

Transplanted Modernity and the Reconfiguration of Nation: Im Hwa's Writings on Modern Korean Literary History and National Literature*

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This article explores the evolution of Im Hwa's literary criticism, focusing on the continuity between his history of New Literature during Korea's late colonial period and his theory of national literature in the post-liberation era. It discusses how Im's view on the Korean nation contributes to postcolonial dialogues about preserving positive legacies of nationalist thought under colonial rule to facilitate complete decolonization and support for marginalized groups. In his historiography of New Literature, Im distinguishes modern Korean literature from its pre-modern counterparts, describing modernity in Korea as transplanted from the West. This makes contemporary literature, which he considers indefinable until history reaches a conclusive point, unfold through elements that are alien to Korea. Despite this, Im insists on classifying this essentially non-Korean literature as Korean due to its use of the Korean script. This paradoxical stance implies that the formality of writing in Korean is sufficient to define the literature as Korean. The inclusive vision of the Korean nation, open to anyone who writes in the Korean script, continues in Im's theory of national literature. He argues that the nation, composed of anonymous individuals who identify as Korean, serves as the foundation for all modern literature and holds potential for building a literary collective open to any marginalized groups under various forms of oppression.

Keywords: Im Hwa, transplanted modernity, New Literature, national literature, history

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