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"A Woman's Lot To Suffer" : Recognizing the Intersectionality of Oppression and Resistance in Min Jin Lee's Pachinko

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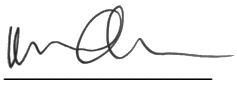
Primary Advisor Signature: 

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ABSTRACT

Min Jin Lee's novel *Pachinko* (2017) portrays the historically based lives of a displaced Korean family during Japan's colonization of Korea from 1905-1945. The novel's attention to the ways that colonial endeavors complicate Confucian family and national structures exemplifies the interrelation between gender and racial oppression facing Lee's Korean women in both the public and private domain. However, by centering female voices all too often silenced, Lee also depicts resistance modes that subvert such oppression. Using feminist and postcolonial theory, historical analysis, and close reading analysis, this project examines both the construction of oppression and the subversive resistance measures taken by Korean women, ultimately arguing for the necessity of articulating local specificities instead of universalizing and homogenizing the experience of women worldwide.

Epilogue:

Ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women's joint power (Lorde 856).

INTRODUCTION

Despite steps forward in the equal treatment of all women in the last century, our modern world still too often erases the experiences of Asian women. The recent upsurging of anti-Asian hate specifically targeting Asian women, like the 16 March 2021 shooting of Xiaoji Tan, Daoyou Feng, Yong Ae Yue, Suncha Kim, Soon Chung Park, and Hyun Jung Grant, stresses the renewed importance of recognizing the positionalities of these forgotten and omitted Asian female identities. However, the rhetoric surrounding this shooting, and others like it, disallowed an investigation into compounding racial and gender issues at play; instead, it too often chose to make white violence a spectacle or blanketly define the shooting as anti-Asian, which elides the role gender played. Such rhetoric included saying the perpetrator's full name while refusing to reveal the identities of the female victims, accounting in excruciating detail every part of the shooter's day that led to the women's deaths, downplaying the sexualized nature of the shooting, and deescalating the inhumane crime by playing into a pornographic normalization of sexualized violence against Asian women (Stevens; Jarvie). And this silencing is hardly novel. Rather, it emphasizes the egregious and continued silencing of Asian female identity within media and society. Indeed, Asian female misrepresentation within popular media as Dragon Ladies (overbearing, sexually cold, tyrannical women) and China Dolls (a helpless, infantilized woman seen/treated as a sexual object)—all identities that limit an expression of three-dimensional character and personality—only further compound Asian women's marginalization. As Chandra Mohanty notices, Asian women, and, moreover, women from all over the Global South (a broad term referencing the regions of Latin

American, Asia, Africa, and the Oceania), are othered in our society; the experiences of white women overshadow and undermine the experience of nonwhite, non-Western women— "third-world women" (337).

Perhaps this is not surprising considering the ways that feminist scholarship from the Global South has also been silenced by Western feminist "sisterhood" movements. Today, themes centering the complexity of female identity, femininity, and sexuality reenergize interest in the ways that racialized and colonized women are perceived and discussed. However, flowing from feminism's past (and, arguably, present) fixation on the experience of white women, universal conceptions of womanhood often cater to Western hegemony and omit Mohanty's "third-world women." This omission, Audre Lorde argues, occurs because "as white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define *woman* in terms of their own experience alone, then women of Color become 'other,' the outsider whose experience and tradition is too 'alien' to comprehend" (856). Here, universal approaches to feminism claim a singular standard "*woman*" that, often, hides and permits the very categorization and homogenizing tactics utilized to demean women in the first place.[1] In response, voices from the Global South argue for local feminist approaches that require a consideration of the immense diversity of sexualities, genders, races, socioeconomic classes, cultures, and religions of the people groups that claim feminism in order to counter more effectively the oppression they face.[2]

Of course, any attempt at recentering Asian women's experience and identities necessitates a balancing between universal approaches that conceptualize global terms of oppression and local

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[1] Chandra Mohanty, in "Under Western Eyes," affirms this, arguing that the West's "privilege and ethnocentric universality," along with an "inadequate self-consciousness about the effect of [their] scholarship on the 'third world,' allows for incorrect, monolithic understandings of women and the oppression that "'colonize[s] the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races, and castes in these countries" (242-243). These (perhaps) unconscious colonial characterizations perpetuate debilitating stereotypes that overlook the subjectivity of actual women.

[2] Hazel Biana adds to this writing that "Oppressions are multilayered and they are embodied by sexism, racism, class elitism and imperialism. Consequently, all these are interrelated and inseparably connected to each other" (18).

approaches that allow for an analysis of oppression's specific manifestations. For this to happen, the way that the local specificities of identity—gender, race, class, religion, economics, etc.—interact and intersect must be noticed and appreciated. Here, the term intersectionality, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage," comes into play ("intersectionality, n."). By recognizing the "overlapping" and relational nature of facets of identity and oppression, intersectionality reclaims feminism for all, even those that do not fit into the homogenized, traditional female standard too often set by Western global feminists. Kimberlé Crenshaw, coining the term "intersectionality," importantly notes that intersectionality is not merely an additive phenomenon; instead, "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" as it considers the ways that each compounds with the other (140). Because Asian women often face erasure at the hands of multiple and intersectional forms of oppression, remediating measures must necessarily look at the nexus of oppression formed by the convergence of their specific facets of identities.

Min Jin Lee's expansive historical novel, *Pachinko* (2017), provides such a corrective avenue through which "third-world women" are highlighted and complicated. "History has failed us, but no matter," begins Lee, setting the stage for her subsequent critique and correction of Asian female silencing (1). What follows is a story immersed in the day-to-day struggles of Asian men and women. Set within twentieth-century colonial Japan, the novel follows the lives of a displaced, intergenerational Korean family as racial discrimination, colonization, and Confucian patriarchy confine Lee's female characters within a nexus of oppression. Analyzing Lee's female characters, then, affirms an intersectional approach to understanding female oppression and resistance, for it requires an in-depth, rigorously historicized, and particular understanding of local forms of Korean gender roles, Japanese government policies, racial tensions, and capitalism. Within this society, male

dominance prevails and relegates women to a life of suffering. Yet we cannot assume what male dominance looks like in this context. Instead, noticing local, historical specifics of society, culture and nationality elucidates how male power is set within a strong sense of family duty and national identity based on Confucian ideology and complicated by the Japanese colonial endeavor and Korean anti-colonial ideologies. This acknowledgement and careful attention to the construction of oppression via Confucian patriarchy and the interplay of colonial/colonized nationalisms emphasizes the great, but necessary, task of intersectionality. Within this nexus of oppression, the voices of Lee's Korean women are silenced, abused, stereotyped, and elided. However, Lee recenters varied diverse and intersectional Asian women, allowing them to subvert the oppression they face by expressing and re-defining themselves. Ultimately, this corrective reminds readers how important it is to undertake an intersectional recognition of women's individuality.

BACKGROUND AND THEORY

Acclaimed as her most successful novel, Lee's *Pachinko* spans eighty years of the lives of a displaced Korean family learning to survive in the face of racial discrimination from the Japanese. The novel also vocalizes the changing themes of sexuality and gender roles as a consequence of time, exile, and colonization through a narration that starts in Korea with a crippled Hoonie and Yangjin, his wife, and Sunja, their daughter. After Sunja conceives a baby out of wedlock with Hansu, an older fish broker from Japan, she refuses to become his hidden mistress and instead accepts a marriage proposal from Isak, a sickly minister. Together, Sunja and Isak escape the impending war between Korea and Japan by moving to Osaka, Japan with Isak's brother, Yoseb, and his wife Kyunghee. After her husband is arrested for his religion and eventually dies, Sunja begins a small food cart business to feed her family. Sunja's decisions, going against the counsel of her male family members, set the tone for the rest of Lee's female characters as they also attempt to walk the line between personal freedom, national duty, and traditional male power. Other minor

characters, like Ayame, the wife of Sunja's son's friend, also contest the normalized and coercive sexual ideal set for Korean women. Throughout this narrative, Lee fashions a story that centers the female experience and criticizes both the historical treatment of Asian women during Japan's colonization of Korea and the treatment of Asian women today.

By basing her novel within the context of Japan's colonization of Korea, Lee chooses an often-overlooked part of history—but one nevertheless central to the development of feminism in Asia and the Global South. While the term *colonization* often engenders images of Western powers invading and controlling countries of the East, Japan's imperial and colonial power dominated over China, Manchuria, and Korea for almost fifty years—from 1905-1945.[3] It would be a mistake to assume that the colonial powers of the West were merely duplicated within Japan's colonization of Korea. Alexis Dudden, recognizing the ways that the Japanese language shifted to accommodate terms of imperialism and power, notes that "specialists on imperialism and Japan alike stumble by overlooking the Japanese empire or assuming that anyone who is interested can plug the empire's history into European theoretical models" (4). Instead, because of the similarities between Japanese culture and Korean culture, racism and nationalism took different routes than those offered by the West's "model" for colonization. For instance, both Japanese and Korean cultures relied heavily on Confucian ideology as the framework for their society, so Korea's national resistance often necessitated more subtle measures. However, despite these similarities, the Japanese government quickly exploited their differences from the Koreans—a people they labeled as ignorant, lazy, incapable, and dirty. More than just national differences between two countries, these terms of degradation towards the Koreans, which mirror the animalistic terms the West used to talk about those they enslaved from "dark" places such as Africa, become racialized terms meant to denote a

[3] Andre Schmid argues that the fact that many people have forgotten about the colonial relationship between Japan and Korea points to the ways that Korea "has been largely written out of Japanese history" and that "History remains harnessed to the [colonial] nation" (951, 957).

difference in human worth. Indeed, these terms of difference were used as the basis for Japan's racism towards the Koreans and as an authorization for Japan to declare Korea a protectorate and, later, to fully annex it in 1910.

Recognizing Japan as a colonial and imperial power also has gendered implications. Elain Kim and Chungmoo Choi express that forgetting "the multiple colonialisms in East Asia" elides and skews "our understanding of gender in the colonial and post-colonial context" (1). Most important to contextualizing "gender in the [Japanese] colonial," Japan's and Korea's colonial relationship was a crucial factor in the New Women's movement of the early 1920s "which stressed women's explorations of their own sexualities and emancipation from the patriarchal household, notions which certain educated Korean women learned from European liberalism via Japan" (Kim and Choi 2). Here, Korea's colonial context and the introduction of modernization "via Japan," opened the door for Korean women to consider personal freedom from patriarchal power and oppression.[4] However, this same colonial context manufactured anti-colonial, Korean nationalism sentiments which "reclaims masculinity, usually at the expense of women," as was the case when the New Women's movement was declared anti-Korean (Kim and Choi 5).[5] This complicated situation for women, one further explored later in this paper, pitted new-found liberty against the reinforcements of national/male power. Importantly, it was also during this time that the sexual freedoms of Korean women were most stripped and threatened through the mobilization of Korean 'Comfort Women' for the Japanese armies. Pyong Gap Min is clear that "the subordination of women to the state and the emperor under the state patriarchal system in imperial Japan became the ideological

[4] Insook Kwon also recognizes how the birth of Korean New Women "was a product of the complicated meeting of Confucian patriarchy, the expansion of women's modern education, the spread of ideas of Christianity and Western feminism and the imposition of several foreign governments' imperial power" (384).

[5] Kim and Choi importantly notice that it was not only Korean nationalism at play against women's freedom. They say, "U.S.-sponsored military dictatorships combined with traditional Korean neo-Confucian patriarchy to construct modern South Korea as an androcentric nation" (3). We must remember the interrelatedness of oppressions between gender, national concerns, and power struggles between the West and the East.

foundation" for the kidnapping of Korean women (947). Coerced from their homes, 'Comfort Women' were forced "to have intercourse with Japanese soldiers, from 10 to 30 times per day. They were regularly subjected to torture, beating, burning, and sometimes stabbing" (Min 941). In this manner, even as feminist ideologies circulated, the Korean female body experienced racial hate as well as sexual violence because of their colonial situation. Because Lee situates *Pachinko* within this societal and national nexus, this history holds relevance for Lee's female characters, their fears and hopes, and the tensions they face between nation and self.

Pachinko's Korean setting also necessitates an understanding of Confucian ideology. In the novel's postscript interview, "A Conversation with Min Jin Lee," Lee notes that implicitly central to her characters' East Asian identity is "the legacy of… Confucianism" (491). According to Wei-Ming Tu, Confucianism "is a worldview, a social ethic, a political ideology, a scholarly tradition, and a way of life" that should be seen as an integral part of East Asian culture (3). More than just a religious or ethical dictum, Confucianism provides the basis for social and familial relationships by ensuring "filial piety" (Tu 13). Stevi Jackson et al. elaborate,

> Historically East Asian culture has been strongly patriarchal and patrilineal—and the latter has all the more force because families are understood not simply in terms of living relatives but as lineages, existing through time, in which living generations owe homage not only to present elders, but also to ancestors. The family, thus conceived, is also a cornerstone of Confucianism… The Confucian ethic privileges order and hierarchy, the needs of the collective over those of the individual, filial piety and women's obedience to men. (9)

Thus, an understanding of Confucian patriarchy emerges that centers "the needs of the collective" and "women's obedience to men" over female autonomy and power, and this structure of patriarchy exists first within the family structure. In the words of Susan Greenhalgh, "the roots of women's

subordination lie first and foremost in the family system" (266). Additionally, this family structure, informs the national structure since Confucianism defines the family as the basic unit of the nation. These specifics of Confucian patriarchy—specifics further elaborated on later sections of this paper—illuminate the fact that universal conceptions of patriarchy, which simply define the term as "the predominance of men in positions of power and influence in society, with cultural values and norms favoring men," should not be applied without understanding specific, local contexts (*OED*, "patriarchy, n."). To do such would overlook and erase critical implications of social structure and family values on iterations of patriarchy in the novel. Understanding the local implications of Confucian ideology through an intersectional and local approach to *Pachinko* is therefore vitally important, for it allows readers to parse out the threads of specific oppression that Lee's women face. In doing so, it also resists a singular homogenous view of women worldwide. To facilitate such an argument, this essay works to recognize the complicated and locally specific forms of both oppression and resistance within Lee's *Pachinko*.

CONSTRUCTION OF OPPRESSION IN THE PRIVATE DOMAIN

In order to fully appreciate the nexus of oppression and resistance measures available in *Pachinko*, this project considers the specific facets of oppression for Lee's women based along the lines of private, family structures and public, national structures. Historically, the division between public and private—the line between "the home as private and the rest of civil and political society as public"—has been defined by customs and culture, both of which are "clearly gendered" (Higgins 849). In *Pachinko*'s Confucian setting, this division between private ("family) and public ("national") also hold significance since, as previously stated, the family functions as basic unit for the nation. For Lee's characters, the private life is informed by traditional Confucian patriarchy, which dictates gender roles within the home and the structure of the Korean family while also idealizing the sexual desires and behavior of women. The public life, on the other hand, is contingent on, and

perpetuates, this construction of male power within the private sphere and is complicated by Japan's colonial efforts and Korean nationalists' resistances to this national upheaval. Beginning with an analysis of the private sphere reveals the specific oppression that women face in the home environment. Indeed, an analysis of the private-domestic sphere facilitates an interrogation into the ways that Confucian male power's preoccupation with female obedience, purity, and labor confines them to the domestic duties, restricts their individuality, and aids in their physical abuse and domination at the hands of men.

For Lee's female characters, gendered and racial oppression within the private domain occur through the construction and maintenance of male power. Primarily, male dominance finds footing within the hierarchical Confucian household, the enforced superiority of fathers and husbands, and compulsory female purity and labor. This intersectional oppression attempts to deny Lee's female characters' desires and experiences while defining them as the inherently passive sex and trapping them within the home environment. Focusing first on the system of male dominance and power within the home in *Pachinko* reveals the position of women in the novel as the second sex—"absolute Other" to man (de Beauvoir 1214). At the beginning of the novel, male dominance, and female subservience—or Otherhood—is seen first in the treatment of daughters. When Sunja was born, the only living child of Hoonie and Yangjin, Lee carefully notes the difference between how Hoonie treats his daughter and how Yangjin was treated by her father. Yangjin's father, Lee writes, was "cursed with four girls and no sons," and Yangjin, the youngest of the four was the easiest for him "to unload" through marriage to Hoonie "because she was too young to complain" (6, 7). Labeling daughters as a "curs[e]" as compared to the supposed blessing of sons indicates the societal devaluing of women from their infancy. Additionally, "unload[ing]" Yangjin through marriage to Hoonie consigns on her the status of an object instead of subject, an animal or thing sold for monetary gain—especially since Yangjin's father receives a dowry for her marriage. This portrayal of

fatherly, male control over "young" and powerless daughters sets the stage for the nuanced marginalization of Lee's women within the home that unfolds across the novel.

Even though Hoonie treats Sunja respectfully, a comparison between him and Yangjin's father, as well as Lee's insistence on Hoonie's exception as a loving father, emphasizes the secondary place of women within the home. Unlike Yangjin's father, and even though he was busy taking care of the lodging house he ran, "Hoonie made his daughter dollies out of corn husks and forsook his tobacco to buy her sweets; the three ate each meal together even though the lodgers wanted Hoonie to eat with them" (9). In fact, "few fathers in the world treasured their daughters as much as Hoonie, who seemed to live to make his child smile" (9). Instead of "unload[ing]" Sunja like a "curs[e]" only worth the monetary gain she provides when she marries, Hoonie chooses personal sacrifice by "fors[aking] his tobacco" for her happiness. However, the fact that Hoonie's behavior is not considered the normal example, as expressed clearly by the fact that "few fathers" treated their daughters like this, signals an exceptionalism that highlights how Lee's women were not expected to receive such love or happiness early in their lives. Indeed, after Hoonie dies from tuberculosis, Sunja's special treatment ends. Instead of eating with her father, now the dinner table becomes a symbol of Sunja's marginalization and isolation. Sunja and her mother "serv[e] the food noiselessly while the lodgers tal[k] brashly about politics;" moreover, "the women clea[r] the tables and [eat] their simple dinner quietly" while the men sleep (12-13). Sunja's status as a woman denies her the ability to eat with the men at the dinner table or participate in their discussions of politics. Instead, she is cast as inferior while she eats a "simple dinner quietly" so as not to disturb them after they are finished eating. The women's silence as they eat and serve, more than just demonstrating male precedence over women, also isolates them from each other. Thus, even just within the first few chapters, Lee begins a portrayal of Confucian female identity within the home that is silent, obedient, and subject to male dominance.

Important to contextualizing Lee's setting and portrayal of Korean intersectionality is identifying the way that Confucian culture interacts with the home environment for women during Japanese occupation of Korea in the first half of the twentieth century. Susan Greenhalgh, speaking about the sexual stratification of women within the traditional Confucian home, argues that the position daughters were given within the home informed the construction of female inferiority within the larger culture. First, she notices that "gender differentials are created not in adulthood, but much earlier, during the period of childhood and adolescence" (Greenhalgh 266). As a result of Confucianism's focus on the economy of the home, daughters—who were considered short-term members of the home since they were expected to eventually marry out unlike sons— "were unlikely to contribute much to [the home's] economy. As a result, parents did not 'waste' resources" on them and instead "restricted their education to on-the-job training in the 'feminine' tasks of housework, childcare, and home-based productive work. With only a few years to repay the debt for their upbringing and marriage, daughters were expected to begin repayment early" (Greenhalgh 270). Such an environment, where daughters were "expected to begin repayment" to their parents by performing "'feminine' tasks" like cooking and cleaning, and where it was unusual for fathers like Hoonie to treat his daughter with love, conferred a secondary status to daughters as compared to their male counterparts, whose membership within the home "was ascribed" and free (Greenhalgh 267).[6] Such conceptions of male dominance over daughters informed the dominance of men over women in general, especially their wives. Greenhalgh is clear that distinctions between the way that daughters and sons were treated within the home means that "girls are socialized into filiality, inferiority, and indebtedness" (301). As these girls grew up, internalized "filiality, inferiority, and

[6] Greenhalgh further explains the advantage that sons have over daughters within the Confucian home: "correctly perceiving their future well-being as dependent on their sons—after all, their daughters would marry out—these parents responded by using these opportunities to improve their son's resources in order ultimately to improve their own long-run mobility and security" (276).

indebtedness" to men created an image of ideal femininity within Confucian culture that placed women under the control of "her father as a child, her husband when married, [and] her sons when widowed" (Okihiro 69). Ultimately, this historical context informs the way that Lee's women should be read and understood; their entrapment within Confucian patriarchy and male power mirrors history through the deliberate denial of subjectivity and agency.

More than just dictating gender roles within the family structure, Confucian patriarchy within *Pachinko* also endorses an inescapable definition of women as "sufferers;" here, the constant placement of Korean women under male power causes women to internalize their supposed inferior identity. Lee demonstrates this through Sunja's coming of age and eventual marriage to Isak. When first reaching maturity, Yangjin emphasizes to her daughter:

> Sunja-ya, a woman's life is endless work and suffering. There is suffering and then more suffering. It's better to expect it, you know. You're becoming a woman now, so you should be told this. For a woman, the man you marry will determine the quality of your life completely. (27)

Here, female identity and womanhood is equated with "suffering"—specifically "suffering" imposed by a male world. By indicating that "the man you marry will determine the quality of your life," Yangjin emphasizes how women are dependent on men for the outcome of their lives. Moreover, when Sunja marries Isak, Yangjin quickly reminds Sunja of her status below him in the marriage, stating, "'if the pastor doesn't give you money for the household, earn something and put aside savings for emergencies… Take good care of your husband. Otherwise, another woman will. Treat your husband's family with reverence. Obey them… Make a good home for him and your child. That's your job. They must not suffer'" (93, 94). Interestingly, this contrast between the times "suffering" is mentioned clearly shows the hierarchy between men and women within *Pachinko* and Confucian culture. Women must "suffer" while men "must not suffer." Indeed, it is expected of

women that they should "suffer" for the benefit of the family so that men and their progeny—specifically male children—can have "a good home." Here, Lee also emphasizes the way that, as noticed before, women learn and internalize "indebtedness" to men over their own comfort and subjectivity. Lee, then, forefronts Korean women's suffering—a suffering all too often unrecognized—by reiterating that female inferiority and loyalty to men even at the expense of their own happiness and well-being.

Importantly, *Pachinko* also carefully emphasizes that, in Confucian patriarchy, male dominance extends to the way that female bodies—specifically within sexual contexts—are subject to male desire. As part of Yangjin's admonitions to her daughter when she marries Isak, Yangjin stresses the importance of sexually pleasing her new husband:

> Before Sunja left home, her mother had spoken to her about sex as if everything was new to her; she explained what a husband expected; and she said that relations were allowed when pregnant. *Do what you can to please your husband. Men need to have sex.* (108)

Yangjin's emphasis that "*men need to have sex*," and that Sunja's role in her future sexual relationship with Isak is to "*please*" him however she can, highlights the gendered inconsistency in finding pleasure within sex while also insisting on the dominance of men over women's bodies. Unfortunately, because "in East Asian societies, talking about sex openly was culturally taboo," "women were traditionally cast as the passive party in sexual encounters and constrained from expressing sexual desire" (Jackson et al. 17).[7] Unsurprisingly, then, Sunja is framed through her mother's commands as the "passive party"—someone whose sexual pleasure is not a concern and whose "sexual desire[s]" are not important. Instead of teaching her daughter how to have healthy

[7] A study done by Alexis Kennedy and Boris Gorzalka on the attitudes of Asians versus non-Asians towards rape, sexual harassment, and sexuality showed that, even in today's more recent culture, "overall, non-Asian participants were more sexually knowledgeable and held less conservative sexual attitudes than Asian participants" (228). Unfortunately, silence about sex in the Asian community zpersists today.

boundaries or how to use terms of consent when it comes to having sex with Isak, Yangjin reinforces the assumption that male desire holds priority over, and, moreover, an entitlement to, Korean women's bodies.[8]

For Lee's character, this passivity and lack of focus on female sexual pleasure results from and reinforces a purity culture that places more value on virginity and faithfulness than on a woman's autonomy or life. Ultimately, this purity culture works to subvert female autonomy while reiterating male power within the home. Speaking about Yangjin, Lee sets the stage for how Confucian culture in *Pachinko* views female virtue. As we learn the reasons for why Yangjin's father gave her away in marriage to Hoonie, Lee writes that her "virtue was expensive" (7). Putting an "expensive" price on "virtue," signifies its importance.[9] More than this, though, Lee demonstrates that female sexual purity symbolizes and connotes female worth. Before Sunja marries Isak, Lee explores her relationship with Hansu, a fish broker from Japan. It is with Hansu that Sunja conceives a child. While Hansu, without consequence, maintains "a string of mistresses" and a wife in Japan, Sunja's value in society suffers as a result of their affair (48). When Hansu refuses to marry her, Sunja recognizes that "If he did not marry her, she was a common slut who would be disgraced forever. The child would be a no-name bastard. Her mother's boardinghouse would be contaminated by her shame" (49). By suggesting that her loss of supposed "virtue" and virginity would cause her community to disgrace her, "shame" her, and label her a "common slut," Sunja internalizes that her virginity, lack of sexual awareness and activity, and overall purity gave her good status, honored her and her family, and labeled her as worthy of marriage. The fact that this focus

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[8] Linda Bennett and Lenore Manderson tie the assumption of women as male property to this prioritization of male sexual desire: "the institution of marriage is interpreted in many Asian societies in a manner that denies women's right to bodily integrity and upholds men's entitlement to sexual access to their wives, regardless of whether women consent to sexual relations" (10).

[9] Interestingly, Lee also portrays the effects of Christianity in the construction of purity culture. In one of Isak's first encounters as a pastor, he hears another pastor say to a girl, "'we have to be careful of your virtue—it is more valuable than money. Your body is a sacred temple where the Holy Spirit dwells" (116).

on purity is highly gendered towards women indicates its use as a mode of suppressing female sexual desire into the normalized patriarchal order while allowing and justifying male sexual activity, desire, and dominance.[10] Sadly, this purity in Confucian culture is held in more regard than female life. Lee notes that many high-class women "hid silver knives in their blouses to protect themselves or to commit suicide if they were dishonored" (32). Such an insistence—that death was preferable to bringing "dishonor" to oneself and one's family—situates female purity above life. Ultimately, for Lee's women, their bodies, sexual desire, and life were given less merit than their male counterparts, which denied them any sexual validation, exploration, or autonomy. By framing female value in this way, Confucian culture once again maintains male (sexual) dominance within the home and domestic sphere, thereby underscoring the positionality of *Pachinko*'s women as history's forgotten and ignored.

Often, and even more tragically as Sunja's relationship with Hansu points out, this dominance and precedence of male desire over women and female subjectivity, sexuality, and desire is manifested through sexual, domestic violence against women. Lee's description of Sunja and Hansu's complicated relationship leaves no doubt about the way that male sexual desire Subjugates women through domineering violence. During a secret meeting with Hansu, Lee writes that he began to make sexual advances on Sunja: "He untied the long sash that held her blouse together and opened it. Sunja started to cry quietly, and he pulled her toward him and held her, making low, soothing sounds, and she allowed him to comfort her as he did what he wanted" (44). While this is not the typical portrayal of violence, physical abuse still occurs; even though she "cr[ies] quietly," Hansu still "d[oes] what he want[s]" to her body. Essentially, he power-rapes her—he justifies taking her body because of the social and cultural dominance he has over her as a wealthy man. Even more

[10] Purity culture in Confucianism also extended to widows. Chenyang Li writes about this saying that "the doctrine of 'chaste widowhood' became an official institution. Women who kept their widowhood were officially honored and their families were exempt from official labor service" (188).

interestingly, Hansu constructs this interaction within the sphere of family dynamics. He replies to her cries saying, "Oppa is here. It's all right. It's all right" (44). "Oppa," the Korean word for elder brother, is used within Hansu and Sunja's relationship at this moment to create a gendered, familial correlation that Sunja, because of Confucian domestic hierarchies, cannot speak against. As her "Oppa," Hansu has domestic male power over her that he uses to his sexual advantage. Throughout the rest of the novel, Hansu continues to assume he has access to Sunja's body: when they meet later after their son is accepted into university, he presumes that she will marry him, and throughout all their subsequent interactions, he objectifies her body (her "big breasts and a pillowy bottom") (346). Moreover, sadly, Hansu is also violent with other women. For instance, when Hansu becomes angry, he takes out his rage on an escort's body when he "hit her again and again, banging her head against the side lamp of the car until she stopped making any noise" (344). Here, the inequalities between men and women, and Confucianism's insistence that men own and have access to female bodies, presumably justifies not only male dominance but also domestic violence on female bodies. This dominance again negates the subjectivity and desire of women in sexual situations—even though they "cry" to be heard, understood, and loved by the male members of their constructed home, they are coerced, even "hit," into sexual submission.

Ultimately, this system of internalized obedience to men and justification of male dominance and violence in *Pachinko* utilizes traditional Confucian gender roles in order to fashion a gendered divide between the private environment and the public one. Kyunghee provides a good example of this divide through her desire to work—a desire that puts pressure on the tensions between colonization's necessitation of women entering the workforce and traditional masculinity's insistence of female immuration within the private domain. Closer to the start of the war, in *Pachinko*'s Book I entitled "*Gohyang*/Hometown: 1910-1933" the effects of colonization and subsequent capitalism

have not yet been felt in full effect; thus, Korean gender traditions are not yet as challenged. It is during this section that Lee writes of Kyunghee,

> Kyunghee's dream was to own her own business selling kimchi and pickles at the covered market near Tsuruhashi Station, and when Sunja moved in, she finally had a person who'd listen to her plans. Yoseb disapproved of her working for money. He liked coming home to a rested and pretty housewife who had his supper ready—an ideal reason for a man to work hard he believed. (123)

A job "selling kimchi and pickles" would provide Kyunghee with the ability to fight the poverty her family faces because of the war economy and anxieties against Koreans within Japan at this time. It would also allow her outside of the defined, private female space delineated for her by Confucianism. However, Confucian male power, as exemplified by her husband, Yoseb's, desire to "com[e] home to a rested and pretty housewife who had his supper ready" negates Kyunghee's subjectivity. Her purpose, according to traditional Confucianism, is to fulfill her husband's desire to have an ideal "pretty housewife"—a mentality that defines and genders the private environment as "feminine." Moreover, when Sunja and Kyunghee enter the public domain to pay off Yoseb's debt, Yoseb admonishes them. He says, "'Stupid women! Every time I walk down the street, how am I supposed to face these men again… My nuts are shriveling'" (140). By interfering in the public world, Sunja and Kyunghee upturn the respective spaces their culture demarcates for men and women. Indeed, Yoseb's declaration, "my nuts are shriveling," demonstrates the severity to which their emergence from the private, "feminine" sphere into the public, "masculine" world threatens his masculinity. Thus, traditional Confucian male dominance establishes and reinforces a gendered divide that confines women to the private domain.

However, the introduction of capitalism through Japanese imperialism and colonialism complicates this gendered divide. For Lee's intersectional women, private does not always

necessarily mean only the confines of the house. In fact, as discussed later when I look at the way that female labor fits into their marginalization under Confucianism, Sunja and Kyunghee are often in charge of outdoor activities like shopping or taking the children to school. Indeed, under Confucian thought, as Greenhalgh writes, the private domain accrues the meaning of non-political and becomes more associated with home/child concerns. This makes the private domain more than a literal space; instead, it is the seclusion of women outside of influential, political, self-actualizing spaces and inside the reproductive, male-dominated spaces. Specifically, Greenhalgh notes that Korean "women's lives are largely devoted to reproductive activities… Any work outside the household is determined by, and designed to mesh with, the needs of the household" (300). Thus, cultural implications prevent Lee's female characters from entering public-political domains by insisting that all their "outside" tasks revolve around "the needs of the household." Under capitalism, however, more opportunities outside of the home opened up for Korean women in Japan during this historical context, affording some flexibility to the movement of women into the literal public space—although, as noted earlier, these opportunities still centered domestic reproduction. Even so, Greenhalgh elaborates, noting that "the emergence of capitalism profoundly threatened men's position of dominance, both destroying old institutions that supported it, and by creating new institutions, such as a labor market, that removed women and children from patriarchal control and gave them independent means of support" (304). "Threatened" by shallow opportunities of female independence, male power retaliated. Greenhalgh writes that the "mechanisms by which [men] maintained power included reviving precapitalist techniques of control; continuing the assignment of all reproductive tasks to women; and restriction women's access to high-paying jobs" (Greenhalgh 304). Therefore, even with capitalism's introduction of independence, it was only a quasi-freedom for Korean women. This historical context thereby

illuminates the ways that Lee's women are continually trapped within male power dynamics even as they are increasingly allowed outside of the home.

For instance, in the case of Yangjin, nuanced male power fights the emergence of female independence at the beginning of the novel by insisting that female obedience and immuration within the private domain are a necessity to national development. This can be seen through Yoseb's critique of Kyunghee's dream to sell kimchi mentioned in the previous paragraph. As an independent subject, Kyunghee "dream[s]" of the public freedom that participating in the workforce would provide her. But Yoseb insists that her staying at home to make him supper becomes "an ideal reason for a man to work hard." In this way, Kyunghee, and women in general, is re-placed within the private domain in order to supposedly encourage their men to "work hard" for the development of their nation and national economy. Ania Loomba writes about this type of interaction between colonial power and male power: "Colonialism intensified patriarchal oppression, often because native men, increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, become more tyrannical at home. They seized upon the home and the woman as emblems of their culture and nationality" (167). Thus, mirroring the dynamic Loomba identifies, Korean female subjectivity suffers as it is caught between the synergistic forces of revitalized male power and Confucian nationalism.

Importantly, though limited in their access to the public sphere, assumptions of male dominance and female obedience enforces female labor within the domestic environment. As already stated, the colonial efforts of Japan in Korea (and in Japan itself) prompted the emergence of a capitalist economy through industrialization and urbanization. This emergence in turn created a twofold burden of labor for women, especially rural, poor women like those at the heart of *Pachinko*'s narrative. Theodore Yoo, looking at the effect of colonialism and industrialization on gender within Korea during this historical period, writes,

> As a result of mass migration from the countryside to urban centers and the entry of Korean women into the paid workforce, there was a sharp discrepancy between the ideal of the Korean woman working at home and the reality of women's growing participation in the labor force over the thirty-five years of colonial rule. (4)

This "discrepancy between the ideal" and the "reality" of expectations for women's labor especially affected women in lower classes—women whose income from outside labor was necessary to keep their families fed and children educated. And yet, under Confucian male dominance as explored earlier, "the ideal wife… is still expected to put husband and family first… Working-class women juggle the double burden of waged and domestic work" (Jackson et al. 13). Thus, the "double burden" of female labor—and the burden of having to straddle the public labor force and private domestic sphere— "was both liberating and oppressive: it gave women greater independence but also saddled them with a double burden as producers and unpaid household workers under men's authority" (Okihiro 84). And, to restate Greenhalgh, most of the public labor women did was merely labeled as a replication of tasks done within the home. Unfortunately, for Lee's female characters, this means that they are oppressed by and caught within a one-dimensional identity as homemaker and domestic laborer, meaning that Yangjin, Sunja, and Kyunghee find themselves trapped within the figurative space of domesticity that refuses them power and individuality.

In fact, the "double burden" of labor for Lee's women becomes their sign of worth in and for the home. For instance, in Yangjin and Sunja's case, their ability to do labor classifies them as worthy daughters and women. In the first description of Yangjin, readers learn that ""The girl has a nice face. No pockmarks. She's well mannered and obeys her father and sisters. And not too dark. She's a little thing, but she has strong hands and arms"" (8). Here, Yangjin's obedience to her family is tied to her ability to do labor with her "strong hands and arms." Moreover, it is this description—of her obedience and ability to work—that convinces Hoonie's mother to plan Yangjin's marriage

with Hoonie. In other words, her worth as a potential daughter-in-law, and her monetary worth to her father, is found in her capacity for labor. Lee's description of Sunja also highlights this same point:

> The girl had a firm body like a pale block of wood—much in the shape of her mother—with great strength in her dexterous hands, well-muscled arms, and powerful legs, her short, wide frame was thick, built for hard work, with little delicacy in her face or limbs, but she was quite appealing physically. (21)

Again, the strength of Sunja's body, "built for hard work," communicates her value as a girl. More than just proving her worth as a "hard work[er]," Sunja's "dexterous hands, well-muscled arms, and powerful legs" also give her value as an object of desire for men. Lee writes that it is these physical features—ones that prove her capacity for labor—that make her "quite appealing physically." Additionally, Hansu "preferred clever women over dumb ones and hardworking women over lazy ones" (36). In this manner, "hardworking" becomes an ideal body type, moniker, and one-dimensional signifier for Lee's women to live up to.[11]

Because of the insistence of male dominance, female labor in *Pachinko* also becomes a necessary facet of being a good wife and mother; tragically, this positions labor as the epitome of womanhood, disallowing Lee's female characters from actualizing their desires. Vivian-Lee Nyitray speaks to the way that the socially established Confucian patriarchy dictated the characteristics of traditional Korean womanhood. She writes, "…the female ideal had been that of a 'virtuous wife and good mother,' meaning it was a woman's duty to create the optimal family and home environment necessary to build a harmonious state" (Nyitray 150). Namely, this "female ideal" that

[11] Michele Mitchell et al. denotes the interaction between gender and imperial capitalism: "in various locations and contexts during the nineteenth century and since, capitalism and imperialism have had a profound impact—often simultaneously—on gendered forms of productive as well as reproductive labor… Gender has, then, powerfully determined labour-value and human worth since the beginnings of capitalist modernity" (396-97).

"buil[t] a harmonious state" demanded "either the enlargement or shrinkage of the female labor force outside the home" as was necessary for the growth of the economy (Nyitray 150). However, either way—if women were pushed outside the home for work or if they were encouraged to remain in the home environment—their identity as "a virtuous wife and good mother" depended on their (public and/or domestic) labor. Lee exemplifies this through Yangjin and Sunja. As addressed above, Yangjin tells her daughter, "'Sunja-ya, a woman's life is endless work and suffering'" (27). Later, she also stresses to Sunja that she is to "'make a good home for him and your child. That's your job'" (94). These passages cause female identity to take on the role of domestic laborer for her family. Sunja and her female counterparts are therefore trapped within the home and within an expectation that their lives are useful only when directed towards labor. In other words, these women must "endless[ly] work" for the benefit of "him"—their husbands and male children. The specification of *male* children is necessary, of course, because girls in Confucian culture are conditioned from infancy to likewise serve as domestic laborers. In this way, womanhood—and thus all facets of female identity—aggregates, sadly, around an identity of "endless work." Just as the dominance of male family members and the construction of female purity deny Lee's women agency, self-actualization, autonomy, and fulfilled desires, labor functions much the same by delimiting and confining women.

This insistence on labor no matter the sphere prevents *Pachinko*'s women from accessing certain freedoms of life, like personal time and education, that could enable an informed resistance to Confucian patriarchy. For instance, growing up, Sunja helps her mother run a boarding house where they live. Through a conversation between Sunja and Hansu, Lee emphasizes the dichotomy between male and female labor. Hansu asks, "'What do you think about when it's quiet and you're not doing much?'" (39). But for Sunja, "There was never a time when she wasn't doing anything… Sunja could hardly remember her mother ever being idle" (39). While Hansu enjoys time to think, to

be "quiet," and to "not [do] much," Sunja possesses no such luxury. In fact, by indicating that, similar to Sunja, Yangjin is also hardly "idle," the narrative renders the gendered labor discrimination plain. Men work, but they, unlike women whose lives are "endless work," are not defined as *only* laborers. Rather, their free time allows them independent thoughts and individuality. For instance, unlike Sunja, who started working at the boarding house at an early age, her sons' only job is to go to school. In fact, it is only after her youngest son, Mozasu, is caught fighting in school that he starts working with Sunja at the confectionery stand—work he explicitly calls "women's work" (247). The key difference between Sunja's and her sons' childhood highlights that Sunja's gender, and thus the expectation of her labor, prevents her from attending school. This lack of time for education and personal thought because of labor, Greenhalgh specifies, only amplifies and enables women's subjugation under filial patriarchy by ensuring that "they find low-status, ill-paid jobs" if they do leave the domestic space (301).[12] Essentially, by accurately demonstrating the labor expected of Korean women under both Japanese colonization and Confucian patriarchy, Lee's characters exemplify how labor functions to re-place Korean women within gendered systems of power by disallowing them from accessing resources that could aid them in gaining more power, autonomy, and freedom. Ultimately, through Confucian patriarchy and a combination of Japanese capitalism and colonialism, the private, domestic sphere for *Pachinko*'s women enacts specific, local forms of oppression which highlights the intersectionality of these Korean women. Recognizing and emphasizing an intersectional approach to understanding these women thus articulates the inherent heterogeneity, individuality, and complexity of Korean women, colonized women, and, indeed, women worldwide.

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[12] Theodore Yoo also notes that because education served as a conduit for Western thought, "with the onset of colonization, female students often utilized Western ideas, adapted and reconfigured to suit the Korean context, to counter a colonial state that vigorously reasserted traditional roles and values, as well as a nationalist agenda that promoted a new cult of domesticity" (17). As a result, women's education becomes linked to themes of resistance and independence. Regulating access to education or prioritizing the economic production of women over education inhibits their utilization of these resistance measures.

CONSTRUCTION OF OPPRESSION IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

These hierarchies of gendered power within the domestic environment comprise only part of the nexus of oppression within *Pachinko*. Colonization and anti-colonial Korean nationalism also fought over the female body by both reinstating her subjugation as central to a reimagined, revitalized nation. As Yoo notes, the "dual, interrelated forces of change— 'colonialism' and 'modernity'—were constantly 'shifting, contradictory, and deeply ideological'" (3). As previously explored in passing, "shifting contradict[ions]" between traditionalism and the economic need for women to move from private to public complicated female identity within colonial-Korean society. Indeed, "…competing visions of Korean womanhood dominated… as the public engaged the 'woman question'… [This] emergence of new female categories unhinged traditional understandings of women's status" (Yoo 4). Additionally, "perceptions and performances of womanhood—not to mention feminism and femininity—could also be mobilised in political struggles connected to decolonisation, anti-imperialism and transnational solidarity" (Mitchell et al. 394). Being gendered as a woman in Korea at this historical time, then, signified a central, ambiguous position within the nexus of tradition, colonization, modernity, and nationalism.[13] Of course, being Korean during Japan's colonization of Korea—especially Koreans who immigrated to Japan like Yangjin, Sunja and Kyunghee do—meant that the Korean female experience was also shaped by racial bias and discrimination. As Jackson et al. rightly note, "women frequently figure centrally in such national imaginaries—whether in terms of traditions to be preserved and protected, modern rights and freedoms to be promoted, or anxieties about cultural and ethnic boundaries" (5). *Pachinko* highlights the way that Korean women "figure centrally in such national imaginaries" by focusing on the way that the public domain—the site of politics, emergent sexualities, nationalisms, and visceral

[13] Chungmoo Choi agrees saying that "A woman's subject position in the social and historical reality of colonial or neo-colonial space has often been constructed as a sexualized one" (14).

violence—exploits the intersectional female body for its "national" gain. Ultimately, a complicated web of oppression emerges—a nexus in which the subservience and complacency of Korean women is re-emphasized. The facets of society comprising this nexus include the Japanese colonial system of racialized/sexualized discrimination and the Korean nationalist agenda, flowing from the family structure's subversive Confucian patriarchy that disempowered women, which epitomizes Korean women as the figurative and literal progenitors of a new and recovered Korean nation. In *Pachinko*, an understanding of this complex intersectionality reveals the mechanisms of national racial violence, compulsory heteronormativity, and enforced motherhood that construct public-political oppression for Sunja, Kyunghee, and Ayame. Ultimately, these forms of public/national oppressions function to marginalize women, deny autonomy to them, homogenize them, and re-assert their confinement within domestic spheres.

In order to understand the novel's construction of racism in the colonial setting, it is important to first note how, historically, Japan's colonization of Korea necessitated and perpetuated a language of racial hierarchy that denied equality of Japan's annexed Korean subjects. Alexis Dudden describes how the discourse of power utilized by the West in their colonial efforts got translated into the Japanese language. These terms authorized Japan as a colonial nation but also produced a racial difference between Japanese and Korean people. This happened because "declaring a territory a protectorate did not merely apply a euphemism to the action of acting over; it established a legal precedent for defining certain people unfit to rule themselves" (Dudden 9). Labeling Koreans "unfit" denoted subservient and subjugated Korean otherhood—an otherhood that, according to scholars like Daisuke Nishihara, mirrored and complicated Edward Said's Orientalism (Nishihara 250).[14] Just as Orientalism sprung forth from and reinstated the West's

[14] Said defines Orientalism as epistemic knowledge of the Orient that acts as a "rationalization of colonial rule" (*Orientalism* 47). Specifically, it casts the Oriental as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'" (*Orientalism* 48).

preoccupation with knowing and owning the East—for "to have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for 'us' to deny autonomy to 'it'"—Japan utilized an epistemic insistence of inferiority and "unfit[ness]" against Koreans. They did so by pointing towards Koreans' supposed ignorance, incapability, and laziness, all terms that stem from racial bias and hatred. Superficially, characterizing this as racial hatred may seem paradoxical given the physiological similarities between Koreans and Japanese as well as the fact that Japan has often been categorized along with Korea as part of "Orient." In fact, according to national mythology, Korea has been depicted as Japan's "elder brother," insinuating a familial connection between the two countries that denies supposed racial difference (Nishihara 250). However, Japan's use of racialized and demeaning words to describe Korea highlights the slipperiness of race as a social construct all too often used for political agendas. Stuart Hall confirms that "race is a cultural and historical, not biological fact—that race is a discursive construct, a sliding signifier" (32).[15] Importantly, Hall iterates that the "sliding signifier" of race "[is] inscribed within the practices and operations of *relations of power* between groups" (emphasis in the original, 47). And so, Japan's "*relations of [colonial] power*" with Korea inscribed the historical "fact" of racial difference between the Japanese and Korean peoples. Indeed, within this historical context, a difference in race was demanded in order to categorically delineate and thereby separate Korea as indelibly other, and, ultimately, justify violence towards and socio-political oppression of Koreans.

For Korean women during their country's annexation, this racial discrimination compounded with gender oppression from both Japan as a colonial nation and Korea itself through the hierarchies of home and national identity. Speaking on the intersections of race, gender, and class within the colonial environment, Anne McClintock potently argues:

[15] Hall goes further to argue that "all efforts to fix the idea of race foundationally on biological, physiological, or genetic grounds, have been shown to be untenable" (34).

> Women and men did not experience imperialism in the same way… Colonized women, before the intrusions of imperial rule, were invariably disadvantaged within their societies, in ways that gave the colonial reordering of their sexual and economic labor very different outcomes from those of colonized men… colonized women had to negotiate not only the imbalances of their relations with their own men but also the baroque and violent array of hierarchical rules and restrictions that structured their new relations with imperial men and women. (6)

Here, McClintock delineates how the positionality of colonized women drastically shifted their experience of imperialism, as well as the hierarchies of colonial power, nationalism, and capitalism. Having to "negotiate" with the androcentric societies at home and abroad, colonized women faced the multiplicities of intersectional oppression and violence.[16] Unfortunately, in the words of Loomba, these oppressions often worked synergistically because "men on both sides of the colonial divide… collaborated when it came to the domination of women" (168). Moreover, considering that "from the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond), female bodies symbolise the conquered land," intersectional race-gender oppression often carried sexual connotations or iterations of explicit sexual violence (Loomba 154). Thus, the sexualized female body remains in the crosshairs of combined racial and gendered discrimination.[17] Such historical positionality informs an intersectional analysis of *Pachinko*'s female characters as they navigate similar imperial and national public-political oppression.

Specifically, as *Pachinko* spotlights, these "collaboart[ive]" efforts result in sexualized racial violence against Lee's Korean women—a violence unexperienced by their male counterparts. Linda

[16] The Oxford English Dictionary defines this as "having man, or the male, as its centre" ("androcentric, adj.").
[17] Choi articulates this further, explaining that "nationalism is a masculine discourse *par excellence*. Due to the sexualized construct of the colonial relationship, the discourse of anti-colonial nationalism demands moral purity, which is again sexually metaphorized" (24).

Bennett and Lenore Manderson speak of the technology of violence in creating and perpetuating gender inequality. They are explicit in noticing that "everyday violence to which women are subjected simultaneously reflect overlapping social hierarchies that are based not only on gender but also on women's age, marital status, class, race, religion and ethnicity" (Bennett and Manderson 1). Essentially, Lee's women face (sexual) violence because of their gender while also susceptible to violence because of their race and other facets of their identity. Racial discrimination for all of Lee's characters—including men—looks as follows: being seated in the back of the classroom for smelling like kimchi; needing to register for Japanese government papers on their sixteenth birthday despite legally being Japanese citizens; and generally being distrusted and dehumanized.[18] However, Lee's women face additional oppression within the public domain from which Korean men are exempt. In one instance, Sunja is attacked by Japanese schoolboys while living in Korea. Speaking of her body, one says, "the yobo has really big tits. Japanese girls are delicate, not like these breeders" (30). The combination of Sunja's body being sexualized for her "big tits" and the racialized language of being called a "breeder" unlike "Japanese girls"—all within the context of a threatened assault—demonstrates intersectional violence. The sexualization of Sunja's body also influences a reading of Hansu's relationship with Sunja. As a man from Japan, Hansu participates in the emergent relationship between Japanese colonialism and Korean capitalism through his fish-broking business. However, keeping in mind Loomba's assertion that female bodies represent the colonized land, this participation in the colonization of Korea influences an understanding of his power rape of Sunja. Just as he utilizes the Korean economy and land for personal gain, he dehumanizes, sexualizes, and colonizes Sunja's body. More than merely highlighting violence based on gender or sexuality, these

[18] Lee sums up the consequences of racial oppression for her characters. Isak, speaking to his son Noa, says, "'Living every day in the presence of those who refuse to acknowledge your humanity takes great courage'" (193). The dehumanization that these characters face, especially as men, is indeed one that "takes great courage" to endure and is a focus, sadly, beyond the scope of this paper.

examples of physical (enacted or threatened) violence reveal the ways in which public-political violence towards and on the female body is repeatedly justified within the context of racial, colonial power.

As the subtext of Lee's novel demonstrates, sexualized racial violence also took place on the national level. Yoo parses out the historically complicated relationship between the Korean female body and the Japanese nation:

> Colonial authorities also resorted to modern forms of surveillance that Michel Foucault terms 'bio-power.' On one level, the colonial state took great interest in the regulation of birth, sexuality, illness, and health… Yet the colonial prescription for managing the Korean social body often put Japanese national interests ahead of modern practice (e.g., promotion of population growth over modern birth control), much to the detriment of women's health and well-being. (5)

Surveilling Korean women in this way, the Japanese government exemplified Loomba's argument that the female body symbolizes the colonial enterprise. Indeed, exerting "bio-power" over female bodies was the "prescription for managing the Korean social body." Lee alludes to a specific form of Japanese bio-power over vulnerable Korean women when Yangjin, Sunja and Kyunghee increasingly enter the public domain through work. Reminiscing about past friends with her daughter, Yangjin laments, "'At the market, I hear that the girls who went to work in factories were taken somewhere else, and they had to do terrible, terrible things with Japanese soldiers'" (238). Lee continues, "Sunja had heard the same stories, and Hansu had warned her on more than one occasion of the Korean recruiters, working for the Japanese army, falsely promising good jobs" (238). By hinting at the possibility that Korean girls "were taken somewhere else" by the "Japanese army" to do "terrible, terrible things," Lee implicates Japanese "bio-power" and surveillance. More than just regulating "birth, sexuality, illness, and health," this iteration of "bio-power" moderates

Korean female behavior in the public domain through fear of being one of these "girls." In fact, it is through public work in the market, in discussions of the Japanese government, and in reprimands from other Japanese men, that Sunja and her family hear of these "terrible, terrible" experiences. Of course, within these stories, Lee cites the experiences of historical Korean "Comfort Women." Already mentioned above, "Comfort Women" were Korean women kidnapped, raped, and brutalized by the Japanese army. Their bodies were the literal sites of Japanese colonization as soldiers took their "comfort" by brutalizing Korean women. By underpinning such visceral stories of intersectional violence (racial in that it happened predominantly to Koreans, and gendered in that it was only women), Lee explicates the nationally wide-spread and yet ignored danger her Korean women face from the public-political domain. As such, insinuations of sexual and racial violence against Korean women, violence that they are exposed to as they venture into the public realm of work, add to the already overwhelming nexus of oppression, fear, and otherness Lee's women endure from the private domestic sphere.

Unfortunately, instead of aiding Korean women and liberating them from the Japanese government's debilitating sexual violence, Korean nationalists also inflicted oppression on female bodies. Historically, this can be seen through the treatment of Korea's New Women and the critique of feminism by Korean nationalists who saw the independence of women as a betrayal to Korea itself. New Women, fueled by Western influences, were comprised of Korean and Japanese feminists who resisted the patriarchal mechanisms within both the home and national system. Seungsook Moon asserts that "the women's movement to revise family law has aimed at eliminating discrimination against women in marriage, family, and kinship" (52). Politically, the new woman also often fought against the efforts of Japanese occupation. However, because many nationalist reformers attempted to "formulat[e] a new vision of women's roles in the family" without subverting the male power inherent within the Confucian home, the new woman was pitted against

national concerns (Yoo 88). Yoo elaborates, noting that nationalist reformers created a "new ideology of the professional wife [that] endowed women's domestic roles with a loftier purpose and significance in the struggle for the Korean nation" (88). And so, while the new woman attempted to gain recognition for her humanity, individuality, complexity, and subjectivity, nationalists cited "any attempt at liberation as selfish and vilified her cultural transformation as corrupt and materialistic" (Yoo 93).[19] Eventually, the agenda of New Women—to revise the family laws of Confucianism—was framed as malevolent to the function of the family itself: "these 'new women' are responsible not only for undermining the family, but also for undermining national cultural identities as well, since they are bad mothers who fail to inculcate their children with national tradition and culture" (Park 209). Any form of "liberation" for Korean women, then, was seen as anti-national because it "undermin[ed]" the hierarchies within the family and, thus, the nation.[20]

At the heart of this New Women's movement and subsequent blow-back from Korean nationalists was an emphasis on sexuality, heteronormativity, and maternity. Central to the New Women's movement was the destabilization and critique of feminine chastity practices and an acceptance of free love and non-traditional female sexualities. Through this focus, these women redirected the victimization and silencing of female sexuality within the private domain and made the issue national. Yoo rightly notes that "the critique [against the New Women movement] was [also] sexual—both in language and content" (199). This critique reduced the feminine body to the ways that it could reproduce the Korean nation.[21] Reproduction, for the nationalist reformer, was

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[19] Even today, Yoo notices that some scholars studying these women find fault in the New Women's movement for being "inappropriate during a time of colonial exploitation. These scholars bemoan narcissistic tendencies that precluded any national consciousness" (198). However, such assertions only emphasize the powerlessness of Korean women in attaining any semblance of freedom for themselves during this time.

[20] Insook Kwon affirms the nationalist attitudes: "Under the nation's emergency situation, the women's resistance against gendered inequalities had no proper site. Quite apart from men, women themselves thought that new women's insistences were unrealistically indiscreet and could dissipate Korea's power as a nation" (400).

[21] Elain Kim and Chungmoo Choi speak to this very situation and the way that it complicated an exploration of female sexuality: "Anti-colonial nationalism reclaims masculinity, usually at the expense of women and their interest in sexuality.

imposed on the female Korean body figuratively and literally. Moreover, the nation resisted the New Women's movement's "direct attacks against the existing marriage system and patriarchal power" by insisting on heteronormativity for both men and women, but especially women whose bodies and sexualities were vessels of economy and reproduction for the nation. Essentially, because the goal of the nationalist reformer was to create strong, healthy Koreans, "at the heart of this critical task were the mothers of the nation;" indeed, motherhood became a necessary identification for women despite their sexuality or desires (Yoo 163).[22] Thus, the two major themes of imposed heteronormativity and motherhood inform an historical understanding of Korean women that also becomes obvious and important in Lee's narrative of Korean life.

Lee begins an exploration into Korean culture's insistence on heteronormativity by creating space for sexually non-normative women. By the end of *Pachinko*'s Book II, it becomes apparent that New Women ideologies have surfaced through a subtle shift in societal behavior. Female college students (like Akiko Fumeki, Noa's girlfriend) express their desire for sex, disagree with public authorities, and engage in political debates (277-78). However, even with these ideologies appearing, the national government holds sway over the way that women think of themselves, especially in terms of sexual desire. This is highlighted through the character of Ayame, the wife of Haruki Totoyama, who is a gay man in love with Mozasu. While Lee never confirms Ayame's sexuality, she deconstructs Ayame's assumed heterosexuality by narrating her curiosity in exploring non-normative, non-heterosexual behavior. Lee writes of Ayame that "she had only slept with [men] as a way to get married;" however, after she married Haruki and found out she was infertile, "they did not make love again. She had never been interested in being the sexy lady, and he did not

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The unifying impulse of the masculine discourse homogenizes the nation and normalizes women and women's chastity so that they properly belong to the patriarchal order" (5).

[22] Jackson et al. are explicit in the connection between limited female sexuality and motherhood: "The Confucian ethic privileges order and hierarchy, the needs of the collective over those of the individual, filial piety and women's obedience to men. It thus leaves little scope for women's autonomy or for expressions of sexuality that are not harnessed to the needs of men and of procreation—especially the production of male children who will perpetuate the family" (9).

approach her for such transactions" (364). After a female prostitute makes advances on Ayame— "I like this bone between your neck and shoulders. You're very cute. Come see me" (366)—Ayame's interest in sex increases: "[w]hat puzzled her was that so late in her life, she wanted to know more but had no one to ask" (367). In fact, "Ayame wondered about the girl all day" and marvels at her beauty (367). Though labeling Ayame as only interested in women overlooks the complexities of sexualities and desires, Ayame's attraction to and longing for this woman cannot be disregarded; indeed, it is a woman whose attention makes Ayame interested in sex for more than reproductive purposes. Thus, Lee clearly frames Ayame as a character who disturbs the heterosexual norm through her desires.

Unfortunately, sexuality often becomes politicized. Specifically, in the case of *Pachinko*'s Korean, colonial setting, enforced heterosexuality politically re-asserts patriarchal, national order. Vital to understanding heteronormativity in the novel, one must grasp the political nature of imposed sexuality especially when it occurs in a colonial environment. Jennifer Ting underscores and elaborates on the political nature of sexuality: "the politics of sexuality are not limited to the restriction, denial, or freedom of one's sexual preferences" but, instead, involves an "examination of the way power works" (66). National sexual restriction of women's bodies, then, points to a political power play that uses female sexuality as an expendable pawn. In *Pachinko*'s case, this "power," stemming from anti-colonial Korean nationalists, functions to defend patriarchal nationalism by perpetuating the family and national structures' inherent male dominance over women and their sexualities. Specifically, women's sexualities are necessarily enforced and aligned toward heterosexuality—a sexuality that all-too-often centers male needs. Aptly naming such insistences as compulsory heterosexuality, Adrienne Rich argues that such sexual enforcement plays into a larger theme of "assuring male sexual access to women," a process akin to "prostitution, marital rape, father-daughter and brother-sister incest, wife beating, pornography, bride price, the selling of

daughters, purdah, and genital mutilation" (1523). Often, Rich finds, women internalize heteronormativity, in turn producing "the effect of male identification"—the centering of male needs or desires over female ones (1525).[23] For Rich, male identification places men above women whereas female identification "is a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power, curtailed and contained under the institution of heterosexuality" (1531). Essentially, then, enforced heterosexuality in *Pachinko* politically denys female bodily autonomy in order to maintain the construction of male-centered nationalism.

In *Pachinko*, compulsory heterosexuality derives from within the public domain's media; this compulsory sexual orientation, ultimately, disallows Ayame's full expression of herself. After seeing the woman in the park and recognizing her own desires, Ayame struggles with the stereotypes the media communicates about such "deviant" women: "What confused [Ayame] was that the girl in the green blouse had looked so wholesome and amused, nothing at all like what she'd seen in the maudlin films about a fallen woman from a bad family" (367). The insinuation in this passage for Ayame is that prostitutes and, especially, women-that-desire-women are these "fallen women from a bad family." Constructing this view and then habituating women like Ayame into internalizing this stereotype, these "maudlin films" moralize female sexuality. "Wholesome" women, according to the media, do not participate in non-heterosexual behavior while "fallen women" do.[24] Here, media reinforces and imposes female heterosexuality as normal.[25] Moreover, these films dictate that female

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[23] Rich goes further with this idea to mention that "the enforcement of heterosexuality for women" acts "as a means of assuring male right of physical, economic, and emotional access" (1517).

[24] It is important to note, here, that while I am using Western scholars like Rich to provide the foundation for my analysis of compulsory heterosexuality, I am by no means claiming that Korea's compulsory heterosexuality looks identical to those in America or Europe. In fact, as Jackson et al. affirm, "the Asian aversion to homosexuality is not identical to homophobia in the West. Homosexuality and lesbianism are not merely objects of moral outrage—they challenge the foundations of the Asian patriarchal family…In East Asia, where the family as lineage is a more pressing reality, eschewing reproductive, marital relationships has more devastating consequences…to live as a lesbian refuses women's part in this project, brings shame on the family, and flies in the face of all tenets of feminine virtue. Moreover, to claim a gay or lesbian identity is an assertion of individual desires over the collective, the family" (23-24).

[25] Similarly, Rich unmasks the media for its role in compulsory heterosexuality: "The ideology of heterosexual romance [is] beamed at her from childhood out of fairy tales, television, films, advertising, popular songs, wedding pageantry" (1525).

sexual "deviance" tarnishes the family unit— "fallen women" equals "bad family." Remembering that the family is the basic unit of national identity, the politics involved with ensuring female sexual conformity becomes very important. Yoo affirms this observation noting that the public discourse in Korea and Japan at the height of the new woman's sexual revolution portrayed non-heterosexual, non-normative women "as sexual seductress[es] who posed a danger to the hallowed institution of the family" (79). And, if deviant women "pos[e] a danger to" and create "bad famil[ies]," then those families go on to create a "bad" nation. In other words, by participating in non-heterosexual behavior, not only do these supposedly "fallen women" dismantle existing family relations, but they also prevent the reproduction of future Korean citizens and families by not having children. Therefore, without question, the inherited and internalized social and political structure of Korea for Lee's women relies on their acceptance of heterosexuality in order to assert national order. This comes at the cost of female desires and autonomy, as is the case with Ayame who gives up her potential relationship with the woman from the park. Although readers are not privy to Ayame's thoughts as she returns to the routine of her life, Lee does write that "She felt unable to look at Haruki's face," insinuating both her shame and a sad resignation of non-conformity (370).[26] Ultimately, as Ayame demonstrates, the public domain's shaping of what counts as acceptable female sexuality limits Lee's women in their expression of bodily desires while once again perpetuating the male dominance inherent in Korean nationalism.

More than just enforcing heteronormativity, the Korean nation historically positioned motherhood as the ideal feminine identity; as the traditional myth of Korea's national beginnings exemplifies, this categorization as a "womb" reinforced Korean women's alterity within the national

[26] Kim and Choi explain the consequences of nationalism on Korean female sexuality: "anti-colonial nationalism reclaims masculinity, usually at the expense of women and their interest in sexuality. The unifying impulse of the masculine nationalist discourse homogenizes the nation and normalizes women and women's chastity so that they properly belong to the patriarchal order" (5).

domain. In "Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea," Seungsook Moon retells this traditional myth of the Korean nation. Within the myth, Moon specifically argues that "the representation of gender is noteworthy… the woman is depicted merely as the bearer of the heir, thereby suggesting that woman's only contribution to the creation of the Korean nation was the provision of a proto-nationalist womb" (41). For Moon, this also translates into anti-colonial nationalist ideologies: "androcentric discourses tainted with militarism delegitimizes women as citizens… constructing them instead as carriers of nationalist wombs to deliver heirs and potential warriors who can defend the nation" (52). Identified only as a potential "womb" marginalizes and dehumanizes Korean women into objects of reproduction forced to propagate, literally, Korea's future male citizens. Furthermore, female citizenship in the public domain was historically predicated on their conformity as "womb": "[women] remain excluded from the descent line, and must bear and raise a son in order to achieve 'social security' in the present…Forced to earn their security through reproduction, women's lives are largely devoted to reproductive activities" (Greenhalgh 300). Korean nationalists, awarding women with "their security" for their participation in birthing the Korean nation, limited the sexual freedoms of women, coerced them into filiality, and put women who were unable to reproduce in physical danger. Ironically, more than just imposing heterosexuality on all Korean women, "womb" or "mother" also suggests an identification "as asexual vessels of fertility" (Kim and Choi 4). Such contradictions highlight the complicated positionality Korean women historically embodied. In the words of Kim and Choi, these women "are relegated to the status of voiceless auxiliaries," especially on topics specifically related to their bodies and sexualities (4). Thus, while Korean nationalists presented inconsistent, paradoxical models of sexuality, they forefronted an identity as "procreator" that overtook all other facets of female identity in importance. Such an identification diminished

Korean women to a status of "voiceless," other, non-human, and thing, thereby further perpetuating androcentric national ideologies.

In *Pachinko*, Lee especially focuses on the construction of motherhood as the ideal for Korean women. For instance, while not explicitly labeled as infertile, Kyunghee must come to terms with her and Yoseb's inability to have children together. In a conversation with Sunja, Kyunghee explains her complicated situation: "'I married a very good man. It's my fault. If I had children, I wouldn't feel so restless. I just don't want to be so idle. This isn't Yoseb's fault. No one works harder than he does…. a man in his situation could've thrown me out for not having a son'" (129). By noting that "a man in his situation could've thrown [her] out for not having a son," Kyunghee identifies that providing "a son" proves her worth as a wife. As such, motherhood signifies the female worth within both families and the larger national community. Moreover, by indicating that physical harm could come from not having "a son,"—for, indeed, women could be "thrown… out"—Lee links the national domain's expectation of motherhood to physical neglect, abandonment, and even potential violence against female bodies. Motherhood acts so strongly as an indicator of Korean femininity in *Pachinko* that it results in the internalization of this status quo in Lee's women. After rejecting a marriage proposal from Changho Kim, Kyunghee reiterates that "'He has a right to have children. I couldn't give him any. I don't even have blood anymore'" (273-74). Sunja counters by saying, "'Maybe you're more important than children,'" to which Kyunghee shockingly responds, "'No'" (274). Kyunghee's emphatic "No" highlights the fact that the national domain's insistent enforcement of motherhood perpetuates an internalized belief that, no matter her contributions to society or her own individuality, she is not "more important than children." More than just making motherhood the standard for Lee's Korean women, the Korean nationalist's insistence on motherhood capitalizes on situating a woman's ability to have children as the epitome of her identity.

Additionally, while motherhood is the idealized identity for Lee's women, it also often costs them access to the public domain. As discussed later in this paper in depth, motherhood often acts as a form of resistance for Lee's women; however, Lee also explores the underlying national oppression of female autonomy and individuality at play within the novel. Specifically, imposed motherhood—or the assumption that motherhood is the desired ideal for all women—functions as a method of national oppression that re-places women into domestic spaces. This is especially highlighted in Ayame, who's status as a surrogate mother disallows an exploration of her sexuality. Lee carefully notes that Haruki marries Ayame in order to have someone to look after his mentally ill brother, Daisuke. Diasuke thus acts as a surrogate son for Ayame even as her infertility means she will never have her own biological children. Ayame's entire daily schedule revolves around taking care of Daisuke, and it is only during school lessons that "Ayame went to the public bath, then did her food shopping" (363). Essentially, except for three hours during which Ayame accomplishes tasks required for the domestic domain, her responsibilities towards Daisuke keep her within the home environment. As explored in a previous paragraph, a prostitute propositions Ayame during one of these short trips; it is on a similar trip to the bath that Ayame sees "her husband making love" to another man and, finally, decides to stay out with the girl (368). However, this decision has consequences: "Daisuke had been crying on his bed mat, asking for his mother" because Ayame came home late (370). Ayame's slight deviation from the domestic routine results in Daisuke "crying on his bed mat," feeling afraid. Ayame's choice not to participate in sexual exploration in the park, then, reads another way—not only is this decision prompted from compulsory heterosexuality but also from the imposition of motherhood and its responsibilities on Ayame. Moreover, these motherly, domestic duties seem not to apply to Haruki, whose continued sexual relationships in the park with other men fail to disrupt his routine because that routine already centers the public

environment instead of the domestic one. Thus, motherhood, even surrogate motherhood, confines women back into the domestic domain.

Ultimately, the nexus of oppression created by colonization, nationalism, and Confucian patriarchy results in a world in which it truly seems as if "a woman's life is to suffer." However, as seen through the varied experiences of Lee's women, Korean women cannot and should not be hegemonically categorized as merely "sufferers." Even as Yangjin, Sunja, Kyunghee, and Ayame find their identity and worth tied to their obedience to Confucian male authority and male-centered nationalism, each woman encounters these intersectional oppressions differently. Thus, acknowledging and engaging with the locally specific, intersectional constructions of oppression in *Pachinko* highlights the heterogeneity of Korean women during a colonial period that prescribed and imposed a silencing of her agential subjectivity. Such understandings of the multiplicities of Asian women in Lee's novel begin the critique of universal conceptions of women's identities.

RESISTANCE IN THE NOVEL

Seeing this full picture of oppression provokes in many readers a cry of outrage on behalf of Lee's Korean women, as well as the historical Korean women that the fictional *Pachinko* narrative was based on. Thankfully, Lee refuses to simply leave her characters within the complicated web of oppression that could easily define them. Instead, she fashions a narrative that allows Korean women to express their inner desires, provides them a modicum of resistance against Confucian patriarchy, and resultantly, recenters marginalized female voices in male-dominated spaces. In doing so, Lee also pushes against the homogenization of colonized women in literature and society today, emphasizing the need for third-world feminism to counter the universalizing measures of global feminism.[27] Important to understand, however, is that resistance, "far from being merely a reaction

[27] Lee explicitly expresses her desire for *Pachinko* to be viewed as a work of resistance. She writes, quoted by Joe Fassler, "*When will we see justice?*, we want to know. *When will we see fairness? When will things be okay?*... though there is so much evil, I want to believe in moral justice… goodness has the potential to rise out of the darkness that befalls us" (Fassler).

to imperialism" or patriarchy, "is an alternative way of conceiving human history" (Said "Resistance" 97). In other words, resistance often occurs as an act of retelling, or "[re]conceiving," the stories of "human history" that imperialism, colonization, and patriarchy skewed for their benefit. Lee adopts this strategy of resistance. Indeed, resistance in the novel does not look like Lee's women formally picketing patriarchy or colonization with signs lobbying for change in government—not that this did not happen historically. Instead, in *Pachinko*, resistance reveals itself as a redefinition of what it means to be a Korean woman. This mode of resistance subverts the erased, homogenized feminine ideal set up by Confucian nationalism by redirecting the power of individuality and self-definition back towards Lee's women. These attempts at resistance do not oppose every single structure of oppression within *Pachinko*; indeed, some forms of resistance within the novel seem complicit in other forms of oppression. However, this only accentuates the complexities of intersectionality and reminds readers that, oftentimes, resistance cannot be wholesale even as it is still effective. Enacted by both the characters and Lee's own narrative choices, these moments of resistance emphasize what Gary Okihiro terms "their recentering"—an inclusion of marginalized Asian women's desire, sexuality, and voice (66). In the end, this "recentering" pushes against some facets of the nexus of oppression facing Lee's women, takes back the agency and individuality such oppression stole, and proposes an agential, individual understanding of female identity.

First, Lee "recenters" her female characters by emphasizing and redefining their role within the Confucian family structure. Crucially, Okihiro begins "Recentering Women" by noticing that "Asian American history is replete with the deeds of men. Women constitute a forgotten factor in Asian American history. They have 'no name'" (65). Specifically, women's "no name" status occurs as a result of the Confucian family structure, a structure that rejects women from the family lineage and only identifies them "relative to men." It is this patriarchal family structure that Okihiro urges readers to "recenter women" into and resist against (65). Thus, "recentering women draws up a

chronology based upon the passages of individual women's lives" that counters the long-established androcentric chronology of father-son family histories while simultaneously underscoring the intersectionality and "complexity of social relations" (Okihiro 86, 91).[28] Essentially, it allows Korean women to "name" or define themselves within the center of traditionally male-dominated family structures. Lee adheres to this "recentering" model of resistance by crafting in *Pachinko* a matrilineage of women and their children in order to highlight her characters' pivotal yet silenced role within the family structure. *Pachinko* starts with an image of the traditional Confucian family with Hoonie as the head of the household, Yangjin his wife, and Sunja his daughter. However, the death of Hoonie disrupts their family structure by exemplifying a family, both in the domestic and public realms, run by Yangjin, a woman. Lee subsequently focuses the rest of her narrative (especially within the characters of Yangjin and Sunja) on the mother-daughter/mother-son relationships. These traditionally disruptive family chronologies are threatened by Hansu's insistent disregard for Sunja as Noa's mother. As Noa's father, Hansu feels it is his right to mentor and pay for Noa's life. Despite this, Lee powerfully "recenters" Sunja as mother usurping Hansu as father. After his wife passes away, Hansu approaches Sunja at her mother's funeral asking, "'Why do you have to be so cold? I thought you'd marry me now'" (422). Going further, Hansu, speaking of Noa who has passed away, declares, "'He was my only—'" (422). Sunja disallows him from finishing his assertion of fatherhood and instead both rejects his assumed access to her body— "I thought you'd marry me"—and insists that "'No, no, no. He was my son. Mine'" (422).[29] By denying Hansu's fatherhood, refusing to be his wife, and "recentering" and naming herself as the mother, Sunja

[28] Okihiro is clear that the work of "recentering women" is an intersectional one as is seen through the rest of the quoted citation: "recentering women underscores the complexity of social relations—the location, functioning, and challenging of power involve class, gender, and race, exemplified in the consciousness of an oppressed class as workers, as women, and as women of color" (91).

[29] Another example of Sunja using her denial of Hansu as a mode of feminist resistance is towards the beginning of *Pachinko* when she refuses to be his hidden mistress: "'I will never see you again,'" Sunja tells Hansu, once again displacing him from the family structure (49).

disturbs the Confucian family (father-son) structure while also protesting her traditional role as an erased and silenced member of the family. Instead, she vocally reinstates and centralizes herself as a mother— "He was my son. Mine." Thus, Sunja resists patriarchal dominance in the family structure and its assumed hierarchy over, and access to, female bodies.

Even as this recentering of motherhood enacts a feminist resistance against Confucian patriarchy, it seems to entrench Sunja into the national oppression of enforced motherhood. As Sunja declares "He was my son," she appears to complicitly assert her rights within the family only because of her status as a mother to a "son." However, far from challenging the legitimacy of Sunja's resistance against the father-son Confucian androcentrism, this complicity only draws attention to the complicatedness of intersectionality. Joe Parker, speaking on complicity and agency in local approaches to feminist studies, asserts that local "practices of resistance [are] often or perhaps inevitably complicit with patriarchy, capitalism, neocolonial white supremacy, and other problematic practices under advanced modernity, since complete freedom from such norms may well be impossible" (1). However, while resistance is "perhaps inevitably complicit," that does not make it less-than, less efficient, or less necessary. Indeed, as bell hooks reiterates, "we have all (irrespective of race, sex, or class) acted in complicity with the existing oppressive system" (164). Moreover, interrogating complicity showcases the ways that intersectional forms of oppression often disallow for a complete resistance measure. Here, this paper chooses to redirect the blame often associated with complicity and, instead, uses this acknowledgement of Sunja's complicity in enforced motherhood to "ope[n] up spaces and advocat[e] nuance," as Giuliana Monteverde urgers readers to do (101). Specifically, these nuances tie to local particularities of women's lives. Thus, recognizing the "nuance" of womanhood, even within discourses on complicity, corrects a fixed conception of women, especially that of intersectional women. Ultimately, then, Sunja's apparent complicity only

points to her humanity, the complicatedness of resistance for intersectional identities, and the desperate need for readers of *Pachinko* to contextualize complicity within the specificities of her life.

Going beyond a resistance against Confucian patriarchy in the family structure, Lee also "recenters" female identity by resisting the sexual silencing of her women. Correcting the Korean nation's elision of female desire and sexuality—and its insistence that women are "asexual vessels of fertility"—Lee frankly depicts sex in *Pachinko*. Some critics of the book negatively argue that "this book was really just about sex," and, more importantly, that it had "sex scenes with no apparent purpose" (Johnson). However, far from serving "no apparent purpose," the included sex scenes—at least those of Yangjin, Sunja, Kyunghee, Ayame, and even others not within the scope of this paper—all happen from the woman's third-person point of view. Effectively, this iterates the importance of female sexual experience even within the trivialities of daily life. Moreover, Lee "recenters" sexuality as a way to establish Korean women as humans. From Hansu and Sunja's first meeting in the public market, their relationship plays a prominent role in the story's unfolding events. Showcasing the complexities, contradictions, and multiplicities of female desire, Lee highlights Sunja's emotional and sexual feelings towards Hansu over the course of this relationship. As a girl, Sunja's inexperience and her society's inattentiveness towards female pleasure, autonomy, and desire make her vulnerable to Hansu's exploitation. Even so, sixty-years later when Hansu and Sunja meet again, Lee mentions that "Despite everything, she wanted him to desire her a little—this knowledge was embarrassing" (352). Allowing Sunja to feel complex emotions and "desire" towards Hansu, Lee complicates the one-dimensional sexuality afforded to women by Confucian patriarchy—a sexuality only aligned towards passivity, male desire, and childbirth. Here, Sunja's inconsistent and complex feelings illustrate her nuanced individuality. Through this, Lee demonstrates that perhaps the greatest "recentering" resistance against Confucian patriarchy is to

show Korean women as individual humans with nuanced sexualities instead of a stereotype to be utilized for national, economic, and male gain.

Moreover, although the sex scenes may not always accomplish a "purpose" in terms of plot, they rewrite the silencing narrative of homogenized sexuality that Confucius patriarchy pushes onto women. To do this, Lee employs a diverse Asian woman sexual experience that mirrors the methods promoted by other Asian artists today. For example, *XING* (2017), a photo book and online archive curated by Chinese Singaporean artist Elizabeth Lee, "explores the concept of Otherness whilst aiming to normalize and spotlight [East Asian] women, and their forms, to viewers" (Yeung). The photo book portrays a multiplicity of female sexuality by illustrating reimaged Asian erotic poses that play into the Orientalist gaze and subverting the binary, thereby polarizing archetypes traditionally available to Asian women: "the subservient housewife, the tea-serving geisha, the dragon lady, the ingenue schoolgirl" (Yeung).[30] In an interview with *Crack Magazine* about *XING*, the artist argues that "one of the most major, if not the most pressing issues of the representation and preconceptions of Asian women lies with sexuality. More often than not, the Asian female is either hyper-sexualised or hyper-desexualised" (Yeung). She finds that a countermeasure to this homogenized discourse is to notice that "as with all cultures, nuances are ubiquitous. Just as how all women refrain from adopting identical personalities," the same is true of Asian women's sexuality (Yeung). By representing multiple, varied forms of Asian sexuality and identity, Elizabeth Lee spotlights and argues for these "nuances" of female sexuality. Similarly, *Pachinko*'s sex scenes permit a glimpse of everyday, individual, and different Korean female sexuality that interrogates and destabilizes stereotypes about women from the Confucian male gaze. By exemplifying multiple sexual experiences from women's point of view, Lee presents complicated Asian female sexuality

[30] Importantly, Elizabeth Lee explains that, while the book only "explores a facet of East Asian female identity" and should not be considered a complete representation of Asian female sexuality, it does "aim to shift the perceptions of this group" (Yeung).

that refuses to be categorically uniform or stereotyped. Far from only being confined to the expectations of male desire, Lee's exploration of her female character's sexuality and sexual experiences centers their desires as important to the overarching narrative while also allowing them to be distinct and human. Ultimately, this showcasing of individuality within sexuality disrupts the normative heterosexuality idealized by Korean society and Korean nationalists, thus refashioning female sexual agency for *Pachinko*'s women.

Furthermore, true to Said's claim that resistance "is an alternative way of conceiving human history," or the history of female intersectional oppression in this case, Lee's female characters showcase "an alternative way" of defining Korean womanhood. Throughout the novel, Lee's women iterate the connection between their identity as a woman and a sufferer. To cite again, this claim is first made by Yangjin to Sunja: "'Sunja-ya, a woman's life is endless work and suffering. There is suffering and then more suffering'" (27). However, by the end of the novel, Sunja questions this definition. After meeting her grandson's girlfriend, Sunja thinks, "Her mother used to say a woman's life was suffering but that was the last thing she wanted for this sweet girl who had a quick, warm smile for everyone. If she didn't cook, then so what? If she took good care of Solomon, then nothing else should matter, though she hoped that Phoebe wanted children" (451). Instead of repeating harmful generational tropes that normalize female "suffering," Sunja asserts the Confucian feminine ideal was not that important— "If she didn't cook, then so what?" Indeed, by indicating that what matters most is "If she took good care of Solomon," Sunja shifts the focus from what Phoebe can do as a wife or mother to who she is as a person. Through this, Sunja reframes the previous female identification with suffering into an acknowledgement that suffering exists but that it should not be imposed on women or their identities. Moreover, Sunja redefines who she is as a woman. In the last few pages of the novel, Sunja dreams of Hansu and "the beach near her old home in Yeongdo" (476). Now awake, Sunja clarifies to herself, "It was not Hansu that she missed,

or even Isak. What she was seeing again in her dreams was her youth, her beginning, and her wishes—so this was how she became a woman" (476-77). By interpreting her dream in this way, Sunja recenters "her youth, her beginning, and her wishes" as what made her "a woman." Doing so disrupts the male-centered, suffering-centered definition of womanhood prescribed and perpetuated by Confucian patriarchy. Therefore, instead of continuing a problematic, limited understanding of female identity, Sunja reconceives her own history and future delineations of female suffering.

Additionally, Sunja, Yangjin and Kyunghee recenter a new feminine ideal of a working, unmarried, political woman opposed to the Confucius patriarchal ideal for Korean women. Near end of the novel, Yangjin, Sunja and Kyunghee start a new tradition: they gather with a dying Yangjin every evening to watch *Other Lands*, Yangjin's favorite television program. In the show, "the interviewer Higuchi-san, a spry, ageless woman with dyed black hair, traveled all over the globe and interviewed Japanese people who had immigrated to other lands" (412). Yangjin, Sunja, and Kyunghee "were devoted to [Higuchi-san]" and idealized her even though "the interviewer was no ordinary woman of her generation; she was unmarried, childless, and a skilled world-traveling journalist who could ask any intimate question" (412). Valorizing and uplifting an "unmarried, childless," "world-traveling journalist" permitted to "ask any intimate question," revises the silent, domestic-bound mother and wife model constructed by Confucian patriarchy and Korean nationalists. Moreover, Higuchi-san "was reputed to have Korean blood," which reframes her popularity and ability to speak publicly as even more important for its resistance against racial bias and discrimination (412).[31] Here, Higuchi-san speaks as a Korean in and for the Japanese government refuting the manufactured racial differences between Korean people and Japanese people and, instead, prompting a more heterogeneous understanding of Japanese identity. This places immigrant Korean women—Korean women the Japanese government dispossessed despite

[31] Wanting to denote the important act of speaking, Hazel Biana argues that "Speaking is an act of resistance" (22).

their long history in Japan—into the Japanese narrative. Thus, even though Yangjin, Sunja, and Kyunghee themselves cannot always resist their gendered or racialized oppression openly, their admiration of Higuchi-san as "no ordinary woman of her generation" and as a "Korean" woman defies Confucian patriarchy and racial oppression while proposing a new, ethical, and inclusive understanding of Korean womanhood.

As Lee makes space in *Pachinko* to recenter the Korean woman's voice, individuality, and integral identity in the Confucian family and larger national debates, she uses *Pachinko* to interrogate the homogenization of Asian women. As noticed at the beginning of this paper, universal conceptions of womanhood bolster singular categorizations of female identity that turn all women into a monolith. Because of the self-legitimization of Western feminist movements, this assumed monolith of women uses white Western women as its standard. Inherently, this marginalizes and de-legitimizes the experiences of non-white, non-Western women. Hazel Biana thus questions, "How can the marginalized transform silence into speech when the privileged speaks for them" (23). Similarly questioning, "Can the subaltern speak?" Gayatri Spivak denotes the inability for economically disadvantaged, intersectional women without lines of social mobility—her "subaltern"—to "speak" up for themselves and to their particular forms of oppression (32). In other words, how can Asian women speak to their own particular oppression when a Western identification of oppression and identity is imposed onto them?

Through *Pachinko*, Lee recenters these "subaltern," silenced voices, gives them a voice of their own, and, thus, reclaims their homogenized identities. In an interview, Lee notes that *Pachinko* works to make readers "participate in the struggles of people like Sunja… as you begin to care about her husband, about the fate of her children—all of a sudden, these people you're reading about are not just 'some Koreans,' a faceless group of politically oppression immigrants in Japan. They're *people*" (qtd. in Fassler). The specification that "They're *people*" requires an acknowledgement that

Lee's characters are not simply a category, an item, or even an historical anomaly easily forgotten but, instead, part of a complicated humanity. This affords them subjectivity and a powerful voice that a restrictive view of women disallows. Lee continues, emphasizing,

> I think literature is especially good at awakening that part of our capacity [empathy]. It's one of the few things that can really convince human beings to view each other as human beings. We're so willing to dehumanize entire populations in order for us to conveniently go along with our lives. We know exactly one North Korean, for example. The rest of them, we don't know—but it makes it very easy to bomb North Korea if we pretend they're all one person. (qtd. in Fassler)

Again, as Lee denotes, *Pachinko*'s opens readers' eyes to the multiplicity of Korean people, but most especially women, which counters a "dehumanize[ation]" of these people. Indeed, Lee concurs with Said, who argues that "No one today is purely *one* thing" ("Resistance" 98). Thus, by recentering a heterogenous group of Korean women, the novel illuminates that these women—despite shared oppression—are not "purely *one* thing."

CONCLUSION

This depiction of individual, varied, intersectional femininity and sexuality reminds readers of *Pachinko* how noticing the differences between women worldwide functions to strengthen feminist resistances instead of detracting from them. As universal claims of "sisterhood" exemplify, "the need for unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity" between groups of women (Lorde 857). However, this form of homogenized "unity" comes at the cost of a full recognition of women, their identities, and the oppressions that, sadly, constrain these identities. Claims of universality thus sabotage more complete and specific resistances to complicated and interrelating structures of oppression. As Biana argues,

> Individuals who fight for the eradication of sexism without supporting struggles to end racism or classism undermine their own efforts. Individuals who fight for the eradication of racism or classism while supporting sexist oppression are helping to maintain the cultural basis of all forms of group oppression. While they may initiate successful reforms, their efforts will not lead to revolutionary change. (18)

Here, "successful reforms" that "lead to revolutionary change" target not just one type of oppression or marginalization but recognize the intersectionality of both oppression and resistance. Indeed, an image of interrelating structures of identity that cannot simply be subsumed, unattended, or isolated from each other emerges. Just as "the eradication of sexism" also addresses racism and classism, so too does gender necessarily interact with race and class. This understanding that the facets of one's identity impacts experiences with oppression and resistance points towards an essential redefinition of "unity." Instead of prescribing the homogenous categorization and simplification of women, "unity" for feminism must mean an acceptance and recognition of local, intersectional differences between identities. As Lorde affirms, "Ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women's joint power" (856).[32] Accordingly, "differences" caused by race, class, history, or other factors of positionality "between women"—these intersectional, locally specific facets of identity—must not be forgotten. Instead, highlighting these aspects of life that make women unique subjects rather than objects allows for "solidarity" and "women's joint power" without leaving some women's voices behind.

Moreover, Asian women particularly stand to benefit from intersectionality and the redefined unity that comes with it. As mentioned above, there are gaps in the ways that race, gender,

[32] Or, to put it simply, "Valuing differences and complexities can lead to political solidarity" (Biana 23). Additionally, as Crenshaw notes, "feminism must include an analysis of race if it hopes to express the aspirations of non-white women" (166).

and sexuality are approached in discourses centering Asian women. Thus, it is critical to spotlight works like *Pachinko* which emphasize the complexity and intersectionality of Asian women in order to rectify this oversight and erasure. With the release of Apple TV's television show based on *Pachinko*, such issues of Asian female recognition and representation become even more important. Promised to be cinematographically immersive as it dramatizes the lives of Yangjin, Sunja, Kyunghee, Ayame, and other Korean women and their families, the series features strong Asian actresses like the Oscar winner, Youn Yuh Jung (playing an older Sunja); Jung Eun-chae (playing Kyunghee); and Min-ha Kim (playing a younger Sunja). While the show releases 25 March 2022, which disallows a full investigation of its handling of intersectional identities, oppression, and resistance in this essay, popular entertainment sources already name the show as "an educational, sweeping saga (about culture, history, politics, romance, and lineage)" (Gajjar). Taking such an "educational" approach to the adaptation of Lee's novel, then, creates a space on a world-wide platform through which the lives of Korean women can be emphasized as significant and relevant.[33] Moreover, the series' desire to speak to the "culture, history, politics, romance, and lineage" of Korea and Korean people allows an emendation to the too-often skewed perception of Korean women perpetuated by stereotypes of Asian women in today's culture. Finally, if the show does justice to the novel, as many critics assert, it will be particularly "educational" on the various oppressions that Korean women have faced and the resistances they have employed. Such a re-telling of *Pachinko* re-emphasizes the fact that Asian voices—specifically women's voices—matter and have relevance to a Western reader and viewer. Indeed, it begins to correct Lee's opening claim in the novel that "History has failed us" by giving Asian female identities universal recognition without eliding the specifics of those identities (1).

[33] I say "world-wide" for several reasons. First, Apple TV is available in over 106 countries across North American, Latin American, the Caribbean, Europe (including Russia), Central Asia, and Africa. Secondly, the series itself caters to a varied audience by having subtitles in Korean, Japanese, and English with dubs in other languages as well.

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