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**Dissensus in/and Korean American Literature: Zainichi Identity  
in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko* (2017)**

**MA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

Fluid identities are becoming increasingly common in the American society. Much of contemporary American literature focuses on analysing the complex questions that have become relevant with the increasing visibility of multi- and transcultural identities. Korean American author Min Jin Lee's novel *Pachinko* is one such novel which comments on the expanding notion of transcultural identities by depicting ethnic Koreans living in Japan – the Zainichi people. This thesis aims to analyse the Zainichi identities with the help of Jacques Rancière's concepts of dissensus and distribution of the sensible to see if Lee's depiction of Zainichi identities brings dissensus into the sensible and redistributes the American literary field.

The introduction will provide the context for discussing *Pachinko* by providing information about multiculturalism, transculturality, and the context of Korean American history and the Zainichi. The literature review will give an overview of Rancière's ideas that are relevant for the thesis, focusing on dissensus and the distribution of the sensible. The literature review will also outline how Rancière's ideas have been used for studying postcolonial literature and how his concepts can be relevant for studying contemporary American multicultural literature. The second chapter will feature an analysis of the markers of identity that Lee uses in *Pachinko* to describe Zainichi identities. These include basic identity markers, spaces of identity, material identity markers and fluid identities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Today's world has increased communication between cultures and this has led to the erasure of sharp distinctions between ethnic groups and the emergence of different hybrid identities. As these hybrid identities are becoming more common, they are also often examined in contemporary literature. As the literary field overall, and more specifically American literature, becomes increasingly diverse, it is important to study how this can influence what is considered to be part of American literature and how American literary field can be redistributed. To analyse these topics, the concepts of the distribution of the sensible and dissensus, developed by French philosopher Jacques Rancière, can be useful, as Rancière's philosophy stresses the connection and tension between aesthetics and politics. The present thesis will test how well these terms can be adapted to the study of literary hybridity by analysing Korean American author Min Jin Lee's novel *Pachinko*.

Different terms have been developed to describe cultural hybridity, including multiculturalism and transculturality. Although transculturality and multiculturalism are often used interchangeably, they are distinct concepts (Benesaieh 2010: 12). According to Marotta (2014: 91) multicultural identity is characterised by fluidity and mobility between cultures. At the same time, cultures are seen as separate and relatively fixed, which has led to criticisms that instead of bringing communities together, multiculturalism enforces differences (Benesaieh 2010: 17; Marotta 2014: 92). This is closely connected to the claim that multiculturalism still relies on the existence of the "the host self and minority Other" (Morotta 2014: 92). While this can be understood in various ways, according to some it can lead to a situation where the minority identities are othered, with Phillips (2007: 25) arguing that under multiculturalism members of these groups are obligated to fit "into a regime of authenticity, denying them the chance to cross cultural borders, borrow cultural influences, define and redefine themselves."

For some scholars, like Welsch (1999) and Benesaieh (2010), transculturality develops the issues presented in multiculturalism. According to Benesaieh (2010: 25) transculturality applies to a situation where “people no longer perceive themselves under one single culture.” Benesaieh (2010: 29) sees transculturality as offering alternative ways to look at otherness. Instead of the host Self and minority Other dichotomy, transculturality maps the ways in which cultures mix and the power relations between them can be increasingly hard to identify (Benesaieh 2010: 17). Instead of fixed power relationships based on a single dominant culture, Benesaieh (2010: 17) stresses that in transculturality one culture is often just one among many others. Transculturality does not stress rigid differences between cultures and, rather, emphasises the connections between them (Benesaieh 2010: 11). As Welsch (1999: 198) argues, due to various physical and virtual movements, “there is no longer anything absolutely foreign,” which results in fluid movement between cultures. Benesaieh (2010: 26) notes that “individuals and communities are now developing the ability to continuously shift between cultural flows and worlds, and to compose a new sense of self that is not monoculturally ascribed.” A good example of that are second and third generation immigrants who do not identify with either the country of their ancestors or the country they were born in (Benesaieh 2010: 26). Instead, Benesaieh (2010: 27) notes that their identities are more fluid and often depend on the cultural context(s).

Multi- and transcultural identities are increasingly relevant in contemporary American culture. There is increasingly more of both physical and virtual movement and communication between the US and other countries and cultures. This is influenced by factors like deterritorialisation and fluidity between cultures (Dagnino 2015: 1). These broader processes are closely connected to the US immigration history in the second part of the twentieth century. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, greatly changed immigration in the US (Lee 2018: 21). The previously restrictive

national quotas were removed and replaced with “equal per-country quotas” (Lee 2011: 21). As a result, by the twenty-first century, the majority of new immigrants come from outside of Europe, from Latin America or Asia (Lee 2018: 24). This has greatly increased the Asian American population, from 980 thousand in 1960 to over 24 million in 2020 (Cohn and Passel 2022).

Asian American communities have different immigration histories. While Korean immigration history is similar to that of the Chinese and the Japanese, there are also distinct factors that affect this ethnic group. According to Jane Hong (2018: 5), Korean immigration to the US officially started at the beginning of the twentieth century when thousands of workers went to Hawaii to work at plantations. What was supposed to be a temporary stay to earn money and return to Korea, turned permanent for many after Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910 (Hong 2018: 5). After this, Korean people were also considered citizens of the Japanese Empire and prohibited to enter to the US (Hong 2018: 6).

Hong (2018: 11) notes that the Exclusion Era spans from 1924 to 1940 and during that time Korean immigration to the US came to a halt. Only people who belonged to the categories that were not excluded by the law were permitted to enter the country – visitors, students, and family members. The latter category included “picture brides” of Korean men who had already settled in the US before and who wanted to bring women from Korea to establish families (Hong 2018: 11). After World War II, Koreans were again able to migrate to the US and Hong (2018: 17) notes that during that period most of the migrants were women and children. After the Korean War, many children were adopted by families from the US (Hong 2018: 18).

During the second part of the twentieth century, starting with the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, Korean immigration starts to increase dramatically, with about 1 million people immigrating from Korea to the US between 1965 and 2009 (Lee 2018: 22). Lee (2018: 25)

also notes that in that period, South Korean government also encouraged migration because of overpopulation and unemployment, with the US as the most favoured destination (Lee 2018: 28-29). Lee notes that during this period there were two immigration trends – the continuing family immigration, and occupational immigration. As the Hart-Celler Act favoured educated and skilled people, most of the immigrants were also middle-class (Lee 2018: 31-32). The 1990 Immigration Act raised the immigration quota again but removed several exemptions for family members (Lee 2018: 37). After this, Korean immigration actually decreased in the late 1980s and 1990s (Lee 2018: 36). Lee (2018: 39) notes that since 2000, Korean immigration has started to increase, with occupational immigration becoming more common than family immigration.

As the US received more immigrants from non-European countries, this changed the nature of immigrant experience represented in American literature. American literary field has become increasingly multicultural, with authors like Caton (2007: 1) questioning the existence of a unified canon of American literature. The changing immigration flows have led to the development of various diaspora communities, including Korean Americans, who have also started to produce literary works. What could be called Korean American literature only found its footing in the second half of the twentieth century when many multicultural writers rose to prominence in the US (MacGowan 2011: 32). This wave included some Korean American authors like Richard E. Kim and Chang Rae-Lee. The increasing popularity of Korean culture through K-pop, K-dramas, and K-beauty in the past decade has drawn renewed attention to Korean Americans and their culture. While the early Korean American writing, mostly concerned the authors' immigration experiences, was already published in the 1920s and 1930s (Kim 2004: 3, Park 2018: 108), Korean American literature has only reached the peak of its popularity in recent years. Notable Korean American authors include Steph Cha who won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for her 2019 novel *Your House Will Pay* and

Jenny Han whose books from *To All the Boys* novel series published from 2014-2017 were *New York Times* bestsellers and were adapted to a film series on Netflix.

One of the most popular recent Korean American novels is Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*. The novel was published in 2017 and has received both critical and commercial attention. It was a *New York Times* bestseller and also featured in many critics' lists of best books of the year and the decade. The book was also nominated for several awards, including the National Book Award. The book is also in the process of being adapted into a television series, the first season of which aired in 2022. In their reviews critics have generally focused on the wide historical scope of *Pachinko*, and issues of identity, nationality, and resiliency.

It is notable that Lee's book is neither set in the USA nor does it feature Americans and their identity struggles. Instead, *Pachinko* is also the first novel published about Zainichi Koreans in English (Yi 2022: 399), bringing a new topic into both Asian American and American literature overall. The term Zainichi is often used to denote only the Korean immigrants who arrived in Japan during the period of Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945) and their descendants, with newer Korean immigrants excluded from that category (Kim 2011: 233). While during the Japanese occupation of Korea, Zainichi Koreans were considered Japanese citizens, they were deprived of the citizenship in 1952 and have to still apply for the legal status of 'special permanent residents' (Kim 2011: 235). Kim (2011: 235-236) notes that as most Zainichi Koreans were born in Japan and at this point there are second, third or fourth generation Japanese residents, they are in many ways indistinguishable from Japanese people because they speak only Japanese, have gone to Japanese schools, and have otherwise integrated into Japanese culture. Kim (2011: 236) points out that the main aspect that marks their descent is their Korean-sounding name, but some Zainichi Koreans also use a Japanese name (*tsūmei*) in their everyday life to avoid discrimination and to pass for Japanese.

Zainichi identity has been described as ‘transnational’ (e.g., González-Lario 2017), which makes it possible to analyse their experience from the perspective of transculturality.

Lee’s choice of writing about Zainichi Koreans and setting the book in Korea and Japan brings attention to questions that come up as American literature becomes more multi- and transcultural. Jay (2001: 33) notes that British and American literatures are closely tied to globalisation. This means that when studying these literatures, it is essential to recognise the various cultural contexts and histories that inform them (Jay 2001: 33). Additionally, Jay (2001: 33) argues that globalisation has also changed the role of the English language in literature: “literature is becoming defined less by a nation than by a language, in which authors from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds write.” As an effect of globalisation, Jay claims that it has a “potential for disrupting traditional nationalist paradigms for literary study.” Thus, according to Jay (2001: 38), as people move more and have connections with various cultures and languages, it is possible that the traditional understanding of American literature and how it is studied is going to change. This challenge expands to all literatures written in English. Writing over fifteen years later, Caton (2007: 2) points out that American identity is also constantly being rewritten to include more diversity. The present thesis explores one case of expanding the notion of transcultural identity.

Lee’s novel can be viewed as a re-examination of whether and how Asian (or any) identity outside of the US can be relevant in American literature. Lee (2017: 546) has noted that as she is a first-generation immigrant, *Pachinko* is also to an extent inspired by her own experiences. The complex cultural connections featured in *Pachinko* explore the topic of multicultural and transcultural identities and how they are depicted in culture, including literature. Dagnino (2013: 5) notes that while multiculturalism has been an important concept for studying difference, it has ultimately led to the overemphasising of differences between

cultures. Dagnino's definition is useful because it emphasises the tension in transcultural literature:

...transcultural literature literary works engage with and express the confluent nature of cultures overcoming the different dichotomies between North and South, the West and the Rest, the colonizer and the colonized, the dominator and the dominated, the native and the (im)migrant, the national and the ethnic. (Dagnino 2013: 3)

Dagnino's (2013: 5) understanding of transcultural literature does not reject the power relationships present in these dichotomies but offers a way of seeing the often very complex relations between them. Dagnino (2013: 5) argues that in literature, this results in overcoming ethnic and national boundaries to explore the possibility of more fluid identities. Dagnino (2013: 3) also notes that there are several factors that can undermine transcultural literature, for example market conditions, that is what is published, translated and distributed. Dagnino (2013: 7) argues that the literary world is still dominated by Anglo-American culture, as publishing houses play a large role in making a writer internationally well-known and book reviews are also "concentrated in the metropolitan centres of the West." Despite this, Dagnino (2013: 3) concludes that transcultural literature is becoming increasingly significant and that "(im)migrant literature has recently started to be addressed under a transcultural perspective." This aspect is also relevant in marketing, where transcultural authors are often marketed as "ethnicized" and their books feature "transnational settings" (Dagnino 2013: 7).

This thesis builds on the idea of the continuing redistribution of the American literary field and aims to look at *Pachinko* in that context by using the ideas of French philosopher Jacques Rancière. Rancière's concepts of the distribution of the sensible (*le partage du sensible*) and dissensus offer an opportunity to show how *Pachinko* uses various identity markers to signify the Zainichi characters' identity and how other identity markers change to show the fluidity of identity. There have been some studies (Vallury: 2014; Brauer: 2019) about Rancière and postcolonial literature, but the present thesis hopes to add to that

discussion by looking at how Rancière's concepts can be used to study American multi- and transcultural literature.

The main aim of the thesis is to see if and to what extent Rancière's concepts can be used in such literary analysis. To do this, the following chapter elaborates on Rancière's concepts of dissensus and the distribution of the sensible. The chapter also features an overview of the use of Rancière's concepts for the study of postcolonial literature and a brief discussion of the possibilities of using Rancière to study American multicultural literature and how the literary field can be analysed through the notions of the distribution of the sensible and dissensus. The empirical analysis will look at identity markers that Lee uses for Zainichi characters and how some of these markers are adapted as the characters move between different identities. The analysis will examine if these fluid identities manage to bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible as it is described in the book.

## 1. JACQUES RANCIÈRE AND THE FIELD OF CULTURE

Since publishing his first book *Reading Capital* with Louis Althusser and others in 1965, Rancière's work has focused on the connection between politics and aesthetics. Rancière's understanding of this is influenced by Marxism, more specifically, his work often engages with the philosophy and ideas of his former teacher Althusser but develops them further in several important ways.

In his work Rancière assumes the fundamental equality of all actors, and as his theory offers a new way to look at the connection and tension between politics and aesthetics, it can also be used to analyse this constant tension in literature. This chapter gives an overview of the main ideas of Rancière's philosophy that are relevant to this thesis. The main focus is on his two concepts – distribution of the sensible and dissensus. The chapter will analyse Rancière's understanding of literature, its connection to politics, and how it has been used for studying postcolonial literature. The chapter ends by linking these concepts to American multicultural literature.

### 1.1. Dissensus

The concept of dissensus plays a central role in Rancière's understanding of both politics and aesthetics. In his definition of politics Rancière (2011: 3) opposes himself to Hannah Arendt who argues for the separation of politics and other areas of life. In contrast, Rancière (2011: 3) sees connections between politics and the social, economic, and domestic spheres. Rancière (2011: 4) notes that politics happens "when the boundary separating the political from the social or the public from the domestic is put into question." For example, Rancière (1999: 32-33) argues that the domestic household is a political space "not through the simple fact that power relationships are at work in it but because it was the subject of

argument in a dispute over the capacity of women in the community.” While according to Rancière (1999: 32), “nothing is political in itself”, and it is possible for different events to “give rise to politics”:

A strike is not political when it calls for reforms rather than a better deal or when it attacks the relationships of authority rather than the inadequacy of wages. It is political when it reconfigures the relationships that determine the workplace in its relation to the community. (Rancière 1999:32)

According to Rancière, it is important to bring attention to how workers and their workplace, such as their expected roles and what is considered to be a deviation from these roles and why, are seen in the community. Therefore, the same events can either give rise to politics or not – events like strikes and protests are not inherently political in themselves but they bring attention to the tension between the hierarchical police logic and the egalitarian logic of politics (Rancière 1999: 32).

For Rancière (2011: 3), politics is closely connected to equality. In Rancière’s (1999: 33) opinion, equality is an assumption that needs to be constantly proven. This can happen through events like protests, with Rancière often giving movements like Occupy Wall Street as an example of enforcing and proving equality. Rockhill (2004: 86) notes that Rancière’s understanding of equality should not be understood as “the arithmetical distribution of rights and representation.” Rather equality can be established through events and actions that redistribute what is seen as normal and sensible (Rockhill 2004: 86). Thus Rancière (2011: 3) argues that politics happens when hierarchies and roles are questioned, and the equality of all members of the community is enforced.

For Rancière (2011: 3) politics is opposed to the police. The term does not refer to the law enforcement but inequality and the limits of the community by broadly. Police assigns participants certain roles in society and thus limits their political participation. According to Rancière this tension between politics and the police brings along dissensus. Like politics, dissensus also questions positions and hierarchies in communities “by confronting the established framework of perception, thought, and action” with the political subject (Rockhill

2004: 85). Similarly to politics, dissensus also brings attention to the members of the community who are not seen and listened to by others, often through questioning the division of public and private (Tanke 2011: 62). Therefore dissensus is the means by which politics opposes consensus and the police (Tanke 2011: 61). Elaborating on this connection, Rancière (2004: 52) notes that “equality only generates politics when it is implemented in the specific form of a particular case of dissensus.” This can be seen as related to the events that have potential to “give rise to politics” (Rancière 1999: 32). Thus, equality can generate politics through dissensus by questioning the presupposed roles of the members of the community through various actions like protests and strikes. At the same time, art, including literature, is also able to generate politics and enforce equality.

Dissensus is contrasted with consensus, which according to Rancière (1999: 95) is the basis for contemporary democracy. Consensus is closely connected to the police and, as Rockhill (2004: 83) notes, consensus ultimately “reduces politics to the police.” Like the police, consensus is also built on having various hierarchies in the community. Rancière (1999: 116) argues that while consensus is supposed to include all members of community, there are still hierarchies of problems and opinions. Tanke (2011: 45) notes that, similarly to the police, consensus also leads to some members of the community not having a voice to make their problems heard and this prevents the politicisation of these people. As a result of trying to seemingly include everyone exclusion is not seen as a part of consensus by the community and deviations from the norms of the community are not tolerated (Rancière 1999: 124). Thus, according to Rancière (1999: 124) in consensus “the whole is all, nothing is nothing” meaning that collective identity is established through eliminating aspects that deviate from it.

For Rancière the dissensus between politics and the police plays a crucial role in establishing and enforcing equality. Politics is not just one area of public life but rather a

process that is realised through dissensus. Equality is enforced and the established hierarchies are opposed through dissensus. As politics and dissensus question what is seen as sensible, the tension between these concepts and the police is also essential for Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible.

## 1.2. Distribution of the sensible

Brant (2017: 235) notes that for Rancière sensible “determines the evolving boundaries of what is perceptible and common to the community as well as the specific groups who stake claims on this space and representations of it.” According to Brant (2017: 235) this is explicitly connected with who is included in or excluded from the community and whose voice is listened to. Rancière (2011: 6) notes that the distribution of the sensible (*le partage du sensible*) refers to the distribution of time and space – both real and metaphorical – “boundaries of what is in or out, central or peripheral, visible or invisible.” According to Rancière (2011: 7) this includes the societal hierarchies and other partitions, e.g., the belief that workers work during the day and sleep during the night, that are seen as given. The distribution of the sensible also influences how the society sees politics, with Rancière (2011: 7) noting that instead of a process, politics is seen not as a way to change world in a specific way, with there being political subjects and objects. Regarding this, Brant (235) notes that “the groups that are included in or excluded from the body politic based on social status and the perceived legitimacy or illegitimacy of their speech” are the main concern of the distribution of the sensible.

Rancière's definition emphasises the importance of hierarchies in this distribution and the fact that what is seen as appropriate depends on whether the person is a visible part of the distribution of the sensible or if they are at its periphery. This understanding is especially important when it comes to relationships between and inside communities. Rancière (2004: 12)

notes that the distribution of the sensible indicates who can take part in the community and on what level. This results in a hierarchical set-up, with everyone in the community having their own place (Rancière 2004: 12). The police plays an important part in establishing the distribution of the sensible by enforcing laws and hierarchies through which it is possible to divide people into groups (Rockhill 2004: 3).

For Rancière, distribution of the sensible and dissensus are closely connected. Tanke (2011: 61-62) notes that the sensible is “always once removed from itself meaning that it never assumes a stable configuration or a single direction.” Dissensus is used to point out this discrepancy and to disrupt the distribution of the sensible by redistributing it and “rejecting the meanings that the police makes of the sensible” (Tanke 2011: 62). Thus, dissensus opposes consensus by questioning what is seen as the distribution of the sensible (Tanke 2011: 62) and creating tension in it.

Rancière finds that art is not separated from the distribution of the sensible (Tanke 2011: 75). Rancière (2004: 13) sees artistic practices, including writing, disturbing the distribution of the sensible by creating dissensus and redistributing it. For example, transgressive fiction creates dissensus because it depicts characters who are confined by what is seen as sensible and who break free of the norms in some unexpected way thus redistributing the distribution of the sensible. Authors with multicultural backgrounds can also bring tension to the literary field by redistributing how aspects like national and cultural identity are depicted in literature.

The concept of distribution of the sensible plays a fundamental role in Rancière’s philosophy. For him the main task of both politics and aesthetics is to create tension in the distribution of the sensible through dissensus and, through that, to enforce equality. However, as can be seen from the way Rancière sees literature, equality and dissensus are not the same in politics and aesthetics.

### 1.3. Literature and politics

For Rancière (2010: 152) literature is not inherently political. More specifically, Tanke (2011: 103) notes that art cannot be said to be directly associated with politics, but art has its own politics. Rancière (2010: 152) creates a link between his concept of politics and literature “as a definite practice of writing” that aims to re-distribute what is seen as sensible. Rancière (2010: 152) points out that as politics, which he also sees as a process to challenge the overall distribution of the sensible, frames what we see, then “literature as literature” can be involved in politics. Rancière (2010: 152) argues that instead of the political views of the writers or the depiction of social situation and struggles in their books, literature and politics are connected through their aim of moving towards equality through modifying the distribution of the sensible.

Rancière argues that art, including literature, can bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible. Rancière (2010: 161) sees literature as something that can represent and analyse “the state of things.” Additionally, for Rancière (2004: 56) there is a close connection between literature and democracy, but they create different types of dissensus. Rancière (2004: 57) argues that in literature, dissensus can be created and democratic equality established through the depiction of people from different backgrounds, e.g., seeing a daughter of a farmer as important as a king and using similar language and style to describe them.

According to Rockhill (2012: 24) this analogy between literature and democracy has its flaws. While they both are indeed concerned with equality, the way their principles are realised differs (Rockhill 2012: 24). Rockhill (2012: 24) argues that the seemingly democratic ways of depicting events and characters can result in literary democracy sometimes restricting democracy. For Rockhill (2012: 24), if in Rancière’s understanding of literature all literary forms and characters are equal, then there is no similar need to verify equality as is present in Rancière’s notion of politics. Tanke (2011: 143) also notes that the way that the artistic

regime is conflated with equality is at times unclear. Instead, Tanke (2011: 146) argues that as the central theme of the texts of the aesthetic regime is freedom not equality, Rancière could establish a more visible connection between aesthetics and equality by providing more close readings of texts of the aesthetic regime.

There has been some criticism of Rancière's theories about art and literature. Rockhill (2012: 5) notes that Rancière's language can occasionally be misleading when talking about literature. While Rancière has developed a general theory about art and literature, he has not written about the societal aspects and places that make art possible and help to spread it (e.g., libraries, museums, universities, etc. (Rockhill (2012: 26)). To illustrate his thoughts on literature, Rancière mainly uses examples from French and other European literatures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries like Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola. He has not considered contemporary multicultural literature inside or outside of Europe. Rockhill (2012: 23) concedes that a wider range of examples "would certainly lend further credibility to his project". Rancière (2004: 56) has noted that he tends to use authors from similar cultural backgrounds but believes that "the same kind of tensions are to be found in all of modern literature". Regarding contemporary multicultural and transcultural literature where the understanding of identities, genres, and topics is interconnected and constantly changing, this statement might be an overgeneralization.

While Rancière does not see literature as inherently political, he recognises its potential to bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible. Rancière argues that the way that art and politics realise this process differs. At the same time, this distinction can become blurry, with Rancière himself noting that establishing a connection between them can be ambiguous. Although in his work Rancière has thus far focused on European authors, others have used his ideas about the potential connection between aesthetics and politics to study postcolonial and multicultural literature.

#### 1.4. Using Rancière for analysing postcolonial literature

Rancière has not written about multicultural or transcultural literature but there is some work on how Rancière's ideas can be used to study postcolonial and world literature. While multicultural and postcolonial literature cannot be equated, they both seek to investigate the politics of identity and location in today's world and hence the work done on postcolonial literature can also shed light on transcultural literature that is the focus of this thesis.

Lorna Burns (2021: 69) engages with Robert Young's assumption that postcolonial literature is written to make a social impact, for example to bring light to injustices. According to Burns (2012: 58), Young's characterisation of postcolonial literature presumes inequality. In contrast, Burns (2021: 70) wants literary studies to focus more on the presumed equality of all actors. Due to that Burns (2021: 73) finds that Rancière's ideas make it possible to look at postcolonial literature "not as an articulation of difference but as an enactment of equality." More specifically, Burns (2021: 72) argues that in postcolonial literature dissensus is used to (re)establish equality in situations where all parties are not seen as equal.

Rancière's concept of dissensus has also been used to study specific postcolonial literary works. Raji Vallury (2014) analyses Tahar Djaout's novel *The Last Summer of Reason* to open a wider discussion about whether Rancière's often rigid distinction between aesthetics of politics and politics of aesthetics is also relevant in postcolonial literature where art and politics are very closely intertwined. Vallury (2014: 249) suggests that (postcolonial) literature can present the same kind of dissensus that Rancière sees as part of politics. By analysing the narrative strategies used in the novel, especially the "fractured subjectivity" (narration switching between "he" and "you"), and the function of memory and art, Vallury (2014: 252) concludes that Djaout has managed to stage dissensus in his novel. Similarly to Burns (2021), Vallury (2014: 248) also brings attention to the emphasis on equality in

Rancière's work and notes that this opens new possibilities for studying postcolonial literature. Vallury (2014: 251) argues that aesthetics of politics and politics of aesthetics are more closely connected than depicted by Rancière. Vallury (2014: 258) argues that postcolonial literature can also bridge the gap between politics of aesthetics and aesthetics of politics, by offering the reader a possibility to bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible. According to Vallury (2014: 258), this happens not just by depicting social injustices, but by looking at the possibilities of emancipation. Thus, for Vallury (2014: 251), the main value of Rancière's ideas for postcolonial literature is the fact that his philosophy stresses the connection between politics and aesthetics, which is vital for postcolonial literature.

Paula Brauer (2019) analyses Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West* by also using Rancière's idea of dissensus. Unlike Vallury, Brauer does not make the distinction between aesthetics of politics and politics of aesthetics. Brauer's (2019: 299) main focus is on how the depiction of migration in the book is influenced by the use of magical realism. Brauer (2019: 299) notes that one way that the book disturbs what is seen as normal is by permitting characters to travel great distances by going through doors from one place to another. In addition to "the concept of distance [being] disintegrated" Brauer (2019: 299) points out that as the main characters of the book are illegal immigrants, this way of travelling allows them to avoid border checkpoints and many other possible dangers. Brauer (2019: 304-305) also believes that the focus on illegal immigrants brings dissensus into the book because it expresses the perspective of people who have been thus far often excluded from history. Due to that Brauer (2019: 299) concludes that in *Exit West* dissensus is complex, because it is not only connected to the content of the book but also its mode of writing.

While some authors have found Rancière's concepts, and especially his idea of dissensus beneficial, there has also been criticism about how Rancière himself analyses certain works with colonial undertones. Bhattacharya (2017) criticises Rancière's reading of

Balzac, specifically the passage describing items in the curiosity shop in *The Wild Ass's Skin* (*La Peau de chagrin*) and also the Sanskrit text on Shagreen in the same novel. Bhattacharya (2017: 558) notes that for Rancière the passage is a sign of equality because the objects are listed next to each other without any seeming judgement from the author. However, Bhattacharya (2017: 560) argues that Rancière's argument does not consider the historical context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Orientalism.

While Rancière's ideas have not been extensively used in previous studies on postcolonial literature, the articles that have engaged with his ideas have among other aspects noted the value of Rancière's concept of dissensus (Brauer: 2019; Burns: 2022), which is also important in the context of the present thesis. Additionally, while Burns (2021) finds Rancière's presumption of the equality of all actors potentially useful for studying postcolonial literature, Bhattacharya (2017) criticises Rancière's use of the concept in analysing literature with colonial elements. Overall, Brauer (2019), Burns (2021) and Vallury (2014) all seem to find Rancière's ideas useful for bringing a different perspective for studying postcolonial literature.

### **1.5. Rancière and American multicultural literature**

While American literature can be said to always have been multicultural, it has become increasingly so from the second part of the twentieth century. There are some common aspects about American multicultural literature that several authors have been written about, e.g., the changing concept of American literature itself and friction between the social function of the text and its aesthetic value. Rancière's concepts of distribution of the sensible, and his connection between aesthetics and politics can also be used to study American multicultural literature similarly to postcolonial literature. As 'multicultural

literature' is more commonly used than 'transcultural literature' when discussing cultural diversity in literature, it is also used here.

There are discussions on how to look at the every-expanding concept of American literature. Jay (1991: 264) goes as far as to suggest dismantling the concept of American literature because while multicultural texts have been added to the existing canon, the framework that American literature has been built on is based on prejudice and inequality. Instead, Jay (1991: 264) notes that scholarship should be something that "neither colonizes or excludes the Other" but rather tries to understand what role various differences can play in literary production. Jay (1991: 264-265) uses Adrienne Rich's concept of the politics of location as a good example of scholarship that takes differences into account by establishing a dialogue between socially constructed positions. Jay (1991: 266-267) argues that as the everyday life in the US is multicultural, then American literature should also reflect that by not enforcing a so-called common American literature.

Regarding Rancière's concepts of the distribution of the sensible and dissensus, it is important to note how multicultural literature has the potential to bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible and redistribute it. A similar argument is established by Cox (2015: 3), who argues that multicultural literature can "destabilize national identity by writing corrections to U.S. historiography." This ties in with Caton's (2007: 18) argument of the connection between aesthetics and national identity. Caton (2007: 18) argues that the attachment to the romantic elements of the national canon is one of the reasons why white authors from Anglo-Saxon background were for a long period seen as the norm in creating a singular American literary tradition. However, Caton (2007: 2) notes that with the increasing cross-cultural communication, the American literary canon is also constantly rewritten to include more diversity. This enables multicultural literature to redistribute what is considered

to be the sensible of the ever-changing American literary field by featuring and giving voice to characters from various backgrounds who were previously not represented in literature.

Cox (2015: 1) notes that the study of multicultural identities is closely connected to identity politics. Many authors (Caton 2007: 3; Cox 2015: 27; Jay 1991: 274) see literature as a vehicle of social justice and change in the society. For example, Jay (1991: 274) approaches literary works “as active agents in the socio-political process.” Cox (2015: 2) points out that many stories in contemporary American fiction have a testimonial function, which also leads to the blurring of lines between fact and fiction. Cox (2015: 12) finds it important for the reader to try and understand how the author tries to use the text as a call for action. Rancière’s ideas can also be applied to the discussion of identity politics. Rancière (2008: 74) admits that as he has focused mostly on French context, where he says “there is no identity politics”, he has not dealt with topics like postcoloniality in his work. While Rancière (2008: 75) notes that his work does not specifically engage with “identity politics or hybrid, postcolonial identities”, he argues that his general theory which focuses on subjectivization and identity shares common ground with postcolonial studies.

Caton (2007: 3) notes that in literature politics and aesthetics are often seen as oppositional. Caton (2007: 5), in contrast, sees great interdependence between aesthetics and politics. Caton (2007: 7) argues that the connection between aesthetics and politics enables the reader to question the ideological aspects found in the text. Similarly to Caton (2007), Jay (1991: 274) also sees the importance of the “formal properties” of literature. Additionally, Jay (1991: 275) argues that looking at the aesthetic aspects of a text can provide additional context to the socio-political aspects found in the work. Jay (1991: 275) recognises literature “as an historical utterance” that is addressed to its audience. Ultimately, Jay (1991: 278) concludes that while the literary field and multicultural studies is shaped by various power relations, it is important to “question the aesthetics of power and the power of aesthetics.”

Thus far Rancière's ideas have been used very little to study American multicultural literature. The connection between politics and aesthetics comes up in Bentley's (2012) article, which uses Rancière's ideas of the connection between aesthetics and politics to study African American art and literature. Like Caton (2007) and Jay (2001), Bentley (2012) also argues that aesthetics and politics do not have to be strictly separated. She claims that only looking at the political or social aspect of the artwork is not productive because aesthetics are important to understand the message of the work and can possibly give new political dimension to it. Regarding African American literature, Bentley (2012) argues that narratives that present alternate histories or impossible events redistribute the distribution of the sensible because characters in these narratives occupy places that they are not supposed to occupy. Bentley (2012) notes that by writing these narratives African American writers position themselves as political subjects, not passive objects that they are often seen as. Additionally, Bentley (2012) sees the narratives that rewrite history as "a site for enunciating a wrong." The historical impossibility of these narratives demonstrates how history is socially constructed and often a different outcome would have been possible by changing a few small things. Ultimately, Bentley (2012) points out that these narratives show how current inequalities have been constructed due to historical developments.

The debates about the connection between the social or political function and the aesthetic aspects of multicultural literature tie in with Rancière's ideas about the connection between politics and aesthetics. Rancière's stresses the connection of aesthetics and politics and notes that both art and politics can bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible. Distribution of the sensible can be redistributed by questioning roles assigned to people and their limitations. By doing this, it is possible to (re)inforce equality and change what can be seen as a part of the distribution of the sensible. Rancière's concepts of dissensus, distribution

of the sensible, and the connection between aesthetics and politics can be helpful to analyse the tension between them that is often present in American multicultural literature.

## 2. ZAINICHI IDENTITY IN *PACHINKO*

*Pachinko* a family saga that spans most of the twentieth century and represents the life of a family of Zainichi Koreans through four generations. The narrative starts in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century and follows the life of Sunja, who after discovering that she is pregnant by a man who is already married, accepts a marriage proposal from a Christian minister heading to Japan. Following her new husband Sunja makes her way to Osaka which is the setting for the rest of the book. There Sunja has two children, Noa and Mozasu, whose relationship with their cultural identity is very different. While Noa feels ashamed of his Korean ethnicity and tries to assimilate into Japanese society, Mozasu for the most part embraces his Zainichi identity. The book ends in 1989 with Mozasu's son Solomon, who after working at a big international company decides to return to his roots and follow his father's footsteps in managing a pachinko parlour.

Thus far, academic attention has attempted to position *Pachinko* mostly in the context of Zainichi literature. Both Yi (2022) and Tablizio (2022) compare the book with works by Zainichi authors. Yi (2022: 409) argues that as (North American) readers need to know very little about the historical background to read *Pachinko*, then the novel allows its readers to see past injustices without taking real action. Despite that, Yi (2022: 409) notes that *Pachinko* and should not be compared to Zainichi literature from the point of authenticity because they are written for different target audiences and this has coloured the reception of the books. Yi (2022: 410) finds that ultimately it is important to highlight the connections between the different Korean diaspora and their narratives to question literary borders.

Similarly to Yi (2022), Tablizio (2022) studies *Pachinko* in the context of the identity struggles of Zainichi Koreans and also connects Lee's novel with Zainichi writers and their works. Tablizio (2022: 107) notes that the different potential choices regarding citizenship and cultural identity that Zainichi Koreans face is a common cross-generational topic across

most Zainichi literature. Tablizio (2022: 108) notes that while similarly to most Zainichi literature Lee's novel shows the identity struggles of the Zainichi characters, in some respects it also deviates from how Zainichi are often depicted. Tablizio (2022: 108) brings attention to the intergenerational narrative and notes that it is unusual because Zainichi literature usually focuses on "specific struggles" while by showing the understanding of identity for multiple generations, Lee manages to give "a broader overview of the Zainichi experiences." According to Tablizio (2022: 106) *Pachinko* differs from much of Zainichi literature, especially that which is written by the second generation, in the portrayal of its male characters. Tablizio (2022: 106, 108) notes that while second generation Zainichi literature often includes the trope of the violent father, *Pachinko* focuses on the hard-working family matriarch. Tablizio (2022: 109) argues that due to Lee's Korean American background, *Pachinko* manages to connect Zainichi literature to the wider Korean diaspora literature.

Unlike Tablizio (2022) and Yi (2022), Roh (2021: 125) positions *Pachinko* as a part of American literature. Roh views the novel as exploring connections between Korea, Japan and the US. Like Yi (2022: 409), Roh (2021: 139) argues that it is important to note the difference between writers like Lee, who focuses on American audience and Zainichi authors. Roh (2021: 139) argues that writing for different audiences makes Lee depict topics that have already been discussed in Zainichi literature but doing it in a way that engages American readers. Roh (2021: 142) also points out that while most of Lee's novel is concerned with Zainichi people, the book also features a Korean American character which brings a comparative element into the novel. Thus, as the novel's "main contribution to the body of literature is its framing by a Korean American writer explicitly reaching outward to Zainichi Korea" (Roh 2021: 143).

## 2.1. Basic Identity Markers

*Pachinko* features several Zainichi identity markers. In this section, I will highlight the basic identity markers – citizenship and ethnicity, which mark Zainichi as being of Korean descent. Through looking at the that role citizenship and ethnicity play in forming the characters’ identities it is also possible to place where the Zainichi as a group are positioned when it comes to the distribution of the sensible as it is described in the book.

### 2.1.1. Citizenship

While citizenship is not immediately noticeable, it plays an important role in building the characters’ identities. As Korea was occupied by Japan from 1910 to 1945 then, until the Japanese loss in World War II, the Zainichi characters are citizens of the Japanese Empire. During this period, their citizenship is one of the few things that allows Zainichi to be part of the distribution of the sensible of the Japanese community as, unlike their ethnicity, their citizenship does not instantly make them different from the norm.

Citizenship starts to play a larger role in the book after Japan loses the war. With Korea becoming independent, and with the division of the territory into North Korea and South Korea, the question of citizenship becomes very complex. The topic is first mentioned in passing by Mozasu, who almost gets into trouble for hitting a Japanese man. While talking with the police officer about the situation, Mozasu reflects on the advice of his older brother Noa: “Lately, Noa was warning him that since the Koreans in Japan were no longer citizens, if you got in trouble, you could be deported” (Lee 2017: 278). This fear makes Mosazu comply with social norms. From this point, citizenship can be seen as a relatively invisible but at the same time consistent source of dissensus, as members of the Baek family with the exception of Noa do not choose to take Japanese citizenship or align themselves with either North or South Korea, but remain stateless throughout the book.

Throughout the book Mosazu's older brother Noa has identity struggles that are closely related to his ethnicity and citizenship. Noa dreams of becoming an English teacher and studies at Waseda University, but this is made more complicated by his Korean citizenship: "Public schools didn't hire Koreans, but he thought the law may be changed one day" (Lee 2017: 365). As a possibility, Noa notes that he would be able to work in a private school or as a tutor. However, he also indicates that "he had even considered becoming a Japanese citizen" (Lee 2017: 365-366). In 1978, when Noa meets his mother Sunja after many years of living as a Japanese person, he admits that he has also become a Japanese citizen. At this, Sunja exhibits disbelief by asking "You're a Japanese citizen? How? Really?" (Lee 2017: 425). Noa is the only member of the Baek family who tries to make a space for himself in the Japanese community. However, gaining Japanese citizenship does not solve his deeper identity issues and Noa's place in Japanese community remains precarious at best.

This disbelief about gaining Japanese citizenship is also present in Mosazu's reflections about the opportunities and obstacles related to citizenship. Mosazu ponders on his wife Yumi's dream of going to California and the question of citizenship: "He had never taken her there. They'd meant to go. With some difficulty, it was possible now for them to get the passports, but he hadn't bothered. Most Koreans in Japan couldn't travel" (Lee 2017: 378). What follows is an overview of various affiliations that Zainichi were able to choose after Korean independence:

If you wanted a Japanese passport, which would allow you to reenter without hassles, you had to become a Japanese citizen—which was almost impossible, and no one he knew would do that anyway. Otherwise, if you wanted to travel, you could get a South Korean passport through *Mindan*, but few wanted to be affiliated with the Republic of Korea, either, since the impoverished country was run by a dictator. The Koreans who were affiliated with North Korea couldn't go anywhere, though some were allowed to travel to North Korea. (Lee 2017: 378)

This complexity of possible choices also brings attention to the choice not only between Japanese or Korean citizenship, but also the question of two Koreas. Mosazu manages to bring attention to the difference between them:

Although nearly everyone who had returned to the North was suffering, there were still far more Koreans in Japan whose citizenship was affiliated with the North than the South. At least the North Korean government still sent money for schools for them, everyone said. (Lee 2017: 378)

For Mosazu, choosing a citizenship would be an act of dissensus as it requires the re-examination of his Zainichi identity. Mosazu's own understanding of these issues at this point is fairly straightforward: "Nevertheless, Mosazu wouldn't leave the country where he was born. Where would he go, anyway? So Japan didn't want them, so fucking what?" (Lee 2017: 378).

The topic of citizenship becomes increasingly complex as the second generation Zainichi characters start their own families. Mosazu's son Solomon struggles more with officially being a foreigner in Japan even though he was born and raised there. The process of acquiring an alien registration card is described in the novel: "Koreans born in Japan after 1952 had to report to their local ward office on their fourteenth birthday to request permission to stay in Japan. Every three years, Solomon would have to do this again unless he left Japan for good" (Lee 2017: 432). Later, when Solomon is applying for the card, Mosazu is uncharacteristically quiet even though the clerk makes discriminatory comments about Koreans. Mosazu's Japanese girlfriend Etsuko notes that instead of arguing with the clerk "Mosazu averted his eyes from the clerk and stared at Solomon's right hand" (Lee 2017: 436). When Etsuko and Mosazu are talking about it afterwards, Mosazu reflects on his previous experiences with getting registration papers: "The clerk was normal. Nice even. So I asked you to come. I thought maybe having a woman by him might help." (Lee 2017: 437). However, Mosazu admits that the process is often unpleasant: "It was stupid to wish for kindness" (Lee 2017: 437).

As stateless people are seen as bringing dissensus into the distribution of the sensible of the Japanese community, the process of applying for alien registration cards, visas and other documents concerning travelling is made uncomfortable for them, possibly to incentivise them to choose a citizenship. Ultimately, Mosazu again adopts a straightforward

attitude towards the process, seeing it as something that needs to be done: “It is hopeless. I cannot change his fate. He is Korean. He has to get those papers, and he has to follow all the steps of the law perfectly. Once, at a ward office, a clerk told me that I was a guest in his country” (Lee 2017: 437). The fear of deportation is again present here: “Anyway, the clerk was not wrong. And this is something Solomon must understand. We can be deported. We have no motherland” (Lee 2017: 437). Instead, he sees the ability and will to adapt as important for coping with the situation: “Life is full of things he cannot control so he must adapt. My boy has to survive” (Lee 2017: 437). Mosazu’s patience runs out when Solomon is fingerprinted and afterwards calls the registration papers “dog tags” (Lee 2017: 437). This makes the clerk angry: “The fingerprints and registration cards are vitally important for government records. There’s no need to feel insulted by this. It is an immigration regulation required for foreign—” (Lee 2017: 438). Even though Solomon’s parents and Solomon himself were born in Japan, for the clerk, and many Japanese people in the novel, they are still foreigners, or “guests”. This is aptly summarised by Etsuko, who reflects on Solomon’s situation: “He was born in this country, and he had to be fingerprinted today on his birthday like he was a criminal. He’s just a child. He didn’t do anything wrong” (Lee 2017: 441).

As an adult Solomon sees citizenship almost as an alien concept. Unlike Mosazu, however, he does not have doubts about the possibility of getting a citizenship. Instead, it is something that he would be able to apply for if and when he wants it. When thinking about marrying his Korean American girlfriend Phoebe and getting an American citizenship, he ponders about potential citizenship opportunities:

Yet now, when she put forward the idea of marrying for citizenship, he realized that he didn’t want to become an American. It made sense for him to do so; it would have made his father happy. Was it better to be an American than a Japanese? He knew Koreans who had become naturalized Japanese, and it made sense to do so, but he didn’t want to do that now, either. Maybe one day. She was right; it was weird that he was born in Japan and had a South Korean passport. He couldn’t rule out getting naturalized. Maybe another Korean wouldn’t understand that, but he didn’t care anymore. (Lee 2017: 521)

Solomon's inability to decide what citizenship he should apply for reflects his overall identity struggles as a third generation Zainichi, who is told that he is Korean in Japan and is seen as Japanese in Korea. For Solomon, who is otherwise indistinguishable from a Japanese person, citizenship is one of the only ways that allows him to be in touch with his Korean heritage.

### **2.1.2. Ethnicity**

Although the question of ethnicity and citizenship are intertwined in the book, there are some aspects of the characters' identity that are related more with their Korean descent and not citizenship, especially in the first part of the book. In a sense, the existence of Zainichi who like most of the Baek family do not hide their culture and instead make their own spaces in the distribution of the sensible, is dissensual. By depicting the characters' ethnic identities, the novel furthers the discussion about the role of different ethnic identities in what is usually considered to be a monoethnic society like Japan.

Even though the novel features a few smaller conflicts between Korean and Japanese people before Sunja arrives in Japan, discrimination is present in every aspect of life there. Yoseb, Isak's brother and Sunja's brother-in-law, who has already lived in Osaka for over a decade before Sunja and Isak arrive, reflects on the difference in attitude when people realise he is Korean: "From appearances alone, he could approach any Japanese and receive a polite smile, but he'd lose the welcome as soon as he said anything" (Lee 2017: 106) Yoseb also thinks about how Koreans are perceived to be "cunning" and "wily," while also being "natural troublemakers" (Lee 2017: 106). Yoseb observes that while many Japanese people claim to be able to distinguish a Korean person from Japanese person by their looks, that is not true.

While Yoseb sympathises with other Koreans, he also perpetuates some of the negative opinions held by Japanese people. Noting that "there are many different kinds of Koreans" in Osaka, he points out their "deceitfulness and criminality" (Lee 2017: 114).

Although Isak argues that they should help their fellow Koreans, Yoseb stresses that everyone has problems and advises Isak and Sunja to be “extra careful around other Koreans” (Lee 2017: 115). Yoseb also mentions this in connection with the Korean independence movement, advising Isak to not get involved with it: “And you can’t always trust the Koreans in these independence groups. There are spies who work both sides” (Lee 2017: 118). Yoseb understands that Japanese police and court system is fixed against Koreans and notes “the bad ones [Koreans] know that the police won’t listen to our complaints” (Lee 2017: 115). The bias against Koreans becomes clear when Isak is arrested for another person’s infraction and cannot leave the prison despite his health issues. While Yoseb appeals to a police officer, readers get a glimpse into the officer’s thoughts: “Koreans caused trouble, then made excuses” (Lee 2017: 169).

The ethnic discrimination that Zainichi face is also reflected in their living conditions and work opportunities. Most Zainichi in Osaka live in a ghetto where buildings are deteriorating and living conditions are very cramped. The work that Zainichi are able to get is also very limited with Sunja and her sister-in-law Kyunghee selling Korean food as street peddlers. Yoseb is not faring much better because even though he is a good mechanic, he only finds work as a biscuit factory foreman where he makes only “half the salary of one Japanese foreman” (Lee 2017: 191). His Japanese boss Shimamura is very strict with all of his workers and sees the fact that Yoseb does not want to punish factory workers as a sign of the weakness of Korean people. Shimamura thinks that this is something that can be fixed by Japanese discipline: “how could the foreigners ever learn unless the Japanese taught them to loathe incompetence and sloth” (Lee 2017: 202).

However, the novel does not depict all Japanese people as being prejudiced against Koreans. When the Baek family moves to the countryside in 1944 to escape the bombing of Osaka, they start working at a sweet potato farm. While Tamaguchi, the Japanese owner of

the farm, is at first doubtful about taking them in, he discovers that the family are not lazy as he had suspected. His fears are based on rumours: “Tamaguchi hadn’t had any idea of what Koreans would be like” (Lee 2017: 227). As Tamaguchi is portrayed as a man who predominantly cares about his profits, the fact that he treats the Baeks equally to others makes the family’s stay in the farm relatively happy. When the war ends, Tamaguchi offers the family to stay at his farm as long as they like even though some Japanese workers refuse to work with Koreans.

Even after the dissolution of the Japanese Empire, their Korean ethnicity still shapes the Zainichi characters’ identities. This can be seen from the second generation characters’ different attitudes towards their ethnicity. The understanding of what it means to be a ‘good Korean’ is present throughout the novel and influences Zainichi characters in several ways. While they are still in Korea, the Protestant minister who marries Isak and Sunja reminds Sunja of the importance of acting as a ‘good Korean’: “Every Korean must be on his best behavior over there. They think so little of us already. You cannot give them any room to think worse of us. One bad Korean ruins it for thousands of others” (Lee 2017: 94). The notion becomes increasingly important for second generation characters Noa and Mosazu, who exemplify the difference in understanding of who a ‘good Korean’ is.

While Noa and Mosazu are brothers with similar upbringings, their lives after adolescence go very differently with Noa pretending to be of Japanese descent and Mosazu managing pachinko parlours and accepting his Korean ethnicity. Noa is said to resemble a Japanese: “In his clean, pressed clothes, Noa looked like a middle-class Japanese child from a wealthier part of town, bearing no resemblance to the unwashed ghetto children outside his door” (Lee 2017: 194). Since childhood Noa is ashamed of his Korean heritage and tries to assimilate into Japanese culture. While people at school know about him being a Zainichi, he does not admit it to strangers, instead going by his *tsumei* Noa Bando. When anything

regarding Korea is mentioned at school Noa feels uncomfortable: “In class, he dreaded the mention of the peninsula where his parents were born and would look down at his papers if the teacher mentioned anything about the colony of Korea” (Lee 2017: 195). As a child, Noa sees Korea as a place where he could be “normal,” (Lee 2017: 234) but when he visits Busan as an adult he does not feel at home there.

Noa’s introverted personality is contrasted with that of his younger brother Mosazu who is an energetic troublemaker as a child: “The younger child [Mosazu] had none of Noa’s formality. He seemed so free” (Lee 2017: 233). From an early age, Mosazu aspires to be rich so “umma and Aunt Kyunghiee wouldn’t have to work anymore” (Lee 2017: 250). While Noa hides his Korean heritage, Mosazu’s attitude is more unaffected as with his name and address in the ghetto, he is obviously Korean. Although Mosazu mentions that “getting picked on used to bother him,” (Lee 2017: 269) when he was young, he does not care anymore. Instead, he ignores the mocking remarks and sometimes hits his bullies. While Noa sees the solution of ending discrimination against Zainichi in becoming good members of the Japanese society by getting educated, at the time thirteen year old Mosazu “just wanted to hit everyone who said mean things” (Lee 2017: 269).

This difference in understanding who is a ‘good Korean’ frames the brothers’ understanding of Korean identity. Since their schooldays, they are contrasted: “Noa told Mozasu that his former teachers had told him he was a good Korean, and Mozasu understood that with his own poor grades and bad manners, those same teachers would think Mozasu was a bad one” (Lee 2017: 269). From the start, Mosazu ignores the distinction: “Mozasu did not intend to be a good Korean. What was the point in that?” (Lee 2017: 270). Like with citizenship, Mosazu concludes that there is nothing he can do, as he is seen as an outsider in both Korea and Japan:

This country isn’t going to change. Koreans like me can’t leave. Where we gonna go? But the Koreans back home aren’t changing, either. In Seoul, people like me get called Japanese bastards, and in Japan, I’m just another dirty Korean no matter how much money I make or how nice I am. So what the fuck?

All those people who went back to the North are starving to death or scared shitless. (Lee 2017: 416-417)

This blunt attitude towards his situation seems to characterise both Mosazu's relationship with identity and citizenship, and also the novel's attitude towards it.

After one failed try, Noa manages to get into Waseda University. Like before, Noa does not make friends at university, approaching neither Japanese nor Korean students:

He knew well enough from schools past that the Japanese didn't want much to do with Koreans, so Noa kept to himself, no different than when he was a boy. There were some Koreans at Waseda, but he avoided them, too, because they seemed too political. (Lee 2017: 305)

However, Noa starts a relationship with Akiko, a Japanese girl who sees Noa's Koreaness as something exotic. Noa notes that he "didn't want to be fascinating" (Lee 2017: 331). Although Akiko is very critical of Japanese society, Noa thinks that she makes too many generalisations about foreigners. This is apparent when Akiko understands that Noa is embarrassed of being Korean and tries to console him:

I'm not embarrassed that you are Korean. I think it's great that you are Korean. It doesn't bother me at all. It might bother any ignorant person or even my racist parents, but I love that you are Korean. Koreans are smart and hardworking, and the men are so handsome. (Lee 2017: 340)

While Akiko seems to have good intentions, her attempt is patronising and makes Noa understand that he cannot be with her because she sees him as a token, not a person:

She would always believe that he was someone else, that he wasn't himself but some fanciful idea of a foreign person; she would always feel like she was someone special because she had condescended to be with someone everyone else hated. His presence would prove to the world that she was a good person, an educated person, a liberal person. (Lee 2017: 341)

After this, Noa, who wants to be seen as himself, not Korean or Japanese, breaks up with Akiko.

While confronting Sunja about his parentage, Noa again reflects on his shame about his Korean identity:

All my life, I have had Japanese telling me that my blood is Korean—that Koreans are angry, violent, cunning, and deceitful criminals. All my life, I had to endure this. I tried to be as honest and humble as Baek Isak was; I never raised my voice. But this blood, my blood is Korean, and now I learn that my blood is yakuza blood. I can never change this, no matter what I do. It would have been better if I were never born. How could you have ruined my life? How could you be so imprudent? A foolish mother and a criminal father. I am cursed. (Lee 2017: 345)

Although Sunja knows that being a yakuza is the only possible employment opportunity for many Zainichi, she is reluctant to say this to Noa because as Noa has worked himself up he “could not feel compassion for those who did not try” (Lee 2017: 346). Shortly after, the second period of Noa’s life begins as he cancels all contact with his family.

Instead of returning to university, Noa goes to Nagano, away from his family and any connection to Korean culture. Ironically, Noa starts to work for a pachinko parlour owner, hiding his Korean ethnicity. The image of a ‘good Korean’ also comes up again before Noa’s job interview. Noa is happy that he looks presentable: “Koh Hansu had mentioned often that a man should look his best each day. For Koreans, this was especially important: Look clean and be well groomed” (Lee 2017: 364). This assumption that Koreans have to make an effort to be considered respectable is also closely connected to Noa’s next thought: “In every situation, even in ones when you have a right to be angry, a Korean must speak soberly and calmly, he’d [Koh Hansu] said” (Lee 2017: 364).

After some years, Noa marries his co-worker Risa Iwamura, who is also an outcast in the Japanese society because her father committed suicide. Firstly, Noa and Risa find solace in each other. However, Korean culture and the fear of his ethnicity being discovered still haunt him: “Noa carried the story of his life as a Korean like a dark, heavy rock within him. Not a day passed when he didn’t fear being discovered” (Lee 2017: 396). He stops engaging with Korean culture, while maintaining his love for foreign literature: “Over lunch, for thirty minutes a day, he reread Dickens, Trollope, or Goethe, and he remembered who he was inside” (Lee 2017: 396).

Noa’s fear of being found out is not completely unfounded, as the novel shows that Risa’s mother “felt suspicious of his character” (Lee 2017: 397) because he had no parents or family. However, like the pachinko parlour owner who hired Noa, Risa’s mother “felt compelled to overlook his background as long as no one ever found out” (Lee 2017: 397). In

1978, Koh Hansu tells Sunja about Noa having a family and pretending to be Japanese. This confuses Sunja: “Is it so easy to do this?” (Lee 2017: 420). When Sunja talks to Noa after many years of not seeing him, Noa mentions hiding his identity: “My wife doesn’t know. Her mother would never tolerate it. My own children don’t know, and I will not tell them. My boss would fire me. He doesn’t employ foreigners” (Lee 2017: 424). Sunja, whose relationship with her ethnic identity is not as complex, asks: “Is it so terrible to be Korean?” (Lee 2017: 424). Noa’s answer is arguably the most explicit rejection of his Korean identity: “It is terrible to be me” (Lee 2017: 424). Later, when Sunja thinks about Noa after his death, she points out the cruelty inherent in the generalising assumptions about different ethnic groups: “The Japanese said that Koreans had too much anger and heat in their blood. Seeds, blood. How could you fight such hopeless ideas?” (Lee 2017: 461). Ultimately, Sunja concludes that unlike Mosazu’s matter of fact understanding, Noa’s sensitive nature allowed these assumptions to flourish:

Noa had been a sensitive child who had believed that if he followed all the rules and was the best, then somehow the hostile world would change its mind. His death may have been her fault for having allowed him to believe in such cruel ideals. (Lee 2017: 461)

While Noa has complex feelings about meeting Sunja again, he admits that “He had imagined that this day would come and had prepared for it, but now that she was here, he was surprised by his own sense of relief” (Lee 2017: 422).

Noa’s actions are not meant to bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible as ultimately he wants to not be defined by his ethnicity. However, as this fluid movement between different cultures is seen as undesirable at the time, Noa makes a more radical choice than Mosazu and hides his origins. Although Noa’s choice may seem more extreme, it does not question the distribution of various roles in the society at large. Instead, Noa fully assimilates into Japanese society and his actions remain on an individual level, while Mosazu’s work brings along more collective change.

While Noa and Mosazu are very different, conflicts between them are rare and they support each other during their childhood and adolescence. Noa continues to help Mosazu with his studies, teaching him more practical skills like arithmetic instead of kanji, to give him skills required in many workplaces. Noa's patience helps Mosazu to avoid the fate of many Koreans going to Japanese schools:

If Noa hadn't tried so hard and taught him with such care, Mosazu would've done what nearly all the other Korean boys in the neighborhood did rather than go to school—collect scrap metal for money, search for rotting food for the pigs their mothers bred and raised in their homes, or worse, get in trouble with the police for petty crimes. (Lee 2017: 268)

Even after Noa cuts contact with his family, Mosazu also does not stop thinking about him and the ever-present notion of the 'good Korean': "He's [Noa] living somewhere else, and he doesn't want us to find him. I think he just got tired of trying to be a good Korean and quit. I was never a good Korean" (Lee 2017: 417).

While ethnicity is something that cannot always be discerned just by looking at a person, *Pachinko* shows that this is something that people try to do. Hideo Takano, the pachinko parlour manager who Noa starts to work for, is proud of his supposed ability to distinguish between a Japanese and a Korean person just by observing them. During his interview with Noa, who is pretending to be Japanese, Takano asks him questions about his birthplace and parents to confirm his Japanese ethnicity. As he is not completely happy with Noa's explanations, the interview ends with him asking: "You're not a foreigner, right? You swear" (Lee 2017: 367). Although Takano has a reputation of hating foreigners and especially Koreans, readers get additional information about his motives regarding Noa: "The owner suspected that Nobuo Ban was a Korean, but he said nothing, because as long as no one else knew, it didn't matter" (Lee 2017: 367).

Mosazu's Japanese girlfriend Etsuko is conflicted about his Zainichi identity. She notes his physical features, which she believes to be Korean: "She hadn't known many Koreans before him, but she imagined that his squared-off facial features were traditionally

Korean—his wide jawbone, straight white teeth, thick black hair, and the shallow-set, narrow, smiling eyes” (Lee 2017: 432). Additionally, while Etsuko would like to marry Mosazu, she sees him being a Korean as something beneath her: “If she married Mosazu, it would prove to everyone in Hokkaido that no decent Japanese man would touch a woman like her” (Lee 2017: 443). While Etsuko’s family and children seem to be mostly concerned about Mosazu’s pachinko parlour ownership and its possible connections to yakuza, it is also noticeable that they do not like that he is Korean, with Etsuko’s daughter Hana asking: “So you didn’t marry a Korean gangster, and you want me to congratulate you for this?” (Lee 2017: 442).

Even Solomon, who is protected from many aspects of ethnic discrimination due to his family wealth, has to put up with stereotypes about Koreans in his international workplace. During a poker game, Solomon’s Italian co-worker notes that Koreans have a clever blood and that they are “tricky” (Lee 2017: 487). Solomon thinks that while similar assumptions are held by many Japanese people “it was just strange to hear such a thing coming from a white Italian who had lived in Japan for twenty years” (Lee 2017: 488). When his Japanese boss Kazu expresses regret about “what the Japanese have done to the Koreans and the Chinese who were born here,” and urges the Zainichi to protest, Solomon thinks that he was getting too “worked up” about the topic” (Lee 2017: 492).

Insidiously, Kazu uses Solomon’s ethnicity and his father’s pachinko connections to make a Korean property owner sell her house for a development project. However, after the deal is made, Kazu fires Solomon. Solomon quickly understands that Kazu has used him but is unable to prove anything. Kazu himself turns on his earlier stance towards Zainichi: “If you are trying to imply that you were being discriminated against, something that Koreans tend to believe, that would be incorrect and unfair to me” (Lee 2017: 509). While talking to his father and his friends, one of them notes that Kazu probably “just wanted the Korean staff to go away” (Lee 2017: 515). Ultimately, Kazu’s opinion of Zainichi people is shown as a

representative of the wider Japanese society, which ostracises Zainichi people despite them living in Japan for several generations.

## **2.2. Spaces of Identity**

To better understand how the Zainichi characters make space for their identities in the Japanese community, this section will highlight spaces of identity – religion and pachinko – that both feature in the book. These spaces, both mental and physical, allow the Zainichi characters to make room for themselves both as individuals and as a group and thus to bring dissensus into Japanese society.

### **2.2.1. Religion**

Their Protestant faith is something that also distinguishes the Zainichi characters from Japanese people. While topics related faith do not appear in the book extensively, they are represented as something that gives the Zainichi characters the strength to deal with their hard everyday lives. The most explicit references to Christianity are the Biblical names of several of the Zainichi characters (Isak and his brother Yoseb, Noa, Mosazu and Solomon). Their Christianity can be seen as an early form of dissensus, as it allows Zainichi people to have a place where they can be with other Zainichi people and its connections with independence activism creates more room for dissensus. While during the first part of the novel, Zainichi also face discrimination due to their religion, it still allows them to find a place that is freer of everyday discrimination.

The first part of the book is more explicitly connected with religion because after their arrival in Japan, Isak works as a minister at the Hanguk Presbyterian Church. The church is seen as a place where Zainichi go to ask for both mental and material advice, thus making it an important place for the Zainichi community. It is noted that as the Japanese government

does not approve of Christianity, many Western missionaries had already left and people were afraid to attend the services. Even much later, Japanese people tend to see Christianity as something foreign. Hana likens Christianity to a cult and questions their activities: “But you don’t do anything interesting like get naked outdoors in a group or sacrifice babies? I read that people in America do things like that if they are serious Christians” (Lee 2017: 462). Hana’s opinion about Christianity changes when she has to spend time in a hospital before dying. Although she does not believe in God, Hana is happy that Solomon’s family members pray for her, and she sees Sunja and Kyunghee touching her as “something holy” (Lee 2017: 517).

In the novel, church closely is associated with Korean independence activism. This is perhaps the most overt connection to dissensus and identity in the novel. While many of Isak’s actions are closely connected with his faith, his interest in the Korean Independence Movement comes from his dead brother Samoel, who was also a minister, and died while protesting the Japanese occupation. Isak also sees fighting for independence as something holy, as “it was Christlike to resist oppression” (Lee 2017: 118). While Isak himself does not take part in independence activism, he is still arrested in 1939 when during a compulsory visit to a Shinto shrine when Hu, a Chinese sexton at the church, mouths the Lord’s Prayer when he is supposed to pledge his allegiance to the emperor.

Christianity can bring dissensus into Japanese society. This is something that the Japanese government also understands, thus making Christians take part in shrine ceremonies to control and humiliate them. Although Hu had been mouthing the Lord’s Prayer at all shrine ceremonies, Isak had not stopped him but “admired Hu’s faith and gesture of resistance” (Lee 2017: 175). It is also explained how the Church justified attending these events:

Under considerable duress, the decision-making authority of the Presbyterian Church had deemed that the mandatory Shinto shrine ceremony was a civic duty rather than a religious one even though the Emperor, the head of the state religion, was viewed as a living deity. (Lee 2017: 174)

While Isak’s elder Pastor Yoo believed the shrine ceremony was “a pagan ritual,” (Lee 2017: 174) he attended the meetings so that members of his congregation would not be punished.

However, other characters are scared of dissensual actions and, while they are not happy with the Japanese rule, still disapprove the actions of the Independence Movement and partially blame it for the harsh treatment that Zainichi face. Contempt towards Christianity and its ties with the Korean independence activism comes across as Yoseb tries to get Isak out of prison. First, he tries to reason with the Japanese police guard. The novel features the guard's thoughts: "The minister [Isak] would be held for a very long time—these religious activists always were" (Lee 2017: 169). Yoseb's mind goes to his Japanese boss: "He thinks that Christians are rebels. The people who were in charge of the March 1 *demo* were Christians. All the Japanese know that" (Lee 2017: 172). The police close the church but members of the congregation still continue to meet in secret.

Other first generation Zainichi characters also find solace in their faith. Kyunghee, Sunja and Yoseb's belief that God has a plan allows them to not despair even in the face of hardships. Kyunghee sees being childless and instead helping Sunja to care for her sons as "the Lord's plan for [her]" (Lee 2017: 301). Yoseb sees the decay of his body after getting injured during the nuclear attack at Nagasaki in the same way: "My father once said that when you die and go to heaven, you get your body back. I can finally get rid of this one" (Lee 2017: 298). After marrying Isak, Sunja also becomes a Christian and finds much solace from her faith, especially later in her life.

Christianity and religion overall is not as important for younger members of the Baek family. Although Noa is raised as a Christian since childhood, he is also interested in other religious traditions. After Isak's imprisonment Noa starts to doubt his Christianity:

Noa did not believe in God anymore. God had allowed his gentle, kindhearted father to go to jail even though he had done nothing wrong. For two years, God had not answered Noa's prayers, though his father had promised him that God listens very carefully to the prayers of children. (Lee 2017: 195)

Noa hides this from the rest of his family. Later in life, he feels respect towards Buddhism and questions the connection between Christianity and other religions: "would God keep away from temples or shrines? Did such places offend God, or did He understand those who may

wish to worship something, anything?” (Lee 2017: 360). While religion is not as important anymore, the Baek family still continue to go to church every Sunday. Solomon also reflects on his family’s continuing connection with Christianity:

Like everyone in his family, Solomon was a Christian. His paternal grandfather, Baek Isak, had been one of the early Presbyterian ministers in Osaka. When Solomon was growing up, people at church referred to his grandfather as a martyr because he had been jailed for his faith and had died upon his release. Sunja, Mozasu, and Solomon went to service each Sunday. (Lee 2017: 463)

However, despite being a Christian, in the last chapter of the novel, while Sunja is visiting Isak’s grave, she notes that while neither she or Kyunghee performed the *jesa*, they were interested in talking to their dead husbands and ancestors. The novel ends with a conversation that Sunja has with Isak in front of his grave.

### **2.2.2. Pachinko**

Pachinko plays a large role in the book and many characters work in a pachinko parlour at some point. In the novel, pachinko – a mechanical game that is comparable to the slot machines in the West – is closely associated with Zainichi characters and their identity. While to some Zainichi, pachinko is a means of earning money without facing the discrimination present in Japanese companies, pachinko is also seen as a dirty business due to its supposed associations with yakuza and the fact that the parlours are mainly operated by Zainichi. Similarly to religion, pachinko brings dissensus into the distribution of the sensible as it allows Zainichi to make themselves a space that is almost free of discrimination.

Pachinko parlours are seen as places where no Japanese person would work. After finishing high school and preparing for university entrance exams, Noa works as a bookkeeper for a Japanese man. While Noa knows that he could make more money working for a Korean company or yakuza, he “wanted to work in a Japanese office and have a desk job” (Lee 2017: 267). After dropping out of university, Noa first arrives in Nagano and looks for potential employment. When suggested that he should go to a pachinko parlour Noa who is

pretending to be Japanese panics: ““Pachinko?” Noa tried not to look offended. Did the waiter think he was Korean? Most Japanese never assumed he was Korean until he told them his Korean surname, Boku”” (Lee 2017: 362). However, he is told that the parlour is a “grand establishment”, partly because “they do not hire foreigners” (Lee 2017: 362). Thus, pachinko is not seen as respectable partly because it is associated with Zainichi.

Noa himself has internalised the perception of pachinko as something negative. Noa looks down upon Mosazu’s employment at a pachinko parlour due to its connections with yakuza and wants him to work for the family confectionery instead. Noa also says that “all the worst Koreans,” (Lee 2017: 345) are members of yakuza. His negative auto-stereotype is strong: “I’m a Korean working in this filthy business. I suppose having yakuza in your blood is something that controls you. I can never be clean of him” (Lee 2017: 423). This perceived connection between yakuza and pachinko parlours is also noted by Mosazu: “I am not yakuza. But everyone thinks Koreans are gangsters” (Lee 2017: 433).

Although Noa works for a pachinko parlour, he is a bookkeeper and it is his brother Mosazu whose entire life becomes closely connected to first managing pachinko parlours and later establishing his own locations. Pachinko allows Mosazu to come to better terms with his Korean heritage, as he can be in an environment where he is not judged for being Zainichi: “At school, Mosazu hadn’t thought that the taunts had bothered him much, but when the mean remarks had utterly disappeared from his daily life, he realized how peaceful he could feel” (Lee 2017: 281). As most of the people in the parlour were Korean, “nothing stupid was said about his background” (Lee 2017: 281).

While pachinko parlours enable Mosazu to become very wealthy, operating them also brings stigmatisation. While his girlfriend Etsuko is also an outcast in Japanese society as a divorced woman with children, Mosazu notes that marrying him would make her situation even worse: “Her kids hate her enough already. It’d be hell for her if she married a Korean

pachinko guy” (Lee 2017: 417) Etsuko herself notes how dating Mosazu has made her even more of an outcast: “The pinball business was dirty, they said; pachinko gave off a strong odor of poverty and criminality” (Lee 2017: 429). Etsuko’s mother was even harsher when she found out that Mosazu wanted to marry Etsuko: “To a pachinko Korean? Haven’t you done enough to your poor children? Why not just kill them?” (Lee 2017: 432). Later Etsuko wonders about his relatives’ hostile attitude:

Why did her family think pachinko was so terrible? Her father, a traveling salesman, had sold expensive life insurance policies to isolated housewives who couldn’t afford them, and Mosazu created spaces where grown men and women could play pinball for money. Both men had made money from chance and fear and loneliness. (Lee 2017: 450)

She concludes that pachinko can symbolise hope for a better life for the people playing the game: “Every morning, Mosazu and his men tinkered with the machines to fix the outcomes—there could only be a few winners and a lot of losers. And yet we played on, because we had hope that we might be the lucky ones” (Lee 2017: 450). Ultimately, the novel presents pachinko’s unpredictability as metaphor for life with Etsuko noting that “pachinko was a foolish game, but life was not” (Lee 2017: 450).

Working at a pachinko parlour can be viewed as an act of redistributing the distribution of the sensible, as for Mosazu and many other Zainichi working at the parlours allows them to carve out a space without discrimination. As Mosazu eventually becomes the owner of several pachinko parlours, he also keeps this system going by hiring mostly Zainichi workers, helping his workers’ families and paying pensions to retired workers. In a sense, pachinko parlours become small social systems, as Mosazu’s boss and later Mosazu himself helps people who are otherwise seen as outcasts. Mosazu himself acknowledges this when Solomon asks him about retirement: “And what would happen if I sell my stores? They might fire my workers. And where would my older workers go?” (Lee 2017: 502).

Solomon notes that one of the reasons that he took a job in an international company was that his father expected there to be less discrimination than in a Japanese company. His

father's occupation is still brought up by his co-workers. During a poker game his Italian co-worker tries to make fun of his family's perceived connections with yakuza: "Koreans here are smart and rich. Just like our boy Solomon. It wasn't like I was calling him a yakuza! You're not going to get me killed, are you, Solly?" (Lee 2017: 487). His Japanese boss Kazu tries to console him by pointing out that many other occupations are not available for Koreans in Japan:

Maybe your dad could have worked for Fuji or Sony, but it wasn't like they were going to hire a Korean, right? I doubt they'd hire you now, Mr. Columbia University. Japan still doesn't hire Koreans to be teachers, cops, and nurses in lots of places. (Lee 2017: 492)

Solomon is somewhat embarrassed about his father's occupation, unlike the father himself.

The novel comes to a full circle when Solomon starts to work at Mosazu's pachinko parlour after being fired from his company, because his father's perceived connections with yakuza. The idea of continuing the family business comes from Etsuko's daughter Hana who mentions that "Japan will never change" and "integrate gaijin [foreigners]" (Lee 2017: 517). She sees pachinko as something that allows Koreans to get rich and "do whatever you want" (Lee 2017: 517). While at first Solomon is sceptical about this plan, the novel ends with Mosazu opening a ledger to start teaching Solomon about the pachinko business.

### **2.3. Material Identity Markers**

Similarly to spaces of identity, material identity markers are also connected to how Zainichi make space for themselves in Japanese society. This subchapter features analysis of material identity markers - food, education and language, and lifestyle – that change throughout the book. While at first, these identity markers act as features that distinguish Zainichi, from Japanese people then during the course of the book they become connected to dissensus as blurring the lines between nationalities and ethnicities redistributes the sensible.

### 2.3.1. Food

In the novel, food is something that immediately marks one's identity. Especially at the start of the book when they have very little money, the Baek family cooks and eats Korean food, with Sunja and Kyunghee also selling it. Later, food is still seen as a way to distinguish Zainichi from Japanese people. However, when the family gets wealthier, they also start eating more Western food on special occasions. Food is mostly depicted as the 'safe' form of presenting one's identity, as eating or selling Korean food is not closely related to discrimination, as are many other identity markers featured in the novel.

While the kitchen in the family's first house is very small, the physical closeness while making food also allows Sunja and Kyunghee to bond. Even though food is not described as directly bringing dissensus into the distribution of the sensible, the novel alludes to food as something that holds communities together. Kyunghee, who dreams of selling kimchi and pickles for living finds an ally in Sunja and Isak's arrest pushes Sunja to become a street peddler. While there are some obstacles (not being able to get the right ingredients, rising cabbage prices), the women manage to find creative solutions: "When there were no cabbages at the market, the women pickled radishes, cucumbers, garlic, or chives, and sometimes Kyunghee pickled carrots or eggplant without garlic or chili paste, because the Japanese preferred those kinds of pickles" (Lee 2017: 179). As Sunja's main product is kimchi, her customers are mostly "Korean women who worked in factories and didn't have time to make their own *banchan*" (Lee 2017: 181). After a few months, Sunja is able to start making kimchi for a nearby Korean restaurant. As food is seen as a marker of community, selling Korean food allows the characters to make another space for themselves in an otherwise hostile society. From this point, making Korean food is not only a marker of identity, but also the family's financial backbone. In 1944, with food becoming scarce in the wartime, the restaurant closes and the Baek family move to countryside to escape the upcoming bombings.

Kyunghee cooks both Korean and Japanese food: "...Kyunghee had made two dinners in the Tamaguchi kitchen—a Japanese one for the Tamaguchi family and a Korean for the others" (Lee 2017: 231).

Younger characters continue to eat Korean food. While Noa is otherwise ashamed of his Korean origins, he still mainly eats Korean food and like a Korean, meaning "high volume, strong flavors, and deliberate speed" (Lee 2017: 336). While studying at the university, Hansu sometimes takes him out to eat sushi. There, Noa "aped the ruling-class Japanese" (Lee 2017: 336) who enjoyed these rare delicacies. However, he notes that he prefers to eat Korean food because it can be eaten more efficiently. As food is one of the few elements unconnected to discrimination against Zainichi, it can be seen as a safe way to express their identity even for Noa who otherwise rejects Korean culture.

As the family's financial situation improves, they also start eating non-Korean food. For example, in 1968, Sunja offers Hansu imported butter cookies and tea, with the teapot being filled with a "generous pinch of tea leaves," reminiscing about the times "when there was no money for tea and a time when there was none to buy" (Lee 2017: 389). On Solomon's birthday in 1979, the family has a large "American dinner" (Lee 2017: 440) with dishes like fried chicken and potato salad. As Western food is served when there are guests or during parties, it seems to be something that is eaten at special occasions while Korean food is still eaten at home every day. The understanding of Western food as something of a luxury is apparent when Phoebe gifts Sunja and Kyunghee a box of expensive French chocolates when she and Solomon come to visit her.

Even at the end of the book, while Sunja has already lived in Japan for several decades, Korean food still plays an important role in the lives of the Baek family. This becomes apparent when Phoebe starts to appear at family dinners. While the family cook and eat Korean food every day, Phoebe's experiences are limited to visiting Korean restaurants in the

US with her family. When Kyunghee asks how Phoebe's mother makes pajeon, Phoebe's answer about her mom not cooking brings out a very surprised reaction: "“What?” Kyunghee gasped in horror and turned to Sunja, who raised her eyebrows, sharing her sister-in-law's surprise” (Lee 2017. 497). Instead, Phoebe admits that she has grown up on American fast food and Korean food was something that was eaten on the weekends at a restaurant. Kyunghee and Sunja do not understand how a Korean person does not eat Korean food and worry about Phoebe's own skills: “What would Solomon eat if he married this girl? What would their children eat?” (Lee 2017: 498). For Phoebe's family, however, not cooking Korean food “was a point of pride,” a sign of social mobility. She does not understand that for Sunja and Kyunghee cooking is a communal activity that also allows them to bond. Ultimately, as Korean food holds the Zainichi community together and allows for people, and especially women, to bond on a more communal level, it can be seen as subtly bringing dissensus into the distribution of the sensible.

### **2.3.2. Education and Language**

Both education and language play a big role in shaping the younger characters' identities. While Sunja cannot read, her children and grandchildren go to good universities. They learn to speak Japanese and English. However, as a result the third generation Zainichi cannot speak Korean and have limited ways of communication with their grandparents. This change in language and education level brings dissensus into how Zainichi are usually perceived, as they make it harder to distinguish them from ethnic Japanese people.

The education levels of first generation Zainichi depend on their gender. Sunja and her sister-in-law Kyunghee have no formal education, while Isak and Yoseb both have attended school and speak good Japanese. After living a decade in Osaka, Kyunghee is able to speak sufficient Japanese to communicate with the sellers at the market but Sunja does not know

any Japanese when she arrives in Japan. Sunja has hard time getting used to her Japanese name. The novel features a brief description about how the naming system works:

Due to the colonial government's requirements, it was normal for Koreans to have at least two or three names, but back home she'd had little use for the Japanese *tsumei*—Junko Kaneda— written on her identity papers, because Sunja didn't go to school and had nothing to do with official business. Sunja was born a Kim, yet in Japan, where women went by their husband's family name, she was Sunja Baek, which was translated into Sunja Boku, and on her identity papers, her *tsumei* was now Junko Bando. When the Koreans had to choose a Japanese surname, Isak's father had chosen Bando because it had sounded like the Korean word *ban-deh*, meaning objection, making their compulsory Japanese name a kind of joke. (Lee 2017: 139)

Sunja's Japanese language skills do not develop very much over time. Even late in her life, Sunja mostly communicates with fellow Zainichi. The topic of Sunja's lack of education comes up even at the end of the book when Sunja is visiting Isak's grave and is sad about not being able to read. The groundskeeper urges Sunja to go to a night school but Sunja thinks that it is too late for that.

For the first generation Zainichi characters the way that they spoke Japanese was also important. Yoseb notes that while he may look like a Japanese person, when he opens his mouth "his accent never failed to give him away" (Lee 2017: 106). Kyunghee listens to Japanese radio programmes to "improve her accent". The only first generation Zainichi character who can fully pass as Japanese is Hansu who "spoke exactly like a Japanese" (Lee 2017: 35). Sounding Korean while speaking Japanese is not a problem for the subsequent generations, with Noa and Mosazu both speaking Japanese without a Korean accent, which in the case of Noa, enables him to pass as a Japanese person, blurring the previously clear lines between Japanese people and the Zainichi.

Noa and Mosazu study in a Japanese school where they face bullying and discrimination. Zainichi are seen as lazy, with one of Noa's teachers noting that Noa's diligent nature is uncommon in Koreans. The teacher thinks that "...he [Noa] should work hard to improve his illiterate race: "One industrious Korean can inspire ten thousand to reject their lazy nature!" (Lee 2017: 210). Noa is also mocked for smelling like the ingredients that Sunja and Kyungee use to make kimchi:

Like all the other Korean children at the local school, Noa was taunted and pushed around, but now that his clean-looking clothes smelled immutably of onions, chili, garlic, and shrimp paste, the teacher himself made Noa sit in the back of the classroom next to the group of Korean children whose mothers raised pigs in their homes. Everyone at school called the children who lived with pigs *buta*. Noa, whose *tsume* was Nobuo, sat with the *buta* children and was called garlic turd. At home, Noa asked his aunt for snacks and meals that didn't contain garlic, hoping this would keep the children from saying bad things to him. (Lee 2017: 183)

At school, Noa does not have any friends and Mosazu's only friend is Japanese boy who is also an outcast because he has a disabled brother. The two bond over being discriminated against and become close friends for the rest of their lives. As late as in 1976, a Zainichi student commits suicide in the novel due to bullying from Japanese students. The police is not able to punish the bullies who drove the body to suicide. While the novel does not feature characters who go to the new Korean schools established after World War II, the schools seem to act in a similar way to pachinko parlours by allowing Zainichi to establish their own space free of the discrimination found in Japanese schools.

Despite the discrimination they face at school, many characters (especially Isak and Noa) see education as something that would improve their situation. Sunja thinks fondly about Isak's support of Noa's studies:

Isak had said that Noa would help the Korean people by his excellence of character and workmanship, and that no one would be able to look down on him. Isak had encouraged the boy to know everything as well as he could, and Noa, a good son, had tried his best to be the very best. (Lee 2017: 343)

Hansu sees Noa's education as an investment that benefits all Koreans: "It's important that older Koreans support young Koreans in their studies. How else will we have a great nation unless we support our children?" (Lee 2017: 249). Noa's costs at Waseda University push the family's finances to its limit, but this is seen as a necessary sacrifice:

The boy has to go to Waseda. He deserves to go. Even if no one hires Koreans here, with his degree he can go back to Korea and work for a better salary. Or move to the United States. He'll know how to speak English. We have to think of his education as an investment. (Lee 2017: 291).

Hansu meets Noa every month and is happy that his son is able to go to school, noting that while he has met many rich people "he was most impressed with educated men who could write well" (Lee 2017: 335).

Third generation Zainichi Solomon is able to get an international education by attending an international preschool “where only English was spoken” (Lee 2017: 382). During this time, the family starts to speak more Japanese and occasional English. Sunja also notes that Solomon’s Korean is very limited: “At school, he spoke English and at home, Japanese. Sunja spoke to him in Korean, and he answered in Japanese sprinkled with a few words in Korean” (Lee 2017: 382). When talking to each other, Mosazu and Solomon also mix Japanese and English, for example, with Solomon thanking Mosazu by saying “*arigato* very much” (Lee 2017: 434). Later, Mosazu reflects on these educational choices:

Mosazu had chosen the international school in Yokohama because he liked the idea of Westerners. He had specific ambitions for his son: Solomon should speak perfect English as well as perfect Japanese; he should grow up among worldly, upper-class people; and ultimately, he should work for an American company in Tokyo or New York—a city Mosazu had never been to but imagined as a place where everyone was given a fair shot. He wanted his son to be an international man of the world. (Lee 2017: 446)

This principle is in full force during Solomon’s birthday party, where people “spoke English rather than Japanese” (Lee 2017: 446) and the guests were mainly children of Western expatriates. It is noted that Solomon’s best friends are “Nigel, the son of an English banker, and Ajay, the son of an Indian shipping company executive” (Lee 2017: 447).

Solomon is able to attend Columbia University in the US. When he returns to Japan with his Korean American girlfriend Phoebe, finding a common language during family meetings becomes especially difficult. Unlike Solomon, Phoebe knows Korean, which leads to the family communicating in three languages: “Phoebe spoke Korean with the elders and English with Solomon, while Solomon spoke mostly in Japanese to the elders and English to Phoebe; with everyone translating in bits, they made it work somehow” (Lee 2017: 496). While English does not act as an immediate identity marker like Korean or Japanese, it is seen as a language of prestige. Being able to speak English also helps in finding employment, as Solomon is able to work at an international company. Ultimately, both language and education influences how Zainichi are perceived, as subsequent generations are able to speak

fluent Japanese and get a better education in Japan and abroad, thus making them virtually indistinguishable from Japanese people.

### 2.3.3. Lifestyle

While the Baek household start out by living in very poor conditions, their financial situation improves remarkably during the novel. The struggles and changes in the characters' identities can also be observed in the gradually changing descriptions of lifestyle, especially living spaces and clothing. Similarly to education and language, the changes in clothing and living spaces bring dissensus into how Zainichi are usually perceived and show how the family's lifestyle becomes similar to that of rich Japanese families, making it hard to distinguish between Zainichi and Japanese people.

When Sunja first arrives in Japan, she is marked as a person of Korean descent already by her clothing: "Sunja pulled her jacket closer to her body, aware of the passersby staring at her traditional dress. No one else in the station was wearing a hanbok" (Lee 2017: 110). Sunja's brother-in-law Yoseb, who has lived in Japan for a decade, already knows that clothing distinguishes Korean and Japanese people and has changed his clothes:

Yoseb wore the street clothes of a modest workingman in Osaka—plain trousers, a Western-style dress shirt, and a heavy woolen coat that didn't show its wear. Long ago, he'd put aside the finery that he'd brought from Pyongyang—expensive suits his parents had ordered from a tailor who made clothes for the Canadian missionaries and their families. (Lee 2017: 107)

He dresses to not stick out. Yoseb's wife Kyunghee is also not wearing traditional clothes but a "Western-style dress" (Lee 2017: 113). Seeing Sunja's traditional Korean clothing, Yoseb immediately notes that "she'd need clothes," (Lee 2017: 110) to mask her Korean ethnicity. While visiting the butcher shop, Sunja notices the contrast between how she and Kyunghee are perceived due to how they dress:

Kyunghee, who looked smart in her midi skirts and crisp white blouses, easily passing for a schoolteacher or a merchant's modest wife with her fine features, was welcomed in most places. Everyone thought she was Japanese until she spoke; even then, the local men were pleasant to her. For the first time in her life, Sunja felt aware of her unacceptable plainness and inappropriate attire. She felt homely in Osaka. Her well-worn, traditional clothes were an inevitable badge of difference, and though

there were enough older and poorer Koreans in the neighborhood who wore them still, she had never been looked upon with scorn with such regularity, when she had never meant to call attention to herself. Within the settled boundaries of Ikaino, one would not be stared at for wearing a white *hanbok*, but outside the neighborhood and farther out from the train station, the chill against identifiable Koreans was obvious. (Lee 2017: 138-139)

By 1940, it is noted that Sunja wears “Japanese trousers and a blue padded jacket” (Lee 2017: 186). Clothing can be seen as an early form of dissensus, even for first generation characters, as it is one of the easiest elements to change. Unlike their accent, clothing allows the characters to blend in and visually pass as a Japanese person to avoid discrimination.

As the Baek family’s financial situation improves, Sunja’s dress also changes: in 1968 “Sunja was wearing a black wool coat, nothing expensive but not shabby, either. It looked store-bought” (Lee 2017: 383). Sunja does not have to wear self-made clothes anymore and her clothes are also Western-style – a “camel-colored sweater and brown woolen trousers” (Lee 2017: 388). In 1978, Sunja’s clothing is even more high-end as she is wearing “an imported French designer dress and Italian leather shoes” (Lee 2017: 419).

Despite her wealth Sunja notes that being poor has taken a toll on her body and face. She notices that she looks older than she actually is and compares herself to her sister-in-law Kyunghee: “She was fifty-two years old. Her sister-in-law, Kyunghee, who’d been diligent about wearing her hat and gloves to protect her from spots and lines, looked much younger than she did, though Kyunghee was fourteen years older” (Lee 2017: 389). Sunja admits that her wealth cannot erase poverty from her face: “Her face and hands belonged to a poor, hardworking woman, and no matter how much money she had in her purse now, nothing would make her appealing” (Lee 2017: 389). In 1978, while Sunja in sixty-two years old, she is again said to be “rumped” and “ordinary” even though her clothes are more that “of a wealthy Tokyo matron” (Lee 2017: 419).

On the other hand, Hansu, who already at the start of the novel is a rich man, is described as elegant and handsome throughout the book. Already in 1932 in Korea, he looks different from local men: “Wearing an off white Panama hat like the actors in the movie

posters, Koh Hansu stood out like an elegant bird with milky-white plumage among the other men, who were wearing dark clothes” (Lee 2017: 29). When Hansu mentions that he had to wash his father’s clothes when he was a child, Sunja is in disbelief. Throughout the book, Hansu continues to dress extravagantly as is befitting for a high-ranking yakuza. Even in 1968 while he is seventy years old, he looks the same:

Hansu was seventy, yet he had changed very little; if anything, his features had improved. He still trimmed his thick white hair carefully and tamed it with scented oil; in his fine wool suit and handmade shoes, Hansu looked like an elegant statesman—a handsome grandfather. (Lee 2017: 389-390)

Hansu’s polished looks are not only for show, as his well-made clothes and elegant demeanour make people think that he is Japanese. For example, when Noa and Mosazu first meet Hansu in 1944, they are surprised that he speaks fluent Korean because he was respected by Japanese people and “was so well dressed” (Lee 2017: 232). When Mosazu starts working at a pachinko parlour, he also notices how clothing can change the way that people are perceived. Instead of a plain combination of white shirt and black trousers, Mosazu starts dressing similarly to Hansu in well-made suits.

When Sunja first arrives in Japan, she and rest of the Baek family live in Ikaino, a Korean ghetto. Compared to the well-maintained Western-style houses in downtown Osaka, Ikaino is a jumble of decaying buildings:

Ikaino was a misbegotten village of sorts, comprised of mismatched, shabby houses. The shacks were uniform in their poorly built manner and flimsy materials. Here and there, a stoop had been washed or a pair of windows polished, but the majority of the facades were in disrepair. Matted newspapers and tar paper covered the windows from inside, and wooden shims were used to seal up the cracks. The metal used on the roof was often rusted through. The houses appeared to have been put up by the residents themselves using cheap or found materials—not much sturdier than huts or tents. (Lee 2017: 111-112)

The Baek family’s house, which is described as “a boxlike shack,” (Lee 2017: 112) is one of the better living spaces in the ghetto where people pay most of their income as rent. The Baek family is lucky because they own their house. Yoseb sees the irony in his situation, joking that “this place is only fit for pigs and Koreans” (Lee 2017: 112).

As the prices are too high, the whole Baek family continues to live under one roof for several years. Although the house is small, it is always clean and on her first night there,

Sunja sees the house as cozy: “The street outside was quiet and dark, and the tiny shack was lit with a clean, bright warmth” (Lee 2017: 120). After World War II when their old house is destroyed, the family are able to build a larger one. The materials are also sturdier: “The women papered the walls with good-quality paper and bought strong, thick glass for their little windows” (Lee 2017: 256). While their living situation improves with the new house, the fact that they still live in the Korean ghetto marks them as Zainichi.

As the Baek family gets wealthier, their living arrangements also change, making it harder to distinguish them as Zainichi from just their living place. In 1968, Hansu visits Sunja’s house and the contrast with the house the family’s first house is immediate:

It was a brand-new three-bedroom in the Westerners’ section of Yokohama./.../The furnishings resembled sets from American films—upholstered sofas, high wooden dining tables, crystal chandeliers, and leather armchairs. Hansu guessed that the family slept on beds rather than on the floor or on futons. There were no old things in the house—no traces of anything from Korea or Japan. (Lee 2017: 387-388)

Sunja’s home is also equipped with modern gadgets like a colour TV. By 1989, the house has again been refurbished, with Solomon noting that “the house was unrecognizable from the one of Solomon’s childhood filled with dark American furniture” (Lee 2017: 495). Instead,

...the interior designer had removed most of the original interior walls and knocked out the small back windows, replacing them with thick sheets of glass. Now it was possible to see the rock garden from the front of the house. Pale-colored furniture, white oak floors, and sculptural paper lamps filled the vast quadrant near the woodburning stove, leaving the large, square-shaped living room light and uncluttered. In the opposite corner of the room, tall branches of forsythia bloomed in an enormous celadon-colored ceramic jar on the floor. (Lee 2017: 495)

This leaves Solomon with an impression that “the house looked like a glamorous Buddhist temple” (Lee 2017: 495). Changing living spaces also redistribute the distribution of the sensible because they show that the assumption of the Zainichi as dirty people living in poverty is not always true, and it can be impossible to distinguish between them just based on looking at their living spaces.

## **2.4. Fluid Identities**

This subchapter focuses on the fluidity of Zainichi identities and how certain aspects described in the book reflect the changes in identity and bring dissensus to the distribution of the sensible. The section provides an overview how yearning for home and a new diasporic identity allows the novel to depict identities as fluid. Additionally, to contrast Zainichi viewpoint with that of another Korean diaspora and also relate it to American culture, the section features an analysis of the Korean American character Phoebe and her American viewpoint of the Zainichi characters.

### **2.4.1. Yearning for Homeland**

The first generation Zainichi characters have different reasons for moving to Japan. While Isak's brother Yoseb left for Japan "in search of a different life," Isak moves to Osaka partially due to its softer climate. Female characters do not seem to have similar motivations with Kyunghee being "sent for" by Yoseb to become his wife and Sunja marrying Isak and travelling to Osaka to not be disgraced by having a child out of marriage. As the political situation changes with the Japanese loss in World War II and Korean independence, some first generation Zainichi characters dream of going back to Korea, while younger generations dream of starting a new life in the US. While the first generation's dreams of going back to Korea do not redistribute the sensible as it can be viewed as a logical action for people who were born and grew up there, the following generations' dreams of the US as a neutral place to start a new life introduce a third party to the binary understanding of Zainichi identity as something related to Korean and Japanese culture.

While the first generation of the Baek family often reminisce about their life before moving to Japan, they do not return to Korea after World War II. Shortly after the war ends Yoseb says that he is "done with Japan" (Lee 2017: 243) but is persuaded to stay by the fear

that life in Korea, especially in the North, is even harder than in Japan. Sunja also often remembers her life in Korea but she understands that going back would make the family's life even harder, especially as Noa is by that point old enough to have to fight in the Korean War.

Kim Changho is the only character who ultimately returns to North Korea. Already in 1949, he discusses the possibility with Hansu who discourages him: “they’ll kill you in the North, and they’ll starve you in the South. They all hate Koreans who’ve been living in Japan. I know” (Lee 2017: 253). While Changho mentions some talking points he hears during the socialist meetings he attends, Hansu shuts him down:

And whenever you go to these meetings, I want you to think for yourself, and I want you to think about promoting your own interests no matter what. All these people—both the Japanese and the Koreans—are fucked because they keep thinking about the group. But here’s the truth: There’s no such thing as a benevolent leader./.../As for these Korean groups, you have to remember that no matter what, the men who are in charge are just men so they’re not much smarter than pigs. And we eat pigs. (Lee 2017: 253-254)

However, Changho wants to visit the graves of his dead parents. He and Kyunghee are both confused about the situation in North Korea and wonder if Korea would ever become free of the influence of bigger world powers, with Kyunghee making a simplified but topical analogy:

I suppose it’s like when two grannies have a dispute, and the villagers constantly whisper in their ears about the wickedness of the other one. If the grannies want to have any peace, they have to forget everyone else and remember that they used to be friends. (Lee 2017: 261)

After many doubts, Changho ends up returning to North Korea in 1959. Changho invites Kyunghee with him so that they can return to “rebuild a nation,” (Lee 2017: 300) and visit their parents’ graves. While Kyunghee does not have Changho’s interest in nation-building, she misses her childhood home and declining his invitation causes her much sorrow.

Later, Changho is mentioned only periodically, as there is very little news about people who went to the North. It is mentioned that “in more than two years, they’d heard from him only twice” (Lee 2017: 349). Even after many years, Kyunghee still seems to have regrets about not going back to North Korea after the Korean War. In 1978, while watching a Japanese TV show, *Other Lands* which covers various Japanese diaspora communities, she wishes that the interviewer would also visit North Korea:

Despite all the restrictions, she had always hoped that Higuchi-san [the interviewer] could somehow go to North Korea. Koh Hansu had told her husband that her parents and in-laws were dead, yet she still yearned to hear news of home. (Lee 2017: 456)

Kyunghee has a hard time with believing the various stories spread about North Korea, as she still wants to believe that Changho is alive:

Also, she wanted to know if Kim Changho was safe. No matter how many sad stories she heard from the others whose family members had gone back, she could not imagine that the handsome young man with the thick eyeglasses had died. (Lee 2017: 456)

While Kyunghee understands that going back to North Korea would ultimately be impossible, she still sees it as home and chooses to deceive herself about her relatives and friends.

As the second generation Zainichi characters were already born in Japan, they do not dream of going back to Korea. Instead, Mosazu and especially his wife Yumi dream of moving to the US. When they meet, Yumi is already taking English classes in the local church and Mosazu starts to accompany her. Their English teacher is a Korean adoptee who had lived in the US for most of his life. English is his first language and his manners are also American as he is very jovial. Yumi sees him as an example of what a Korean can become: “John represented a Korean being from a better world where Koreans weren’t whores, drunks, or thieves” (Lee 2017: 326). John is happy that he was adopted there, noting that he “felt guilty that many others hadn’t been chosen the way he was” (Lee 2017: 328).

Yumi takes the English classes with the intention of eventually moving to California as she thinks that “everyone is better off in America,” (Lee 2017: 325) because, unlike in Japan, differences are accepted more easily. Although Mosazu thinks that Yumi is “irrationally biased in favor of America and anything from America,” (Lee 2017: 325) they discuss moving to the US together despite Mosazu losing his secure source of income. Mosazu also wonders if Noa may have moved there after dropping out of university, calling the country “this magical place so many Koreans in Japan idealize” (Lee 2017: 371). While Yumi notices that many Zainichi move to Korea, she “could not muster any affection for either nation” (Lee 2017: 327). She dreams of the US as a neutral place where she and

Mosazu could start anew. As Yumi dies only a few years later, they are not able to relocate, but references to California brings back memories for Mosazu. When Solomon mentions how his boss went to a university in California, Mosazu's mind goes to Yumi: ““California? Your mother would've liked that”” (Lee 2017: 500).

Only the third generation member Solomon is able to go to school to the US, at Columbia University. While Solomon does not seem to miss living in the US after returning to Japan, he still sees it as a place with more possibilities. When he is visiting dying Hana in a hospital, he offers to get her treated in the US, not because the country's association with an abstract quality of hope: “In America, everything seemed fixable, and in Japan, difficult problems were to be endured” (Lee 2017: 504). However, at the end Solomon still decides that while it may be hard to live there, Japan is still home. While Solomon is able to dynamically move between different countries, this does not automatically allow him to reconcile with different parts of his identity.

#### **2.4.2. Korean American Diaspora Viewpoint**

*Pachinko* also introduces a Korean American character, Phoebe, Solomon's girlfriend whom he meets during his university studies in the US. They move to Japan and Solomon starts to work in a big company. Lee uses Phoebe to bring dissensus into the novel, as Phoebe's narrow understanding of identity and her attempts to interpret Zainichi experience through the lens of American multiculturalism allow the readers to get an outsider perspective on the Zainichi identity. Their differing understanding of identities also leads to many arguments between Phoebe and Solomon.

Readers first meet Phoebe during the only chapter set outside Korea or Japan that takes place in New York City in 1985. Phoebe's dismissive attitude towards Hana's problems foreshadows the future issues between her and Solomon. Hana works at a hostess bar and

Phoebe dismisses her job: ““They have sex for money, right?”” (Lee 2017: 478). When Solomon tries to point out that it is not always so, Phoebe replies that he has “enlightened me [Phoebe] on the finer points of Japanese culture” (Lee 2017: 478). Her Americanness is marked by her vocabulary. For example, Phoebe calls herself “liberal” and “tolerant” (Lee 2017: 479) because she accepts Solomon’s previous relationship with Hana.

Phoebe has a real cultural shock when she and Solomon go to live in Tokyo after college. She has problems with adjusting to Japanese culture and the way that Zainichi like Solomon are treated. The novel frames Solomon’s experience with different cultures in a favourable light: “As a Korean Japanese educated in the States, Solomon was both a local and a foreigner, with the useful knowledge of the native and the financial privileges of an expatriate” (Lee 2017: 482). However, Phoebe does not understand why Zainichi are still seen as foreigners in Japan, and also gets angry when she is asked about her Korean origins:

“In America, there is no such thing as a *Kankokujin* or *Chosenjin*. Why the hell would I be a South Korean or a North Korean? That makes no sense! I was born in Seattle, and my parents came to the States when there was only one Korea,” she’d shout, relating one of the bigotry anecdotes of her day. “Why does Japan still distinguish the two countries for its Korean residents who’ve been here for four fucking generations? You were born here. You’re not a foreigner! That’s insane. Your father was born here. Why are you two carrying South Korean passports? It’s bizarre.” (Lee 2017: 482)

Phoebe also reflects on talking about Zainichi with her American friends in New York, with them having been “incredulous at the thought that the friendly, well-mannered Japanese they knew could ever think she was somehow criminal, lazy, filthy, or aggressive—the negative stereotypical traits of Koreans in Japan” (Lee 2017: 482). Phoebe recalls a naïve comment one of her American friends made as if to sum up the situation: ““Well, everyone knows that the Koreans don’t get along with the Japanese”” (Lee 2017: 482-483). While Phoebe thinks that she can understand the Zainichi identity better, her limited understanding of Solomon’s situation as a third generation Zainichi living between two cultures leads to many problems.

Phoebe is angry for how Zainichi are treated in Japan and this confuses Solomon. While Phoebe believes “that the Japanese would never change,” Solomon ends on the side of

Japanese in most of their arguments. Phoebe also makes sweeping statements like saying that all Japanese people are racist. To counter this, Solomon points out that due to his family wealth, he is sometimes seen as suspicious for other Zainichi and his boss Kazu “had been far kinder to Solomon than most Koreans in Japan” (Lee 2017). Ultimately Solomon comes to a relatively straightforward conclusion: “Yes, some Japanese thought Koreans were scum, but some Koreans were scum, he told Phoebe. Some Japanese were scum, too. There was no need to keep rehashing the past; he hoped Phoebe would get over it eventually” (Lee 2017: 485). As these problems accumulate, Solomon starts to understand how, despite being ethnically Korean, he and Phoebe are very different. As a third generation Zainichi, Solomon has been aware of discrimination but this experience is mainly not his, but that of his first and second generation family members. Due to that, and the fact that he sees himself more as a Japanese than a Zainichi or Korean, he is not as passionate about these problems as Phoebe, who only became aware of them after coming to live in Tokyo.

As the Baek family, and especially its first generation members live a life relatively isolated from the Japanese community, they are surprised to hear about Phoebe’s relatives who have mostly married non-Koreans. While talking about her family members who have married people with different ethnic background, Phoebe notes that “America is full of people like that” (Lee 2017: 499). Intermarriage between Korean and Japanese people is not impossible, as already in 1933 Sunja mentions “the quiet lady who lives at the end of the road who’s Japanese and married to the Korean who brews alcohol in his house” (Lee 2017: 142). However, these examples are rare and Phoebe’s multicultural background is confusing in this insular community. Despite that, Sunja and Kyunghee seem “more curious than reproachful” (Lee 2017: 499) when asking Phoebe about her cultural background. Focusing not on their different cultural identities, but on their experiences as women, Sunja finds that Phoebe symbolises change in how women are seen, as her life does not consist of “suffering” (Lee

2017: 499) for her family anymore. By emphasising the common aspects of their experience over the cultural differences, Lee offers a flexible view on not only ethnic or national identities, but identity in general.

What ultimately leads to Phoebe's and Solomon's break-up is Solomon getting fired. While Phoebe blames the boss, Solomon takes the side of his discriminator. Solomon assumes that Phoebe makes a generalisation about Japanese, to which Phoebe replies: "It's not that I distrust the Japanese, but I don't know if I trust them entirely" (Lee 2017: 520). Phoebe admits that she "sound[s] a little bigoted" (Lee 2017: 520). Solomon, in response, stresses Japanese suffering: "Nagasaki? Hiroshima? And in America, the Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps, but the German Americans weren't" (Lee 2017: 520). In other words, we can see Solomon's conflicted identity: while he is Zainichi, he is also identifying as Japanese. Unlike Phoebe, Solomon advocates not for dissensual processes but for an ability to freely exist and move between different cultures.

Phoebe urges Solomon to find work in the US, but Solomon is more comfortable with his double identity. Solomon admits to himself that some things that he liked about Phoebe in the US are irritating in a different cultural context: "Her equanimity, which had seemed so important in the States, seemed like aloofness and arrogance in Tokyo" (Lee 2017: 521). Solomon dislikes her generalisations about his compatriots: "Sure, there were assholes in Japan, but there were assholes everywhere, nee?" (Lee 2017: 521). Instead of looking at people as a group, he relies on personal experiences:

Kazu was a shit, but so what? He was one bad guy, and he was Japanese. Perhaps that was what going to school in America had taught him. Even if there were a hundred bad Japanese, if there was one good one, he refused to make a blanket statement. Etsuko was like a mother to him; his first love was Hana; and Totoyama was like an uncle, too. They were Japanese, and they were very good. She hadn't known them the way he had; how could he expect her to understand? (Lee 2017: 521-522)

Ultimately, Solomon acknowledges that in some ways, he is also Japanese and this is more important for him than the relationship: "The space between Phoebe and him could not close, and if he was decent, he had to let her go home" (Lee 2017: 522).

Lee uses Phoebe to draw attention to outsiders' limited understanding of the contradictory Zainichi identity. She protests against Zainichi discrimination, but this is not the whole story, as Salomon and other members of his generation see themselves as Japanese, not as much as Zainichi. The example shows that easy generalisations cannot be made in the case of transnational identity. Ultimately, to be able to redistribute the distribution of the sensible and take different experiences into account, a more fluid and complex vision of identity is necessary.

## CONCLUSION

As hybrid identities are becoming increasingly common in the American society, multi- and transculturalism is also reflected in literature. While multiculturalism recognises different identities, it still retains the separation of cultures, resulting in a Self vs Other dichotomy (Benesaieh 2010: 29). For many scholars (Benesaieh: 2010; Welsch: 1999), transculturality looks at identities as something fluid that can depend on various cultural contexts. Instead of focusing on the differences between cultures, transculturality allows a more complex insight into power relationships between cultures (Benesaieh 2010: 17). This leads to more fluid identities as “there is no longer anything absolutely foreign” (Welsch 1999: 198). These identities are also reflected in contemporary American literature, for example in with Min Jin Lee’s *Pachinko*, a popular recent example of literary depiction of transcultural identities. By choosing to write about Zainichi, ethnic Koreans living in Japan, Lee’s novel raises many questions about the relevance of different fluid identities situated outside the US in contemporary American literature.

These changes in American literature can be viewed in the context of the ideas of Jacques Rancière whose notions of dissensus and distribution of the sensible engage with the constant tension between aesthetics and politics. For Rancière, sensible is that which is seen as ‘normal’ in society where people have different roles. Distribution of the sensible refers to how these roles have been divided in society. This results in a hierarchical setup where every member of the community has a fixed place which determines what they are able to do and say and whether their opinions are considered. Dissensus can disturb and redistribute the sensible, as it signifies actions that question the roles attributed in the sensible. Dissensus can manifest itself in several ways, among them also in arts and literature.

Rancière does not see literature as inherently political but recognises its potential to bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible. While Rancière himself has not written

about contemporary multicultural literature, other authors have used his ideas to study postcolonial literature and its similarly complex depiction of identities (Brauer 2019; Vallury: 2014). As the idea of redistributing the American literary field and the constantly changing understanding of what is considered American literature are among the most common topics in contemporary American literary studies, Rancière's ideas about the connection between politics and aesthetics provide a framework to analyse contemporary American multi- and transcultural literature.

*Pachinko* illustrates the expanding notion of transcultural identity. Instead of offering a fixed vision of Zainichi identity, Lee uses identity markers that typically position Zainichi characters as different from the rest of the Japanese society but views them as something empowering. Lee shows the community as redistributing the sensible and thus actually (re)enforcing equality. Lee does this in several ways, both through basic identity markers like ethnicity and citizenship, but also markers of space – religion and pachinko – and lastly also material identity markers – food, lifestyle, education and language.

Both ethnicity and citizenship bring dissensus into the novel as Lee depicts the Zainichi existence as something dissensual. All Zainichi characters face ethnic discrimination throughout the book. However, the Baek family members, except Noa, do not hide their Korean ethnicity. Rather, they view it as one part of themselves but do not let it define them fully. As the novel spans several decades, the characters' citizenships also change. Until the Japanese loss in World War II, the Zainichi characters are citizens of the Japanese Empire. Thus, this shared citizenship with the Japanese is one of the few aspects in the book which allows the Zainichi characters to be part of the distribution of the sensible without having to make space for it themselves. After World War II the Zainichi characters have several options in regards of citizenship, but all of them, except Noa, choose to stay stateless instead of applying for a Japanese, North or South Korean citizenship. This stateless existence brings

dissensus into the distribution of the sensible, in disrupting the common sense belief that citizenship equals membership in an ethnic community.

Lee uses identity markers of space – religion and pachinko – to show how Zainichi bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible by creating their own discrimination-free spaces. These spaces include Christian congregations and pachinko parlours. Pachinko starts to function as a small social system, with its own welfare and pension systems. In pachinko parlours Zainichi, who otherwise are seen as outsiders in the Japanese society, can find a place where they are seen as the norm. Material identity markers related to lifestyle, education and language act in a similar way. They evolve throughout the book in a way that disturbs the distribution of the sensible. The Zainichi characters ultimately become virtually undistinguishable from the Japanese. Food, however, remains an important identity marker for all generations of the Baek family and a safe way of expressing one's identity.

Lee also writes about fluid identities by depicting the identity struggles of second and third generation Zainichi characters and bringing a Korean American perspective into the novel. For second generation characters, identity is already something that is not fixed as both Noa and Mosazu have their different identity struggles. Noa's identity struggles ultimately lead him to hide his Zainichi identity and pretend to be Japanese. This does not bring him contentment, however. His decision to hide his Korean ethnicity does not question the distribution of the sensible and the roles that go along with it at large. Rather, Noa's actions remain strictly individual, while his brother Mosazu is concerned with a more collective change. Mosazu manages to bring dissensus into the distribution of the sensible on a collective level by upholding pachinko parlours as spaces that help Zainichi to (re)enforce equality in Japanese society by making their own space free of discrimination.

Third generation Zainichi character Solomon and his identity struggles are mainly contrasted with his Korean American girlfriend Phoebe and her understanding of identity. As

Solomon has relatively few connections with Korean culture, he relates more to being Japanese. However, the Japanese society still sees him as Korean and he faces discrimination. Phoebe does not understand his lack of willingness to stand up against discrimination and defend his individual rights. Phoebe's connection with Korean culture is also different from Solomon's as, unlike him, she speaks the Korean language. This allows her to find some common ground with older Zainichi characters like Sunja. However, Phoebe's limited understanding of Solomon's identity ultimately leads to her return to the US. Phoebe is used in the novel to bring in an outsider perspective and, by making her Korean American, Lee is able to open up a discussion on the wider Korean diaspora and the differences between various diaspora communities.

The question of the wider Korean diaspora also comes up in the novel as Lee depicts the first generation characters wanting to go back to Korea and younger characters seeing the US as a place where they would be able to start a new life free from their restricted Japanese and Korean identities. While only one first generation character returns to Korea, other first generation characters also miss their homeland. Younger characters want to move to the US because they hope it accepts differences and has more opportunities. However, a third-generation character acknowledges that the US is a land of many opportunities, he does not idealise it. Instead, he sees his future in Japan despite the discrimination.

As *Pachinko* is the first novel originally written in English to focus on Zainichi and their identity (Yi 2022: 399), Lee's depiction also brings attention to Zainichi in relation to both Korean American and American literature overall. While Lee's main focus is on Zainichi identity, the novel features a Korean American character to bring in an outsider perspective. This allows the novel to engage with both American literature and wider Korean diaspora literature. Lee's depiction of transcultural identities brings attention to the importance of depicting not only diasporic identities in the US but also in other parts of the world. To use

Ranci re’s terminology, this focus on transcultural identities and the intersection of cultures allows the novel to redistribute the American literary field by making space for new perspectives and opening up the possibilities for other works not only about Zainichi but wider Korean diaspora.

Lee’s novel is among the increasingly popular literature and media products depicting Korean diasporas that have emerged since the 2010s. Recent examples include Lee Isaac Chung’s *Minari* (2020) and Davy Chou’s *Return to Seoul* (2022). The popularity of Lee’s novel also seems to have influenced the translation of literature related to both Zainichi and Korean diaspora overall. After the publication of Lee’s novel, two novels by Franco-Korean writer Elisa Shua Dusapin have been translated to English: *Winter in Sokcho (Hiver   Sokcho)* was translated in 2021 and *The Pachinko Parlour (Les Billes du Pachinko)*, which also features Zainichi characters, in 2022. Translations of Zainichi authors have followed Lee’s novel, with Yu Miri’s 2014 novel *Tokyo Ueno Station (上野駅公園口)* translated in 2021 and Chesil’s 2016 novel *The Color of the Sky Is the Shape of the Heart (ジニのパズル)* in 2022. The success of Lee’s novel has helped to make literature about Korean diasporas seen as potentially marketable to people already familiar with the topics from Lee’s novel.

Ultimately, Lee’s novel aims to represent a transnational and transcultural identity that is not contained within either geographic or ethnic borders. Lee’s exploration of the characters’ Zainichi identity positions them in the distribution of the sensible of the Japanese society. As *Pachinko* is a relatively insular novel, it seems somewhat resistant to the application of Ranci re’s ideas. However, distribution of the sensible and dissensus allowed me to analyse aspects of identity that are considered to be outside the norm as something that can empower people and allow them to survive and even thrive while still maintaining their culturally fluid identities.

I agree with Burns (2021) that Rancière's ideas can be valuable for analysing world literature, including transcultural literature. Instead of offering a Self-Other dichotomy, Rancière's concepts of dissensus and distribution of the sensible allow for a complex understanding of identity and its connection with politics. As transcultural literature often focuses on fluid identities, Rancière's dissensus helps to study these identities and how, despite differing from the norm, people still find ways to express themselves and to establish their own spaces that redistribute the sensible. As transcultural identities are becoming more common, Rancière's ideas can provide a good framework for studying fluid identities that exist between cultures in a world where identities are still often seen as fixed for life.

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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Ester Suur**

**Dissensus in/and Korean American Literature: Zainichi Identity in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko* (2017)**

**Dissensus korea-ameerika kirjanduses: *Zainichi* identiteet Min Jin Lee romaanis „*Pachinko*“ (2017)**

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Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärgiks on uurida *zainichi* identiteeti ning seda kuidas identiteet võib tuua dissensust tajutava jaotamise Min Jin Lee romaanis „*Pachinko*“. Korea-ameerika kirjanik Min Jin Lee kirjeldab „*Pachinko*“ korea immigrantide (*zainichi*) elu Jaapanis läbi mitme põlvkonna. Raamatu tegevusaeg hõlmab suuremat osa kahekümnendast sajandist ning seega pöörab Lee palju tähelepanu muutuvatele identiteetidele ja ühiskonna suhtumisele normivälistes identiteetidesse.

Kuna ameerika kirjanduses on identiteetide paljususe kujutamine muutumas aina tähtsamaks, siis annab töö sissejuhatus taustinformatsiooni multi- ja transkultuursuse mõistete ning nende vaheliste erinevuste kohta. Selleks, et analüüsida kuidas „*Pachinko*“ ameerika kirjandusvälja ümber jaotab tutvustab sissejuhatus *zainichide* ning korea-ameerika immigratsioonialalugu ning kirjandust. Töö esimene peatükk käsitleb Jacques Rancière'i ideid, pöörates põhitähelepanu tema kirjutistele dissensusel ja tajutava jaotamisest. Lisaks annab peatükk ka lühiülevaate sellest, kuidas Rancière'i mõisteid on kasutatud postkoloniaalse kirjanduse uurimiseks. Viimaks tutvustab peatükk ka aktuaalseid teemasid ameerika kirjandusteades, seostades neid Rancière'i ideede potentsiaalse rakendamisega ameerika multi- ja transkultuurse kirjanduse uurimiseks.

Teises peatükis tutvustatakse seni „*Pachinko*“ kohta ilmunud artikleid ning antakse lühiülevaade romaani sisust. Seejärel analüüsitakse romaanis esinevaid identiteeditähiseid tuginedes Rancière'i mõistetele. Identiteeditähised on paigutatud nelja kategooriasse - põhitähised, ruumilised tähised, materiaalsed tähised ja muutuvad identiteedid. Töö peamisteks leidudeks on see, et kõik identiteeditähised, mida romaanis kujutatakse toovad erinevatel viisidel tajutava jaotamise dissensust. Lisaks jaotab raamat ümber ka ameerika kirjandusruumi kuna normaliseerib *zainichide* kujutamist laiema korea diasporaa kujutamist ameerika kirjanduses.

Märksõnad: ameerika kirjandus, ameerika korealased, kirjandusteooria, võrdlevad kultuuriuuringud

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