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What I have felt listening to the presentations over these three days, which is true for many of the presentations, or most of the presentations, is the clear use of the words “modern,” “modern culture,” or “modern literature” in Korea. The same is true for the theory of colonial modernization, but the impression was of saying “colonial era” within the framework of existing modernity. But is this really suitable? I have my own ideas personally on the true form of this modernity. Currently, there are many expressions used, such as “modernism,” “post-modernism,” “colonialism,” and “post-colonialism,” etc., but if we accept that modernity does not exist, the concept of “post-” also vanishes in that regard. Could it not be true that the existence of modernity is confirmed by the concepts of post-modernism and post-colonialism? For example, the term “modern Korean literature” did not exist when I was at university. Even today, China has not set upon a word for modern literature, but why should this be so? I think it might well be because the word “modern” carries a strong whiff of imperialism with it.

On the other hand, modern Korean literature makes abundant use of the methodologies of modern Japanese literature. For example, the focus on handwritten manuscripts or letters, scholarly societies and private scholarly societies, or the methods of creating anthologies, can be cited with an awareness of modern Japanese literature. Modern Korean literature is created in opposition to modern Japanese literature, or by being illuminated by modern Japanese literature, and there are doubts as to whether it actually exists. There is one sphere, which is called modern Japanese literature, and modern Korean literature is made in a format conforming to this. Which is to say, is the actuality of the concept of modernity axiomatic? In historical science, there are various statistics to describe modernity, and in reality there are schools, the police, and railroads. Normally, when handling modernity the idea has been that modernity exists because these systems exist. But does this really follow? What is the most important point, the inner side of the modernity? For example, there are the words “love” and “new women.” The words certainly exist, but just how much have they been internalized? This needs to be reviewed once again. Maybe, Korean modernity exists as a phantasm

or an illusion. For example, pro-Japanese literature was mentioned during the presentations, but pro-Japanese literature basically indicates something written in Japanese. Such works contain details of national polity, and so are pro-Japanese. Being written in Japanese is a huge deciding factor in being pro-Japanese. Currently, however, I am reexamining this problem from the viewpoint of passion and desire for the Japanese language. Which is to say, even on the question of the Japanese language in the colonies, several authors did not so much write in Japanese as that there was a huge number who supported Japanese literature. I surveyed aspiring Korean authors (writers) who were candidates for the Japanese-language first novel prize, and many of these Koreans had a passion or desire to write about themselves in Japanese, or to make some sort of appeal in Japanese. Of course, these were not forced, but free submissions. There is a mechanism for writing in Japanese among this class of people. If we ignore this mechanism and unilaterally cut this off as pro-Japanese literature, we must also at the same time cut off and throw away literary inwardness and the maturity of literature.

Further, there is the problem with pro-Japanese literature of “why write in Japanese?” In other words, is it to get ahead in your career as a pro-Japanologist, or is it *de rigueur*? Is it a problem internal to literature, or external to literature, or is there absolutely no literary inevitability in writing in Japanese? It is extremely difficult to discuss these questions introspectively, but there are authors who have addressed this very problem. The writer Kim Sung-Min cannot write in Korean as a literary issue. Why not? Herein lies a problem with the modern Korean language. Namely, in Korean there is an essential problem that modern novels do not hold water. Writing in Japanese is not simply a matter of national polity. It specifies linguistic problems; in other words the problems of language and inwardness. When I consider this, a modern language that agrees with the so-called colloquial form has a kind of modern language magnetic field, but in modern Korean (Han’gŭl), I think it was difficult to form such a magnetic field. I get the feeling that this situation was the same for Vietnamese. It seems that all of Southeast Asia—no, rather, imperial colonies—could not form this modern language magnetic field. What emerged as one problem from this is whether in the end modernity can be established in Korea, or whether modernity actually exists in the former

colonies. This is because of the suspicion that maybe, modernity in Korea exists as a phantasm and illusion. In which case, what exactly are the currently-fashionable post-modernism and post-colonialism? Surely a modernity that does not exist cannot be further strengthened? In other words, by setting the “post-,” what came before the “post-” cannot be strengthened. As seen in the modern age, such fashion strengthens colonialism, and this is linked to the production of neocolonialism, is it not? Asian countries today—and this is true for Vietnam, Southeast Asian countries, and Korea as well—have become caught up in a situation in which post-modernism and post-colonialism have to be set at the same time as creating “modernity” and “modern literature” from their lack of unique knowledge. The lines are being laid at a very fast pace. Independent development has become impossible. These conditions are accelerating even more. Today, in the case of China, there is no historical division as such between modern literature and modernity, and this is due to a unique kind of thinking in China. Amidst these Asian-style and worldwide globalizations, however, China will someday establish modern literature and temporal classification in the modern age, and use the idea of modernity from now on, which personally worries me.