

Afterword

As I researched this book, a number of new writers and several new social movements found their way into the limelight. In the literary world, just as Yū Miri had become a familiar face in the Japanese mass media, her contemporary Kaneshiro Kazuki made a splash with *GO* (2000), for which he won the most coveted prize for popular fiction, the Naoki, and which was made into a highly commercially and critically successful movie (2001). Some identified this work as heralding a new generation of Zainichi literature, not only because of its stance toward citizenship, ethnicity, and being in and belonging to Japan, but also because of its hip romanticism: it's a love story. In the political arena, some activists continued to demand postwar reparations, but more and more of them devoted their energy to legal struggles by noncitizens to work for the government, to vote, and to stand in local elections.¹

Citizenship, in other words, became *the* issue on everyone's mind. As I take a quick peek into the turn-of-the-century discourse surrounding this topic, I will reflect on how it reinforces the main points I have been putting forward in this book: that if we do not wish to oversimplify the emergence and evolution of Resident Korean identity between the mid-1960s and the turn of the century, we need to (1) closely track politics and liter-

ature and their parallel development and frequent productive cross-fertilization, (2) take life narratives as being central to identity formation, and (3) examine the degree to which this process is gendered and sexualized.

I will start with the political realm. In the mid-1980s, certain municipalities began to allow foreigners to hold certain government positions. For example, they became postal employees and nurses and in 1991 were accorded the right to become full-time educators. A number of cases, however, set a legal precedent of excluding aliens from any employment that put them in a position of “exercising the authority of the nation” or “participating in decision-making for the state,” or, in the case of municipalities, of “contributing to decision-making for the local community.”² In practice, this meant that foreigners were barred from certain jobs, particularly any with managerial responsibility. In 1996, the Home Affairs Ministry decided that decisions about these matters should be left to the municipalities but reinforced the aforementioned restrictions.³

In a landmark case in 1997, Japan’s Supreme Court, although it upheld the above conditions, decided that certain managerial positions in municipalities did not bear any direct relation to state power. The city of Tokyo had denied Chōng Hyang-gyun, a nurse who made home visits, the right to take the exam to enter a management-level position. When her case made it to the Supreme Court, it ruled that this action was unconstitutional because it denied the guarantee of legal equality under the law and of the freedom of occupational choice. It demanded that the city pay damages and permit her to take the exam.⁴ Although in one sense this was a victory, the decision upheld the limit on the sort of employment available to permanent resident aliens.

In the arena of electoral rights, progress was much slower. After Mintōren made local voting rights an objective in 1988, many cases worked their way through the courts, all unsuccessfully. Beginning in 1993, various municipalities began to demand that permanent residents be given the right to vote in local elections, and in 1995, the Supreme Court ruled that it was not unconstitutional for resident foreigners to vote. This ruling did not, however, result in any concrete changes, because at the same time, the court deemed that neither was it unconstitutional for localities to deny aliens suffrage. Indeed, it added that further laws would need to be passed before noncitizens could actually vote.⁵ The govern-

ment began to seriously consider enacting such legislation after South Korean President Kim Dae Jung specifically asked Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō to consider the matter when he visited Japan in October 1998. In a visit to South Korea in March 1999, Obuchi responded that he would make a decision on the matter pending studies being conducted by the Liberal Democratic Party and by a Diet panel.⁶ Other political parties have already adopted recommendations calling for local voting rights for foreigners. For his own part, then President Kim Dae Jung vowed to have similar laws implemented in South Korea.⁷ In 2002, a town in Shiga prefecture was the first to allow permanent foreign residents to vote in a referendum.⁸ Since then, other municipalities have followed suit. In addition, by 2003, a Mindan survey found that roughly 45 percent of local governments had adopted resolutions requesting that the national government grant voting rights to permanent residents.⁹

Such testing of the boundaries of citizenship is not unique to Japan but is rather a worldwide phenomenon. A number of European countries have begun granting resident foreigners local suffrage, and in 1999, Germany, which like Japan has historically been known as a country closed to immigration, changed its nationality laws to allow long-term resident aliens the ability to become German citizens. Concepts of nationality, citizenship, and ethnicity as well as the words we use to designate them of course differ from country to country and language to language. At least since the inception of the modern era, however, these notions and terms have been molded within global political, economic, and cultural networks. This is all the more true today with the increase in speed of the dissemination of information. Lawsuits challenging the meaning of national citizenship, such as those I have cited above, have been influenced not only by the direct relationship between South Korea and Japan, but also by the rest of the world. Activists in Japan learn from activists elsewhere—if not by meeting in person, then from reading about their efforts. Those working within the Japanese state and its localities also worry about how they will appear before the other countries of the world.¹⁰ It is not insignificant that many of the details I have cited above are noted in reports issued by the U.S. Department of State.¹¹ We need to take note of the fact, however, that many of the changes have been initi-

ated and effected locally, particularly in certain areas, such as the city of Kawasaki.¹²

Another example of the resistance to taking on Japanese citizenship can be seen in the case of Chŏng Yang-yi, an activist and schoolteacher who became a citizen as a child, after his father filed an application for the whole family. He so strongly objects to being a citizen that he refuses to inflict the same on his children and thus has not legally registered their births. The procedure of naturalization is what angers him the most: when becoming a citizen of Japan, people have been forced (or coaxed) to take on Japanese names. Chŏng, in fact, was of the first of several naturalized Japanese citizens to file lawsuits demanding to be allowed to legally adopt Korean names. In 1982, he and several others began to hold study meetings and, in 1985, banded together in a group called *Minzokumei o torimodosu kai* (Association to Regain Ethnic Names). In 1987, one member of the organization won his suit, and others, including Chŏng, followed in his path. Even after its core members achieved their objective, the group continued to work to help others do the same.¹³

Although the law now enables people with Japanese citizenship to have non-Japanese-sounding names, few have opted to take the same route as Chŏng and the members of his group. Chŏng understands this fact, noting that among the roughly ten thousand Resident Koreans naturalized each year, few go against the government's entreaty to them to take on Japanese names. Indeed, many Koreans—even those with South Korean citizenship or Chōsen status—use a Japanese name in some aspect of their lives. A newspaper article from 1998 observes that more than 90 percent of Korean students use Japanese names.¹⁴ But it is not just children: I recall my shock (early in my research) when I stopped by an apartment building housing employees of Sōren and saw that most of the mailboxes had both Japanese and Korean names.

As a consequence of this state of affairs, Chŏng argues, the emphasis should be not on pointing out to such people that they have “betrayed” their people, but rather to propose ways that they might nonetheless preserve a sense of their ethnic background. Pak Il, a university professor whom I heard speak on a panel with Chŏng in 1995, argues that even if Zainichi Koreans no longer ate Korean food or observed Korean customs,

they should at the very least make certain that either first or last name is Korean.¹⁵ Only thus can they assure that the presence of people of Korean heritage not become invisible.

Although the Chōngs and the Paks of the Zainichi community insist on the importance of acknowledging the increasing numbers of people naturalizing each year, they do not advocate taking on Japanese citizenship. They rather stress that it is possible to become legally Japanese and yet to resist assimilating; but even this is not their ideal. Rather, they advocate preserving both Korean cultural attributes and some form of Korean citizenship (either South Korean or Chōsen). In this they are of a like mind with other circles of people who strongly identify as Korean, for whom naturalizing is still taboo. The Japanese edition of *Newsweek* in 2004, in an article in the issue with a cover reading “Korian Japaniiizu: Shizentai de ikiru ‘nyū Zainichi’ ga Nihon o motto hippu ni suru” [Korean Japanese: The “New Zainichi,” Living Naturally, Make Japan More Hip], not only notes the continued pressure by officials to take on a Japanese name when naturalizing, but also acknowledges the continued shame for Koreans who do decide to become Japanese.¹⁶ According to one person it quotes, “They say that in America people celebrate when they naturalize; most Zainichi do so secretly. There’s nothing to celebrate.”¹⁷

At one point in my stay in Japan, as I was beginning to figure out the degree to which those I met were averse to taking on Japanese citizenship, I asked an activist friend whether she would consider becoming a Japanese citizen on any condition. She replied that if Japan both changed the naturalization system to make the procedure automatic for those who, like Resident Koreans, have permanent resident status as a result of being descendants of people who came to Japan when their place of origin was a colony, and if it adequately educated its people about its history, she would cease to have objections to becoming a Japanese citizen. Japan is a long way from actually doing so, however, she observed ruefully.

In fact, she and her whole family did undertake a change in citizenship while I knew them. The shift, however, was not from Korean to Japanese, but from Chōsen status to South Korean citizenship. Indeed, in addition to the 10,000 or so Koreans becoming naturalized Japanese each year, thousands of people are making this switch.¹⁸ No doubt this trend is in part the result of the changing economic and political situations of South

and North Korea, which in turn we must see as tied to global transformations. People have begun to recognize that North Korea's political system is oppressive and its people are starving, and that the "Little Tiger" South is no longer the military dictatorship it was for decades. In addition, surely many have grown weary as they have become aware of the unlikelihood of Korean reunification and the inconvenience of holding Chōsen status.

Interestingly, Ri Kaisei also recently become a citizen of the South, something the Ri we learned about in Chapter 2 would never have done. Clearly, Ri has changed with the times. He now openly calls Resident Koreans a "minority" and likens their position to that of minorities elsewhere.¹⁹ When he gave up his Chōsen status in 1998, he published a lengthy explanation in *Shinchō* [New Tide], a literary journal that often carries his fiction.²⁰ The main justification he supplied for his choice was that he had decided that he wanted to contribute to the ongoing political democratization of South Korea.

Sadly, not long thereafter, he was attacked by the slightly older Zainichi author Kim Sōk-bōm in the left-leaning political magazine *Sekai* [The World].²¹ Ri responded in the same journal a few months later, and Kim, once more after a few more months had passed.²² The tone of these articles — particularly the first by Kim and the second by Ri, which are written as letters — is venomous. Each not merely disagrees with the other's political stance, but accuses the other of misrepresenting factual details. In fact, the exchange grew so mean-spirited that in his final piece, Kim observes that *Sekai* had received a barrage of letters from readers and he himself a number of phone calls from friends telling him that they were disappointed, that it looked bad for Zainichi Koreans to be airing their dirty laundry in this manner.

Nonetheless, there is a real argument being hashed out here, and I think it's important to note the degree to which these issues still evoke emotional responses among Resident Korean intellectuals. Kim Sōk-bōm accents the fact that "Chōsen" designation is not equivalent to North Korean citizenship. Although some who hold it are affiliated with Sōren, and some (but not all) of those people do support the North, for others, keeping this status enables one to identify as Korean without allying oneself with either government on the peninsula. If Japan established official

diplomatic relations with the North and Resident Koreans were forced to choose between Northern and Southern citizenship, he claims that he would refuse to do so. He holds this would be the most desirable plan of action.

He expands on this a bit, imagining a scenario in which people like himself become “stateless refugees” and even eventually are able to forge some sort of new citizenship that allows them to travel freely to both North and South.²³ Ri criticizes him of being unrealistic, utopian. Although I do not wish to vilify utopianism in and of itself, I do see Kim as effectively cutting himself off from the ability to change any of the states whose laws govern the way he lives. I respect Ri Kaisei’s decision to become a South Korean citizen; I now wonder when politically inclined Zainichi Koreans will take the even more practical step of fighting for the right to choose Japanese citizenship.

But what do the “new” Zainichi authors, such as Yū Miri or Kaneshiro Kazuki, have to say about this? The work of Yū Miri not only explores deep-seated problems of Japanese society that have nothing to do with Koreans per se but also challenges the state to develop policies to eradicate them. In so doing, I would argue, she makes clear to readers the degree to which Resident Koreans are already involved in Japan’s politics, whether or not they have the right to vote. I therefore take the success of her work to be a positive sign. It compels readers to ask whether it is really fair to see permanent resident aliens as “foreigners” in any true sense, and whether it is therefore fair to exclude them from the political process.

Yet although Yū clearly sees herself as committed to Japan, she has not naturalized herself. Is this perhaps because of the taboo against naturalization that persists in the Zainichi community? We remember that Yū has called herself “neither Korean nor Japanese,” but in a conversation with Ri Kaisei in April 1997, not long after she won the Akutagawa prize, she said that she was “grateful that [her] father didn’t naturalize.” She continued, “Being caught between Japan and South Korea, that is, being in a situation that I had to consider, has been useful for me as a writer, I think. I’m not thinking of naturalizing. There may be various burdens I have to bear as a result, but I want to bear those. I really don’t want to run away.”²⁴ Although her justification for choosing to remain a South Korean citizen has a somewhat different nuance from historically more

common assessments of naturalization as assimilation and thus betrayal, I do sense a hint of that form of reasoning. She also associates Resident Koreanness with hardship, a view prevalent thirty years ago that has since receded into the background. Becoming Japanese, she implies, would make life too simple and would make her inclined to forget the tumultuous history of Koreans' presence in Japan.

However, Yū's story gets more complicated when we follow her to into 1999, the year she gave birth, out of wedlock, quite publicly, to a son. In her phenomenally popular work *Inochi* [Life, 2000], in which she tells of her experience of becoming a mother, Yū recounts her decision to acquire Japanese citizenship for her son, whose father (a married man with whom Yū had an affair) is Japanese.²⁵ She tells of the hassles she goes through to have the man officially declare paternity before the child's birth, because if he waited until after the birth, the child would have to take on his father's last name (95–104). She expresses her anger at the fact that it is up to the man to decide the citizenship of a child born between a Korean woman and a Japanese man (104). "I think it's more severe discrimination than local voting rights," she adds, "so why aren't Mindan or other Zainichi political groups bringing it up? It's got to be because it's a culture that is ashamed of the very women who face this sort of problem" (104). She then notes that she decided not to respond to any of the requests to speak to the Korean press, because she knew that it was likely she would be labeled a traitor to her country.

It's not entirely clear in the book, but it seems that Yū justifies taking on Japanese citizenship for her child only because he is half Japanese by "blood." In 2001, in an interview about the third book in her autobiographical series, she discusses the uproar caused when she decided to wear a kimono to her son's first visit to a Shintō shrine, in and of itself an action some Zainichi Koreans might find traitorous, whatever her attire. She is up front about her increasing ambivalence about her citizenship:

Giving my son Japanese citizenship forced me, as his mother, to consider whether there was a basis for me to refuse to give up my own Korean citizenship. It's strange to hold on to your citizenship if you have no intent at all to learn the language, so — even though I don't know how long it will take — I decided to try to learn Korean. I'm also reading South Korean history textbooks and general Korean histories.

In my own family . . . Japanese culture held a much more prominent place so for us kids nothing that you could call Korean culture really stayed with us.

[Now] I'm making a conscious effort to learn the [Korean] language, and I'm going to decide whether to keep Korean citizenship or to change to Japanese citizenship.²⁶

This is a groundbreaking stance to take. I find it fascinating that motherhood was the experience that pushed her to come to it.

Kaneshiro Kazuki's *GO*, too, despite the author's ROK passport, has a view of citizenship and belonging that puts its author in the category of the hip "new Zainichi." The author describes himself on the cover of the first edition of the book as, in Japanese phonetic writing, "Korean Japanese." The cover also bears a line from the book: "No soy coreano, ni soy japonés, yo soy desarraigado." The phrase actually comes from the protagonist's father, but it applies to the thoughts of the son as well.

Although the book never advocates naturalization, from its very opening, we see that it has something to say about citizenship. It begins with Sugihara, the protagonist narrator, telling us about how his parents changed their citizenship from Chōsen (the "Korea" designation) to the ROK in order to more easily take a trip to Hawaii over their winter vacation. The narration is sarcastic: "I guess I need to explain a bit more. Why did my father, who was born in Chejudo, part of South Korea, have Chōsen citizenship? And why did he need to change his citizenship to South Korean to go to Hawaii? The story's boring, so I'll try not to go on too long. I'd like to mix in a bit of humor, but it might be kind of hard" (7).

As I said before, however, the serious stuff is made palatable with romance. The cover advertises *GO* not only as about ethnic identity, but also as a tale of love: "Me: I fell totally, completely, in love. The girl: Super cute, and Japanese," and by the second chapter, we see this to be true. All the while, we learn of Sugihara's adjustment to his switch from a Korean (Sōren) school to a Japanese one (he literally fights his way into acceptance), and his battle of will and of fists with his old-fashioned *pachinko* parlor-employed and former boxer father.

Even so, at the novel's center is the hero's burgeoning relationship with the very middle-class beauty whom he meets in Chapter 2. We (and he)

know only by her last name, Sakurai. The climax of this plotline comes when, about two-thirds of the way through the novel, the hero and his girl are about to have sex for the first time. It is only at this time that he confesses his Korean identity, claiming that he had not brought it up because he did not think it mattered. She responds: "Why didn't you say anything till now? If you didn't really think it was a big deal, then you should have said something" (181). She shrinks back from him, having been told by her father never to date a Korean or a Chinese because of their tainted blood. He leaves. So no climax after all. When they meet again after a long separation, he asks what he is, and she says she has learned that he is a Zainichi Kankokujin (South Korean resident in Japan). He angrily retorts:

Sometimes I want to kill every one of you, you Japanese. How can you so call me a "Zainichi" without thinking twice? I was born and raised here, dammit. How dare you use the same language you use for people who've come from other places, like the "Zainichi" American Army or "Zainichi Iranians"! It's like you're saying I'm some foreigner who's going to leave some day. Do you get it? Had the thought ever even crossed you mind? . . .

But if you want to call me "Zainichi," go right ahead. You guys, you're afraid of me, right? If you don't analyze me and give me a name, you won't rest easy, right? But I don't have to accept it. It's just like "lion." Lions don't think of themselves as "lions." You just decided yourselves to give that name and act as if you know what a "lion" is. Just try coming close and calling me that name, I'll spring right at you and sink my teeth in your carotid and kill you. Do you get it? As long as you guys continue to call me "Zainichi," you'll be the ones being eaten up. Doesn't that bother you? I'll tell you. I'm not "Zainichi," I'm not South Korean, I'm not North Korean, and I'm not Mongoloid. Stop trying to put me into some neat little box. I'm ME. No, even that's no good. I want to be free even from having to be me. I'm going to look for something that lets me forget even that I'm me. I'll go wherever I have to. If I can't find it in this country, I'll leave, the way you all wish I would. You guys can't do that. You guys are trapped by the state, or land, or position, or convention, or tradition, or culture, or something. You'll die that way. Take a good look. I don't have any of that, so I can go anywhere I please. I can go whenever I want to. Doesn't that bother you? Doesn't it bug you at all? Shit. Why am saying this? Shit, shit, shit. (233-34)

But not to worry: by the end, all is well. She then says “those eyes” and goes on to tell him the story of how she first fell for him. He had thought that they met by chance, but she confesses that she engineered their meeting after seeing him getting in a fight at a high school basketball game, jump kicking the boys around him. Seeing the spirit in his eyes as he fought, she became sexually aroused. “Even now,” she tells him, “I’m wet. Do you want to feel for yourself?” (239). Then she adds: “I don’t care more what race you are. If you’ll just do that jump for me and give me that intense look once in a while, I wouldn’t even care if you couldn’t speak Japanese. Nobody can jump the way you do, and no one can give me that intense look the way you do” (239). Thus we see that the skill Sugihara not only gains acceptance in the Japanese school through violence, but that it is his hypermasculinity and fighting ability that get him the Japanese girl as well. It is through male heterosexual sexuality, indeed, that this book proposes a minority define his relationship to his identity. The Spanish quote on the cover comes through the voice of the father, responding to the son’s saying he’s going to run off to Norway, marry a pretty Norwegian girl, and have a half-Norwegian child. When he was young, he says, he wanted to become Spanish. Why? Because he heard that there were “lots of beauties” in Spain (97). Finally, when talking to an acquaintance who’s organizing a group of young Resident Koreans (regardless of affiliation) to discuss and work on Zainichi issues, he explains his desire not to join them by saying, “The reason I’m not going to change my citizenship is that I can’t stand the idea of being newly integrated into or swallowed up or strangled by the likes of a country. No more living dominated by the feeling that I belong to some big thing” (220). What’s interesting here, though is that he goes on to say, “But if Kim Basinger came up to me right now and said, ‘Change your citizenship. Please, for me,’ I’d file the application in a second” (221). He muses about the seeming contradiction of his stance but makes no attempt to resolve it. This, it seems, is what it means to be a new Resident Korean.

What is disturbing to me in all this is how little has changed. Why the obsession with using relationships with women to make a point about the level on which citizenship is and is not important? Why the gender- and class-stereotyped narrative (working-class fighting boy woos middle-class pretty girl) to tell the tale of boy’s finding his place as Korean in Japan?

As gratified as I am that *GO* may have brought many who might not otherwise have thought about these issues to do so, I continue to be bothered by the basic point of the narrative, that if a man, whatever his origin, is tough enough, he can be accepted into Japanese culture. This leaves homosexual men and women out of the loop. Romantic relations, particularly heterosexual ones, are powerful as fictional metaphors for integration into Japanese society. Obviously, in reality, they are powerful as well: a good many of the Resident Koreans who become Japanese citizens do so through marriage. Yet recalling Yū Miri's fate as described in *Life*, we must remember that women are put at a legal disadvantage. Her other work, with its attention to gender norms and sexual abuse, implies that they are at a social disadvantage as well. My point here is not to decry the writings of men like Kaneshiro or praise the Yū Miris of the world. Rather, I want to argue that we cannot understand ethnicity without examining it in its interaction with gender and sexuality.

I want to believe that someday the stories told by Resident Koreans will have the power to transform the way that all Japan's residents see their place in society. I hope that they will come to believe full citizenship should be granted to all Resident Koreans as a matter of course. But this will not suffice, because liberation and dignity depend equally on an honest and emotional engagement with history. To this end, schools must begin to teach children about Japan's past, including the dark era of colonialism. Yet even this would not be sufficient. A true commitment to history — that is to say, to the future — is surely evoked not only through an abstract and logical understanding of the world, but also through one that is complex, sometimes contradictory, and decidedly emotional. Culture generally and literature specifically play a crucial role in shaping the way we perceive our own place and the place of others in the world. For this reason, I believe that we must begin to understand and teach Resident Korean literature as an integrated part of Japanese literature. Indeed, many have already begun this task.²⁷ It is my fervent hope that my own efforts will contribute to this ongoing transformation of Japan and Japanese studies.