knowledge in the United States as it has ever been. Moreover, Zainichi writers are increasingly engaged with the United States, with stories like Kim Masumi’s “Moeru Sōka” (“The Burning Grass House,” 1997) and Che Sil’s *Jini no pazuru* (*Jini’s Puzzle*, 2016) set in Los Angeles and Oregon, respectively.

Thus, it is not only the increased attention to intersectional social factors and greater openness to integrating into Japanese society, but also the deterritorialization of the genre that sets apart the post–Cold War era in Zainichi literature. All of these factors have undermined the coherence of Zainichi literature, a coherence that, as is now clear, never actually existed. And it is this incoherence that necessitates the brackets around the term. But it is also worth pausing to consider how this acknowledgment of incoherence, fictiveness, or malleability is achieved via the brackets, as quotation marks. As noted above, most explanatory statements

on the use of “Zainichi” in Japanese scholarship point precisely to the need to represent Zainichi as a fluid and non-reified mode of identity. What goes unsaid, perhaps because it is obvious, is that the quotation marks literally make the term a designation of that which has been *called* “Zainichi,” regardless of whether the term is accurate or not. Taken in this literal sense, the brackets force a reckoning with the notion that it is the term itself that creates the Zainichi community rather than any particular shared experience or essence. At the same time, if the foundations of the Zainichi community rest on the term itself—that which they have been named—then perhaps the most illuminating question we could ask is *who* has called them “Zainichi.”

Having already discussed this question at length in the context of Japanese-language discourse, it is instructive to trace the path of *Zainichi* in other linguistic contexts. The purely discursive nature of “Zainichi” as it is used today is perhaps nowhere more visible than in translations and transliterations of the term into English and Korean. In English, whereas the earliest works to introduce the history, politics, and culture of the Zainichi community were more likely to translate the term as “Koreans in Japan” or “Resident Koreans” (depending on their interpretation of *zainichi*), more recent interventions are more likely to use the term “Zainichi” as-is.⁷³ This shift in perception of the function of the term is consistent with its shift in status in Japanese to a term that has explicitly broken away from its referential or denotative sense. The term itself is more important than its literal meaning.

Similarly, in Korean-language scholarship, a spike in interest in Korean literature and culture in diaspora has coincided with increased likelihood of referring to the Zainichi community with its hangŭl transliteration, *Chainich'i*, rather than with its sinographically derived equivalent, *Chaeil*. It is possible, given the citational networks of scholarship that use *Chainich'i* versus *Chaeil*, that *Chainich'i* is not merely a transliteration of the original Japanese word, but rather a representation of the English-language transliteration that occurs outside this “original” context. What I want to suggest here is that not only has the term *Zainichi* broken free from the literal, referential sense in which it emerged, but it has also sprung loose from the Japanese *national* context altogether. It can only be understood as a transnational construct with discursive roots in the triangular positioning of Japan, Korea, and the United States—and even further afield. Moreover, just as with the increased acknowledgment of internal, intersectional difference and the contradictory politics it entails, the transnational origins and entanglements of the Zainichi community are only *belatedly* recognized in the use of “Zainichi” as an explicitly floating signifier. Both factors rendering the term *Zainichi* incoherent have been present from the outset.

As I deploy the term *Zainichi* throughout the remainder of this book, I do so while acknowledging the internal heterogeneity and transnational entanglements of the community it names and delineates. To reiterate, though I apply this name

broadly, I do not mean to imply a cohesion among the disparate authors, works, and historical contexts I bring under its umbrella. Instead, *Zainichi* is allowed to remain incoherent, the connections among the people and artistic works called by that name tenuous, in hopes of demonstrating that a higher degree of comfort with incoherence and disjuncture can enable different—and perhaps less violent—forms of reading.