



Journal

Inter-Asia Cultural Studies >

Volume 19, 2018 - Issue 4: ARTISTIC MEDIATION OF DECOLONIZED BODY . Special Issue Editors: Joyce C.H. LIU and Naoki SAKAI



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Essays

Decolonizing love: ambivalent love in contemporary (anti)sexual movements of Taiwan and South Korea*

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Pages 551-567 | Published online: 21 Dec 2018

 Download citation <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2018.1543250>

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ABSTRACT

This article problematizes the modern construction of “love” in colonial and contemporary Taiwan and South Korea through historicizing the concept from the nineteenth century to the present. The conception of modern love in East Asia emerged during the late nineteenth century that coincided with the beginnings of civilization and nation-building discourses advocating as a strong mediator for the reconfiguration of social and intimate relationships. In the case of colonial Taiwan and Korea, the colonial governments and intellectuals constantly pivoted on “exceptions” – obscene sex, indecent behavior or illegitimate subjects – to justify their political legitimacy/hegemony

In this article



ormative social relationship. Fully embraced by colonial
chanism was extended to their postwar regimes: that is, love

is celebrated and worshiped without the recognition of its underlying ideology of discrimination and exclusion. I coin the term “love unconscious” to characterize the colonial legacies of love in the contemporary social movements in Taiwan and South Korea. Furthermore I examine how both religious groups and LGBTQ activism were stuck in the “love unconscious” with two cases of contested love: the definition of love in the dictionary, and the rhetoric of love in (anti-)same-sex marriage movements. This article argues that Taiwan and South Korea's LGBTQ and marriage movements are based neither on Western discourses nor inspiration, but are instead driven by the reality and legacy of colonial history. To envisage the decolonization of love is to deconstruct the love unconscious and reconsider the history of colonial love.

KEYWORDS: Colonial ambivalence, modern love, LGBTQ, marriage, decolonialization

Introduction: contested love in Taiwan and South Korea

In contemporary Taiwan and South Korea, love has become a site of contested meaning and value for pro/anti-LGBTQ movements. Different social groups declare the legitimacy of their own movements and faith in the name of love, and justify how their understanding of love is universal, and at the same time limited to certain forms of lifestyle. These statements (or events), although having their own “temporal-spatial specificity,” are helpful to observe the diachronicity and synchronicity of the development of “modern love.” I will demonstrate the thematic discourses and declaration of the LGBTQ communities and the marriage movements in Taiwan and South Korea, as well as analyze the opposition parties’ speeches for further discussion. The statements related to the appropriation of love as the main material for analysis can be divided into two groups, namely, “whose love is love?” and “marriage as the ultimate form of love.”

The Taiwan LGBT Pride has been held annually since 2003; participants grew from 2,000 since its inception to 123,000 in 2017.¹ In 2009, the theme of the annual parade was “Love Out Loud,” which the organizers declared an act “in the name of love,” and welcomed people who “support love and resist hatred” to join the team of *tongzhi* parades and to cry out for love. The parade promoted the idea that “LGBT people's love

homophobic tendency of Korean society, the number of attendees grew from its inception of 50 participants to 85,000 in 2017.² In 2014, the parade marched in the city center of Seoul with participants crying out the following slogan: "Let's Love, Let's Love, Let's Love! To Conquer Hate." As shown in the statements above, the *tongzhi*/queer parades held in different years in Taipei and Seoul had appropriated the slogan of "love conquers hate."³

Despite the fact that the 2009 parade in Taiwan and the 2014 parade in South Korea were themed love, nonetheless they became targets of fundamentalist religious groups, who deny LGBTQ/sexual minority love with expressions like "not," "incorrect," and "sin." For instance, a week before the Taiwanese LGBT Pride in 2009, the religious groups, for the first time, protested against homosexuality and the pride parade, promoting slogans such as "God will reform gay people's 'incorrect love' with 'supreme love.'"⁴ Activists from various religious groups tried to disrupt the 2014 Queer Pride in Seoul, holding signboards that read "Same-Sex Love is NOT Love" and "Same-Sex Love is Sin."⁵ The backlash against sexual minorities from religious groups continues after the public assembly in 2014. In a most recent campaign, "Real Love Bus," Christian conservatives organized themselves in a bus chanting slogans/promoting protests against the queer parade in Daegu on 23 June 2018.⁶

Furthermore, the confrontation between sexual minorities and religious groups turns white-hot when the two societies engaged in same-sex marriage debates. Roughly from 2012 onwards, public wedding ceremonies,⁷ legislative and judicial events⁸ of same-sex marriages became glaring events of media sensation in Taiwan and South Korea. As Korean media *The Hankyoreh* implies, the heated debates on same-sex marriage in South Korea and Asia was inspired by former United States President Barack Obama's public support for the legalization of same-sex marriages in May 2012;⁹ when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to recognize same-sex marriage on 25 June 2015, Obama tweeted the news with hashtag #LoveWins, which soon became the headline covered by Taiwanese and South Korean media.¹⁰ Given this, love also centers in the debates of same-sex marriage in both societies; even more important perhaps in this debate is that love reasserted a central position to envision and qualify marriage. For example, South Korean film director and activist Kim Jho Gwang-soo, who held a public same-sex wedding ceremony in Seoul 2013, states, "We got married because of love," and "For

Marriage Campaign in Taiwan shares the same value of love and marriage, inviting people “to ‘love together,’ celebrate the existence and beauty of ‘love,’ while fight[ing] for the basic rights to equal marriage for your love ones and friends.”¹²

Same-sex marriage supporters claim the “equality” and “basic rights” for love and marriage. Interestingly, although religious opponents of same-sex marriage supporters agree with the latter's claim on “equality” and “basic rights” for love and marriage, yet they draw the battle line with the latter on issues from individual freedom to family values and national security. For example, in a public debate about same-sex love held by *The Hankyoreh* in 2012, University Village Church Pastor and Inha University Professor Woo Namsik, argues, “the functions of family include reproduction, happiness, and love. Though we do not know whether there is happiness, love or trust, homosexuals cannot give birth to life.”¹³ Zhang Guang-wei, a pastor of Taiwan Hsin Tien Covenant Church, argues, “same-sex marriage, has nothing to do with the religion, nor with ‘love is love,’ it is about our life, and the structure of a country.”¹⁴ Apart from denying the “love” of/between same-sex couples, religious groups target on the issue of reproduction, and relate it to public health and national security.

Against this backdrop, I argue that this “contested love” by different parties is not unique to the contemporary societies of Taiwan and South Korea; it further offers a window to reflect on the genealogy of love in these societies past and present. By “past,” I refer to the specific period when the modern concept of love was first introduced to most East Asian societies in the early twentieth century while the “present” is the unconditional embrace of “love” as transparent and universal human rights value embraced by modern society. Moreover, although Taiwan and South Korea's LGBTQ and marriage movements are inspired more or less by and have made reference to the human rights discourses from social movements in the West,¹⁵ I argue that what actually drives these two societies' social movements and provides the references for social discourses is the legacy and continuity of colonial history. As what we have seen from the events of “contested love” in Taiwan and South Korea, the diachronicity and synchronicity of the modern concept of love reveal the cultural transformation of “love” in East Asia¹⁶ over the past hundred years.

social movements in the two societies. Next, by inter-referencing Taiwan and South Korea and the sexual minorities in both societies, I will challenge the conventional dominant referencing systems and set the context of my discussion on the legacy of imperial referencing in the construction of modern love.

Colonial love and the “love unconscious”

The specificities that Taiwan and South Korea have synchronically developed along parallel lines in the socio-historical construction of love are aptly demonstrated. For example, the transformation of the terms that refer to love is highly diachronic and synchronic such that the translation, invention, and usage of the terms “love,” “*ren’ai*,” “*yōnae*,” “*sarang*,” and “*lian’ai*” that appeared in the beginning of the colonial era are used for naming and the statements of different social groups, which also signify the emergence of the related terms in contemporary debates, like “true love,” “incorrect love,” or “non-love,” and the differences between Taiwan and South Korea.¹⁷

The emergence of “modern love” has largely affected the construction and development of social relations throughout East Asia in the early twentieth century. The development of social intimacy in colonial Taiwan and Korea were dramatically transformed in their response to imperialism and colonialism under the desire of modernization and national construction. During this period, the Japanese empire and colonial forces began to expand in Asia, leading to various social reforms in colonized Taiwanese and Korean societies at the end of the nineteenth century – drastic changes experienced during the transition from traditional social systems to modern colonial societies. It was also in this period that the voices of free marriage and marriage reform first began to ferment, which was followed by the romantic love/free love initiative that played an important role in the development of literature and social reform.

For example, in Korea, the Kabo reform that began in 1894, with the establishment of state sovereignty, the abolition of social classes, the promotion of Korean language, and the reform of the marriage system. In particular, the marriage reform promoted institutional changes to prohibit child marriage (increasing the marriage age to 20) and permit widows to remarry. At the core spirit of these reforms is the advocacy of “free

gradually loosening under the advocacy of new social values (such as freedom and equality) in the civilization, enlightenment, and nation-building movements. For example, an essay, titled “Equivalence of Men and Women”¹⁸ from *The Korea Daily News (Taehan Maeil Sinbo*, 1904–1910), separates personal characteristics from one's family background, and stipulates that equal social rank between families is not a necessary condition for marriage, while introducing modernization theories, such as eugenics (matching of clever and healthy men and women) to the marriage system. This idea has been promoted by the editorial article of *The Independent (Tongnip Sinmun*, 1896–1899), the most influential newspaper in Enlightenment period, which believes that eugenics will help to promote the civilization of the nation.¹⁹ Critiquing the traditional marriage system led intellectuals of the time to actively engage in social reform by addressing the problem of people's lives, class and “love,” and sought to use love as a way to connect people. In particular, the political frustration following Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910 and the failure of the First Independence Movement in 1919 caused Korean intellectuals to appeal to individual autonomy; the slogan of “free marriage” was soon replaced by “free love,” indicating that social change also influenced the colonial intellectuals' idea of modern love. A passion for educational and cultural reform entered the public media and coincided with various forms of discussions on *yŏnae*. During this phase, *yŏnae* became popular and gradually assumed the definition of romantic love. Because the term was already embedded in the ideology of nation-building, it was thus paradoxically liberating yet repressive.

It should be noted that the English word “love” could be translated as *yŏnae* and *sarang* in Korean. According to the study of Korean cultural and literary scholar Kwŏn Podŭrae, the significant difference between the two is that:

The [translated] word *yŏnae* only connotes the love between men and women. The love of God, humans, parents, or friends is not *yŏnae*. [...] The word *sarang*, [...] is widely known, coming from the Korean word *saranghada*, and has a long-existing meaning of “think of/feel.” [...] After the importing of Christianity, the idea that *sarang* meant the love of God became widespread. In the 1900s, the word was also used in the field of national discourse [...]. *Sarang* first became legitimized in the backdrops of God and Nation. (Kwŏn 2003, 15–16)

She argues that “[T]hroughout the 1900s, love became a public value under the influence of Christianity and patriotism, as Christianity preached the ethics of love, and devotion and passion for the state were strongly encouraged for nation-state formation” (Kwōn 2003, 204). Regardless of the different connotations between *sarang* and *yōnae*, they demanded both ideological conformity and moral cleansing for civilization and nation-building.

A similar social phenomenon can be found in colonial Taiwan. According to Taiwanese literary scholar Hsu Meng-fang's (2010, 37) study on the discourse of “free love” in colonial Taiwan, the discussion of “free marriage” in the 1910s transformed into “love-marriage debate” in the early 1920s. Later, the focus of debate shifted to the idea of “free love” in the mid-1920s. This development, as in colonial Korea, reflects certain socio-historical implications. Hsu illustrates that the desire to achieve “freedom,” “equality,” and the spirit of “revolution” were central concerns then that accelerated the social transformation from the Japanese invasion of Taiwan in 1895 to the victory of the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. Subsequently, a series of international events in the late 1910s,²⁰ and particularly the May Fourth Movement, provoked reflection on individual interiority based on the reform of the social system. Against this backdrop, the circulation of the modern idea of romantic love or free love in the Chinese language world had an important implication on the idea that was deeply embedded in articulations of cultural and national identity between the 1920s and 1930s.

For example, in the 1900s, essays on free marriage in the public media highlight the juxtaposition of the advocacy of civilization, free love, racial superiority, preservation of the nation, as well as criticisms of traditional marriage and the family system.²¹ By the same token, the issue of the revolution of traditional marriage took center stage since the launch of the *Taiwan Minbao* series in the 1920s.²² Almost every issue of these provocative magazines included essays on the issue of marriage. Essays such as “The Women Question in Taiwan,”²³ “On Marriage,”²⁴ “Women and Love-Marriage in the New Age,”²⁵ “Co-Study of Men and Women, and the Issue of Marriage,”²⁶ and “The Advocacy of the Reform of Family,”²⁷ demonstrate the need for marriage reform and emphasize the role of women, new education, traditional family values, and romantic love. These essays promoted statements such as “romantic love and marriage have the great mission to preserve race and promote culture,”²⁸ explicitly indicating the civilizing

example, colonial intellectual Cai Xiao-qian (1908–1982) advocates the autonomy of love by detaching it from the marriage system. He states in “From Love to Marriage” that “love is bigger than marriage, and marriage is just where the true love continues” (Cai 1926). This declaration separates love from the marriage system, while “love” is further understood as being homogeneous with the “civilizational spirit,” but it is repelled by “carnal desire.” Examples such as “The Evolutionary View of Love” (Che 1924, 11) belittles carnal desire as an uncivilized form of love through a Darwinist evolutionary view. The essay divides the development of love into “the old love: physical and barbaric,” “the new love: formal, under evolution,” and “future love: spiritual,” regards carnal desire and the prevalence of the current society as uncivilized. Zhang Wo-jun (1902–1955), one of the leading intellectuals who engaged in the New Literature Movement and the knowledge production of modern love in colonial Taiwan, states in “Supreme Morality: Love” that the ideal love is a pure and sacred spirit, has nothing to do with “the act of lust,” and criticizes “the poor people, who only know the sexual intercourse and reproductive function in the relationship between men and women, and don't know there is a noble and sacred love, are the people truly pitiful for without the value of life ...”(Zhang 1925, 14–16).

In sum, during the colonial period, the concept of love remained more aspirational than real.²⁹ The appropriation and construction of modern love in colonial Taiwan and Korea had such an explicit tendency that love was sublimated as spiritual, sacred, and civilizational, and was considered as the supreme form of social intimate relationship. In that case, one might ask: why did “love,” which emerged with enlightenment, individual autonomy, and social reform, take on such a hegemonic exclusive and discriminating tendency? According to Chow (1991, 45–50), behind the discourse on the “equality of love” is a hidden mainstream ideology at work. This underlying ideology is a reinforcement and consolidation of the traditional value of women. Korean scholar Kim Yang-sun (2011, 54) also argues that, though the public discourses on love and sex education seem objectively discussed the biological differences between men and women, “the ethics of sexual desire is not equally regulative to both genders. Women's ‘chastity’ is regulated as a means to maintain the monogamy relationship.” In the same vein, literary scholars Chŏng Hye-yŏng and Yu Jong-yul argue that “virginity” plays a dominant role in the discourse of love, within which “spiritual love” replaces carnal

Wife”³⁰ around East Asia evidently shows how women's given gender role and subordinated position have never been redeemed by the liberation of love or sex. Being manipulated by complex political and social forces, colonial intellectuals created the category “spiritual” and built up the order of desire. Free love, therefore, ironically became evidence of the absence of freedom in love relationships.

However, it is the supreme character that enables “love” to freely travel in different cultures or societies, and to be successfully translated into them as a supreme moral standard. In the case of colonial Taiwan and Korea, the full embracement of “modern love” signifies the colonial ambivalence that the colonized desires to be modern while at the same time fails to be so. In other words, the colonized seeks to overcome colonial reality through political agenda and becoming modern, but are incapable of doing so. Therefore, the universal value of love, and its autonomous, revolutionary connotation, impels and satisfies the desire of the colonized to be part of the civilization; the embracement of modern love substitutes political failure on the symbolic level.³¹

Learning from the lessons of history, sexual minority or pro-same-sex marriage groups have made claims using discourses of human rights, such as equality and freedom, considering the characteristics of love to be “universal” and “transparent,” yet, this discursive construction is in fact a product of colonialism. While religious groups’ assertion of the legitimacy of “love,” in particular, shows a tendency to view “love” as a universal value, at the same time it disqualifies others based on certain other values. It should be noted that, though religious groups play a central role in the “contested love” in anti-LGBTQ and same-sex marriage discourses, scholarship on the religious backlash against sexual minorities has argued that the legitimacy of the religious groups might be shaken by various social transformations and factors. For example, sociologist Huang Ke-hsien (2017) analyzes how conservative Christian groups in Taiwan have been actively involved in public discourse since 2010, especially in anti-homosexual rallies and discourses. Huang argues that the “the shifting role of the state in Taiwan,” “the transnational religious network in East Asia (especially Hong Kong),” and the emergence of “religious entrepreneurs” are important factors that have contributed to the transformation of the Taiwanese Christian community and its rising prominence in the public domain. Korean cultural geographer Ju Hui Judy Han (2016, 2017) observes that conservative Christian groups in South Korea, notably the Christian Liberal Party (CLP)³²,

security.” These forms of homophobic attacks are exercised for their own political agendas. In other words, religious conservatives need to create targets to attack in order to justify and legitimize their power.

Nonetheless, this worldview of “universal love” can be better illustrated with the notion of the “colonial unconscious.” In her analysis of the “colonial unconscious,” social critic Ezra (2000, 153) aims *not* to reveal the psychological dynamics and consequences of colonizer-colonized interaction, but rather to show how “the discourse of assimilation concealed a latent but powerful desire for cultural separatism.” Moreover, Ezra contends that the collective and unacknowledged racism “extended beyond both individuals and intentions,” and resulted from “a simultaneous attraction to and repulsion of difference” (Ezra 2000, 8–9). Thus, she argues that the tensions between welcoming exoticism and keeping it at bay were openly discussed and coexisted with those in which the will to dominate other cultures went unquestioned (remained unconscious). Religious groups’ paradoxical rhetoric of “love is love” but “your love is not love” embodies an ideology I term as “love unconscious.” I define the notion of “love unconscious” as an emancipation-oppression mechanism operated in the name of love that underscores the all-pervasive yet largely unacknowledged infusion of colonialism into Taiwanese and Korean cultures. This doubleness of modern love shapes both the crux in the “universal-particular” binary structure and the discriminating systems that produce various “others” (that is, sexual minorities) in a society. On that note, I consider “modern love” beyond its ontological meaning, focusing on the discriminating and value system of “love,” as well as its different subjects.

The problem of referencing systems: dominant “love” and its others

When “love” emerged as a social phenomenon in twentieth century East Asia, it coincided with the discourses of “civilization,” “modernization,” and “nation-building,” and was soon naturalized as a transparent and universal value. Subsequently, “love” became a dominant narrative that defined people's social relationships. Given this, when love became an ultimate moral standard, it denied subjects and behaviors related to

into existence by repression.” This tendency to moralize love and repress sex, as I argue, is not only a rhetoric issue, but underlies the state of the colonial situation.

I suggest that the “universal-particular” structure presents “love” as universal and applicable to all members of society, and even to all human beings, while otherizing forms of love (especially love outside marriage, carnal desire, and same-sex love) that do not fit the category. To problematize the binarism and the false consciousness of being equal and free, anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli's conceptualization of “the intimate event” offers a useful way of unpacking the legacy of hegemonic love. Povinelli (2006, 3–4, 191–193) takes “love” as the basis for theorizing the intimate event, a moment where free choice gains a particularly modern kind of political traction through the concept of love and enforces its own social construction. She points out that, not everyone has freedom to participate in the intimate event, if “you happen to be, or are considered to be, a woman, a homosexual, not white,” and this shows “a cluster of fantasies variously concerned with non-normative desires,” which are shown to be both “disrupted and secured by the logic of the exception.”

In colonial Taiwan and Korea, for example, the essays by medical doctors detached same-sex love from subject, created a category of illness. The implication of these medical narratives is the absence of autonomy or agency of these ill or perverted subject. This kind of medical narratives complicit with various social institutions, such as pedagogy, family/marriage, medical science to name a few, to normalize “sex” as a natural sexual desire between men and women. Together with those who have venereal disease, abortion, illegitimate children, same-sex love, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, (love/double) suicide, general and sexual crimes, and all kinds of perverted sexualities are disqualified in the practice of modern love, as they are deemed incompatible with political or civilizational ideology.³³ I have discussed elsewhere of how the case of “same-sex love” is made as exception in the construction of modern love and nation in colonial Taiwan and Korea (Chen 2013). The most interesting case is the “spiritual love” between schoolgirls. In contrast to the “sustainable,” “reproductive” heterosexual relationship, the “period,” “spiritual” same-sex love relationship is meant to be a “backward glance,” as we see the remarkable pervasiveness of the memorial mode of narrating same-sex love that media studies scholar Fran Martin (2010) discovers in contemporary Chinese representations. The “impossibility of the futurity”³⁴ reflecting from female same-sex

on in a reproductive relationship. To put it bluntly, the underlying logic of the discourse of love is to liberate an individual from traditional social relationship to a new rational contractual bond, within which the reproductive sex act or desire is welcomed for nation building. I argue that the discourse of love under colonialism confines romantic/free love to a monogamous-heterosexual-reproductive relationship, which shows how many emerging sexual subjects are designed as exceptions to set up and secure the reproductive sexual normativity for nation building and social order.

More importantly, although these “others” embody the contradictions in the process of modernization, they are of great importance to the mainstream ideology of colonialism and nation-building. Political ideology transforms abstract political demands into social reality by transforming and reinforcing existing “gender/sexual norms,” and mobilize people at all levels of society to enter the construction of political ideology. In other words, the “others” are not the obstacle to the realization of modernization or nation-building, since the prerequisites for these projects are not to maintain the homogeneity within society or the nation, but to ensure that these symbolic others maintain and preserve the alliance among different powers. Furthermore, these “others,” or the modern sexual subjects, generating from the discourses of love, have existed before “love” becomes a normative standard. Thus, from the way these subjects are named, summoned, and divided for the new social system or social relations (and the various power mechanisms behind it), we see how these new regulation techniques are more delicate and comprehensive.

Therefore, corresponding to the operational mechanisms of “love unconscious,” when sexual minorities claim freedom and equality they are in risk of reinforcing the doubleness of colonial discourses. For example, what is at stake when sexual minority groups apply the binary oppositions of “love vs. hate” is to reinforce the history written by the oppressor. In his study of violence in African decolonization movements, Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) has pointed out the need to exercise caution from “instability from anxiety” of the colonized as well as in the unconscious psychological mechanism. He suggests that “[M]anichaeism that first governed colonial society is maintained intact during the period of decolonization” (Fanon 2004 [1961], 14–16). The rhetoric of love as well as slogans such as “love conquers hate” create a structure of binary opposition (dualistic cosmology of good and evil) that manifests how minorities accept and adopt

The dilemma can be further observed in pro-same-sex marriage statements, which regard “marriage” to be the ultimate form of love. Kim Jho Gwang-soo, in his letter to the participants and Korean society for the public same-sex wedding ceremony in 2013, writes, “People ask: why do you want to get married? Because of love, need anything more? We are married because we love each other, just like any other newlywed couple.”³⁵ The statement is similarly echoed by another publicly married gay couple in South Korea nearly a decade ago, who also states, “we got married because of love,” and “same-sex love is no different than heterosexual love.”³⁶ In Taiwan, President Tsai Ing-wen supported the Taiwan LGBT Pride in 2015 with the statement: “Everyone's equal before love. I am Tsai Ing-wen, I support marriage equality,”³⁷ as a presidential election candidate then. Together with the theme of a fundraising concert³⁸ for Marriage Equality – “Love Is King, It Makes Us All Equal” – “love” plays a central role to authorize marriage in the advocacy of same-sex marriage.

Different from the queer predecessors in colonial time, contemporary LGBTQ people or activists adopt “marriage” to prevail against the “impossibility of the futurity” and (re)claim the legitimate relationship and citizenship. The complicity of love and marriage, however, as queer theorist Berlant (2001, 438) writes,

the modern subject [which are sexual minorities] produced by the formalism of love is exploited and expressed by the repetitions of intimate conventionality – so much so that to change the aesthetic of love, its archive of reference, inevitably animates discourses of instability from anxiety through revolution.

Berlant refers to the dominant narrative of love as the “paradigmatic love plot” that “starts specifically and ends generically.” Moreover, it is a story about “love's engendering in individual persons ends with marriage or something promising it, and with the presumption of reproductive acts to come, spawning future generations or sequels” (Berlant 2001, 438–439). This ultimate plot of love is achieved by endless repetitions of a singular form. In these statements, the civilizational values of “freedom” or “equality” on the one hand, are still attached to the universality of love. On the other hand, anti-gay marriage groups utilize the “archive of reference” that is based on the conception of modern love from colonial times to the present. The “archive of reference”

definition of “love” and its related terms shows the legacy from colonial love.

After a century of evolution, the concept of “love” has almost been fixed in present-day Taiwan and South Korea. In Taiwan's *The Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary* by the Ministry of Education, the term *lian'ai* is defined as “the behavior of love and pleasure between man and woman.” Another term equivalent to love – *ai qing* – has a similar definition as “the feeling of loving each other, usually refers to a man and woman in love.” On the other hand, the definition of *yōnae* and *sarang* in the *Korean Standard Dictionary* by the National Institute of the Korean Language signifies “a man and woman longing for or love each other,” and “romantic and affectionate feeling towards the opposite sex.” These definitions of (romantic) love in both Taiwanese and South Korean dictionaries suggest that intimate relationships should be exclusively held between members of the opposite sex. Another glaring observation is that the *Korean Standard Dictionary* defines the goal of romantic love as marriage with the usages/example for the term such as “she married a diligent student after three years of *yōnae*” or “we got married after six years of *yōnae*.” Although civilizing and national ideology are not directly imposed on the meaning of love in today's dictionaries, the tendencies of heterosexuality and marriage are celebrated as the ultimate goal. One should be aware of how present-day dictionaries contain historical traces of languages and concepts attached to them.

Consequently religious conservatives are secure in the knowledge that an established “archive of reference” awaits to be utilized to justify and preserve the dominant history by ostracizing the sexual others. In other words, religious groups need not use their theological knowledge as the basis for debate as the dominant history has already provided resources for them. In Taiwan, for example, most of the negative views against same-sex marriage attack homosexuals for their inability to “reproduce” and to maintain a loyal “monogamous relationship.” That more than 90% of the materials on the official website of pro-family organizations⁴⁰ are about the so-called “problems” of “homosexuality” and “sexual liberation” are evidence of the result of the colonial discourse of love. South Korea's anti-same-sex marriage discourses also hold similar arguments and strategies on reaffirming the “spirituality” of love and the repression of “non-reproductive” sex. As demonstrated previously, the religious representatives attack sexual minorities by stating same-sex love “is just like illicit love,” and same-sex marriage

prevailing historical narrative. Returning to the cases discussed in the beginning of this article, it is clear now how these cases epitomize the legacies of the socio-historical construction of love.

Because the history of sexual subalterns is always silenced or distorted by the dominant ideology, the subalterns cannot present their history with their own voice but have to do so in the oppressor's language and knowledge. As Adrienne Rich (1929–2012) suggests in her poem, “The Burning of Paper Instead of Children,”⁴¹ that, there is a correlation between language, knowledge and domination, as well as the way subalterns struggle to claim language or knowledge as a place where they make themselves subject. Thus, it is important to challenge the existing dominant references with the alternatives. I argue that the radicality of the LGBTQ movements present the testimony of the inequality of love and highlighted the foldings and unfoldings of the “colonial time,” and disrupt the temporality of the postcolonial state. I will provide further examples to counter the normative idea of intimate relationship and dominant reference of colonial worldview, and demonstrate how these open up a space for decolonizing love.

Toward the decolonization of love: inter-referencing the “unimagined communities”

At the end of 2012, groups of university students and activists who promoted human rights for sexual minorities in Seoul requested the National Institute of the Korean Language to revise the definition of “love” (*sarang*) in the *Korean Standard Dictionary* from (romantic and affectionate feeling towards) “the opposite sex or men and women” to “someone or any counterpart,” so as to avoid “heterosexual-centered language that leads to discrimination against sexual minorities.” The institute accepted the petition and revised the definition of love in early 2013. Soon after the amendment, conservative social groups, including the Countermeasure Committee for Homosexuality Problems and The Commission of Churches protested against the revision. They argued that specifying the “union of opposite genders” in the definition of love, romance, and affection is necessary for eschewing the encouragement of homosexuality.

Prior to this event in South Korea, Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association, Taiwan TG Butterfly Garden (the first transgender support group), and the Gender/Sexuality Rights Association Taiwan held a press conference in 2003 to urge the Ministry of Education to amend the definition of various terms related to sexuality that contain discriminating contents.⁴³ The press conference organizers investigated usages of the terms in six categories: from youth, homosexuality, transgender, gender, sex work, to AIDS, in the *Concise Mandarin Chinese Dictionary* (Version 1.2) published by the Ministry of Education, and found that the dictionary presents negative references that carry conservative and discriminating ideas. Examples are like: “Sex Work – Prostitutes and clients are a disease of civilized society;” “Homosexual – In recent years, it has been argued that homosexuality should not be regarded as a disease, but as an abnormal sexual psychology;” “Transgender – Look at the make up on his face, such a tranny.” The organizers pointed out that these examples are based on patriarchal, hetero-normative, and gender binarism, and are a major concern for education. The National Languages Committee responded that, “many usages, examples of the terms are inconsistent with the social change. The committee will review the contents, and invite scholars and experts to revise the untimely parts” (Yang and Shao 2003). The contents have been amended or removed in the current version.

I contend that “revision of dictionaries” represents the sexual minority groups’ strategy of “talking to the oppressor with the oppressor’s language.” The sexual minority’s attempts to revise the definition of love and other sexually related terms should not be understood as submission to dominant powers, but as revealing the evidence to unveil, what hooks (1995, 296) has argued: “how the oppressors do with it [language or knowledge], how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize.” Furthermore, by juxtaposing the events on the “revision of dominant reference” in Taiwan and South Korea, I suggest using the comparative approach of “inter-referencing”⁴⁴ as opposed to the existing dominant referencing systems.

As argued in the previous sections, if love, as a universally-shared value, creates a so-called “imagined community” in the process of civilization, it also creates various socio-sexual others to form the counter “unimagined communities.” The notion of

history of the modern world. Nonetheless, critiques⁴⁵ on “imagined communities” for its Western-centered, spontaneous, inclusive tendencies have drawn caution to applying the notion of encompassing all the different political imaginations. In either case, Taiwan and Korea are never perceived in the same imagined community, not even when they were both under Japanese rule and politically, culturally, converted into Japanese nationalities through assimilation and imperialization policies. Being mediated by various geopolitical referencing systems, Taiwan and Korea are perceived as cultural entities through their vertical relations with their imperial pasts, and segregated from each other as “unimagined communities.” Thus, as Barlow (2012, 623–624) suggests, the challenge “is how we understand the savage history linking emergent states – Japan, Korea, ‘Manchuria’ and China – one instance of a multiply colonized world, yet singular in its particular forms, strategies, ideologies and political practices.” I intend to introduce this geopolitical issue to facilitate my discussion of the “problem of referencing” in the construction of modern intimate relationships in Taiwan and Korea. The “savage history” Barlow refers to here, is the “darkness” that is equally the legacy of the many cultural imagination that are invoked in claims to alterity that should not be ignored in the criticism of colonialism. Similarly, I suggest viewing sexual others as the profound historical references to retrieve the hidden/forgotten history of queer lives, and to revise the historicism of colonial and heteronormative worldview, as well as to envision the strategy of decolonization.

Therefore, I propose to put forward this notion of “unimagined communities” to discuss the communities beyond national boundaries that are within Taiwanese and Korean societies. These are sexual minorities who challenge the normative ideas constructed by the modern state. Through examining the historical construction of modern love, I observe that diverse sexual minorities in Taiwan and Korean societies are segregated as “unimagined communities” as defined by the mainstream normative ideas through different power relations. I argue that these external and internal imaginative limits disrupt the implied trajectories of a unitary national or social imagination. The next question then is to consider how to resist the “love unconscious,” or, how can these segregated minorities identify one another, even to the extent of forming alliances among themselves as “unimagined communities”? In the cases of “revising the dominant

For Taiwan and South Korea, on the one hand, it is important to investigate the background of conventional East-West binary and the colonizer-colonized referencing. This comparative study of colonial/contemporary Taiwan and South/Korea is not confined to the similarities of historical processes or differences in cultural backgrounds. It expands the historical and cultural references – which have been confined to North America, Europe, Japan and China – to those countries/societies with/out commensurability for the articulation of specificities of the Taiwanese and Korean socio-historical situation. For the sexual minorities internal to these societies, on the other, there is a continuity that enables us to examine both the diachronic (historical and cultural transformations of love and sexuality) and the synchronic (differential appropriations and constructions amongst different institutions of a sexual minority and comparisons with others) development of sexual discourses in a society. With this, it is important to inter-reference the segregated, silenced, distorted sexual others both in specific historical time-space and within a society. To this end, the cases of the “revision of dominant reference” provide an instance in which to unpack the general claim about “historical reality” and in particular its relevance for theorizing “normativity.”

It should be noted that, the current conversation to revise the tendency of compulsory-heterosexual in the definition of “love” does not necessarily open up a new space for everyone to participate, and may reinforce the supremacy of love framed in a contractual form of marriage. It is regrettably difficult to fully disrupt the prevailing historical reference and create a new one. Nevertheless, what I observe from the event is that the revision neither targets an unavoidable referent of an imagined “normative other” nor embraces or celebrates the “alternativity.” In the case of revision of the Korean dictionary, I argue, the revision expands its scope of inquiry by positioning sexual minority peoples as producers of history and not simply as objects of it. By the same token, in Taiwan's sexual minority groups' petition for amending the discriminating contents of diverse sexual terms, the universality of heteronormative worldview is challenged not by the “alternatives” or the “particular,” but by a cross-categorical imaginary.⁴⁶ This is embodied in the strategic selection of different categories of the terms and shows how different sexual others – from youth to elderly, housewives to prostitutes, transgender to working class men, single moms to homosexuals, etc. – are defined by the mainstream normative ideas through different power relations. As I have

and already formed. It also shows how the subaltern subjects (colonized, women, homosexuals, etc.) are divided by the different structures and have their own concerns and priorities, which makes cooperation and alliances between the groups difficult to achieve. By inter-referencing the existing segregated minorities through cross-historical, cross-categorical articulation, the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed is recalibrated in the contested love in social movements of both states through the discourses of love that blur historical and relational lines.

This article has utilized the notions of “contested love,” “colonial love,” and “love unconscious” and considered the difficulty of recognizing both the paradox of love and the paradox of the “others” produced by love. It is no doubt a difficult endeavor to revise the existing dominant history (the archive of reference) and create different references for the future. Thus, tracing back to the emerging point of modern love and sexual discourses provides a model that poses an alternative set of questions and practices for thinking and enacting the relationship between the dominant and dominated in a cross-historical context. Furthermore, to go beyond the alliance of power relations, an assertion of more references in forming all kinds of discourses and the alliances of minority subjects ought to emerge. And we ought to think critically on the current dominant social relationships to resist easy conclusions and reductionisms.

Therefore, I envision an inter-referencing approach as a political engagement to examine and challenge the grounds for homogeneous imagination and to reimagine the “models of cross-cultural and cross-categorical” communities.⁴⁷ While the possible members of the “unimagined communities” are still in the predicament constrained by colonial, geopolitical, and love unconscious, they remain divided and segregated from one another. More efforts need to be invested in questioning and challenging the dominant history. If sexual minorities enable a direct critique of the false consciousness of love and overcome the division of power alliance, they will be able to revise history. What is at stake here is to realize the models of what French philosopher Alain Badiou (2012 [2009], 98) proposes to challenge: the identity cult of repetition by “love of what is different, is unique, is unrepeatable, unstable and foreign.” In order to revise the history framed by the dominant structure of colonial, patriarchal, and heteronormative relationships, the “different, unique, unrepeatable, unstable and foreign” form of love

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Chi Ta-wei, Chen Chun-yen, Wah Guan Lim, Jack Chia, and Jenny Hoang, Lu Yi-ting for their discussions and suggestions in the process of completing this paper. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful and constructive comments that greatly contributed to improving the final version of the paper. The earlier draft of this paper was presented at the “Conflict, Justice and Decolonization II Workshop” in Taiwan. I would like to thank Naoki Sakai, Joyce Liu, and all the participants for insightful feedbacks and discussions.

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Notes

In this article



ish, Mandarin Chinese and Korean language sources. Unless
ations into English are mine. The Romanization svstems used

to render Mandarin Chinese and Korean in this paper are Hanyu Pinyin and McCune-Reischauer.

1. The data number of the participants is from: *Liberty Times Net*, 28 October 2017. <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/life/breakingnews/2236511>. *China Times*, 29 October 2017. <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20171029000289-260106>.
2. The data number of the participants is from: *The Korea Herald*, 15 July 2017. <http://nwww.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170715000077>.
3. For 2009 Taiwan LGBT Pride, see <http://e-info.org.tw/node/48813>; "300 Members of Religious Groups Anti-Gay Protest." *Apple Daily*, 25 October 2009. <http://www.appledaily.com.tw/appledaily/article/headline/20091025/32042274/>; 2014 Korea Queer Festival, <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/2014-south-korea-queer-festival#/>; "Illicit Love is not Love, Neither the Same-Sex Love." *News and Joy*, 3 June 2015. <http://www.newsjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=199217>.
4. "300 Members of Religious Groups Anti-Gay Protest." *Apple Daily*, 25 October 2009. <http://www.appledaily.com.tw/appledaily/article/headline/20091025/32042274/>.
5. "Love Conquers Hate." *Media Ilda*, 9 June 2014. <http://www.ildaro.com/6711>.
6. "Opponents Assembled with Real Love Bus to Discriminate Homosexuals in Daegu." *The Hankyoreh*, 25 June 2018. <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/area/850434.html#csidxdf94bed091ea2919ebfe548bf9>.
7. For example, the Buddhist wedding held by Taiwanese lesbian couple Huang Mei-yu and Yu Ya-ting on 11 August 2012. South Korean film director and activist Kim Jho Gwang-soo and his partner Kim Seung-hwan held a public wedding ceremony in Seoul on 7 September 2013. Both public same-sex wedding ceremonies were covered worldwide.
8. Examples like: Taiwanese gay couple Chen Ching-hsueh and Kao Chih-wei applied to the Taipei Court to have their marriage recognized in March 2012; Kim Jho Gwang-soo, who was mentioned above, submitted a marriage application and got rejected in December 2013, subsequently filed a lawsuit to appeal its rejection in May 2014.

10. Examples can be found in: "Obama: Love Wins." *ET Today*, 27 June 2015. <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20150627/526486.htm>; "Same-Sex Marriage Legalized! Love Won!" *Apple Daily*, 28 June 2015. <https://tw.appledaily.com/headline/daily/20150628/36634930>. "Triumph of Love," *Korea Times*, 27 June 2015. <http://m.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201506270892547098>. "Will Our Love Win?" *Nocut News*, 17 July 2015. <http://www.nocutnews.co.kr/news/4445328>.
11. "Director Kim Jho Gwang-soo: Getting married because of love is happier than any couple." *International News*, 8 August 2014. <http://www.kookje.co.kr/news2011/asp/newsbody.asp?code=0500&key=20130808.99002142233>; "Kim Jho Gwang-soo couple will appeal the decision of the court to dismiss same-sex marriage." *The Huffington Post Korea*, 26 May 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.kr/2016/05/26/story_n_10138202.html.
12. "2017 Love Together." Equal Marriage Taiwan Facebook Page, 29 March 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/equallovetw/videos/269592710163522/>.
13. "Debates: How to See Same-Sex Marriage?" *The Hankyoreh*, 17 May 2012. <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/argument/533373.html>.
14. Zhang Gwang-wei, "Same-Sex Marriage is Not about Religion, nor Love," 18 November 2016. <https://goo.gl/i1DMiE>.
15. See Brian Padden's "US Influences Both Sides of South Korean Gay Rights." *VOA News*, 9 July 2015. <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-influence-felt-on-both-sides-of-south-korean-gay-rights-debate/2854672.html>.
16. For scholarship on this topic, see, for instance, McLelland and Mackie (2015); Suzuki (2009); Frühstück (2003); Kwōn (2003); Sō (2011); Kō (2001); Lee (2006).
17. One example of the differences is the terms they used to refer to same-sex love. South Koreans use the term "*tongsōng'ae*" (동성애) to refer to homosexuals; this term came from the broader discourses on romantic love. Taiwanese do not use the term "*tongxing'ai*" (同性愛).
18. "Equivalence of Men and Women." *The Korea Daily News*, 3 July 1907.



20. Examples include the Japanese Democratic movement in 1916, the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, and Wilson's announcement of "self-determination" in 1918.

21. Examples can be found in the following essays that appeared in *Taiwan nichichi shinpo* (台灣日日新報): The translation of Fukuzawa Yukichi's "Danjo kōsai ron" (On the Interactions Between Men and Women, 1886) into Chinese as "Nann'u jiaoji lun" (8 April 1900, 6); "Free Marriage" (1 July 1906, 5); "Debating Free Marriage" (16 July 1907, 2); "Statics of Marriage" (9 June 1908, 4); "Marriage Issue" (13 October 1910, 2).

22. The *Taiwan Minbao* series includes Journals of *Taiwan Youth* (臺灣青年, 1920–1922), *Taiwan* (臺灣, 1922–1924), *Taiwan Minbao* (臺灣民報, 1923–1930), and *Taiwan Shinminbao* (臺灣新民報, 1930–1937).

23. See *Taiwan Youth*, volume 1, number 2, 8 September 1920.

24. See *Taiwan Youth*, volume 2, number 2, 2 October 1921.

25. See *Taiwan Youth*, volume 3, number 1, 7 October 1921.

26. See *Taiwan*, volume 3, number 9, 12 November 1922.

27. See *Taiwan Minbao*, volume 2, 1 May 1923.

28. "Women and Love-Marriage in the New Age." *Taiwan Youth*, volume 3, number 1, 7 October 1921, 13.

29. As writer and literary critic Kim Ki-jin (1903–1985) commented in 1926, "yōnae has come into use very recently." Kim also commented that the famous English statement "love is best" is a speculative idea:

Though there are some guys who have the leisure to say "Love is best," saying that *yōnae* is a kind of emotional game and product of the bourgeoisie is a prejudice against life. Though it might be right to say this in some situations, it does not present the full picture. To those who live in the ruins of the mind or the pathetic majority, there are so many people hungry for love. If [*sarang*] has a certain condition and ideal, it's close to "perfection." If so, eventually the "*sarang*" is nothing but a means of living. People who say "*Reobeu-iseu-*

distance between fantasy and ideal is far. (See Kim 1923, 132)

30. The Wise Mother, Good Wife is a paradigm for constructing the ideal women. It is “良妻賢母” in Japanese and “현모양처” in Korean. For more information on its discussion, please see Choi (2009) and Koyama (2012).

31. The political failure here specifically refers to the failure of Korea's 1 March Independence Movement in 1919, and the failure of Taiwanese Cultural Association's Parliament Petition League Movement since 1921.

32. Christian Liberal Party (기독교자유당) was established on 3 March 2016. In April, the party stated that the voters should “support [the] CLP to protect our families from homosexuality and Muslims” in an advertisement for the 2016 parliamentary elections. See: “Religion-affiliated parties want to ‘protect’ country from Islam, homosexuality.” *The Korea Herald*, 11 April 2016. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160411001013>.

33. These subjects were listed in Kim (1927, 26–34). The colonial doctors’ medical discourses and advocacy of sex education illustrate the underlying logic of the modern love, which liberates an individual from a traditional social relationship to enter a new, rational, contractual one, within which the reproductive sex act or desire is welcomed for nation-building.

34. The situation is the opposition of what Lee Edelman terms as “reproductive futurism,” a political thinking about the future, whilst queerness “should and must redefine such notions as ‘civil order’ through a rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity.” See Edelman (2004, 16–17).

35. “Director Kim Jho Gwang-soo: Getting married because of love is happier than any couple.” *International News*, 8 August 2014. <http://www.kookje.co.kr/news2011/asp/newsbody.asp?code=0500&key=20130808.99002142233>.

36. “Why Gay Couple also Wants to Get Married? Because of Love.” *Ohmy News*, 7 March 2004. http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0000173143.

38. Information of the concert: https://www.arena.taipei/News_Content.aspx?n=4A7BFF61FA074F0F&sms=F9A95D3F5A5C2C68&s=B1ADB4D7CEB22696.

39. The online dictionaries are the Ministry of Education, Taiwan's *Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary* (<http://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/cbdic/>) and the National Institute of the Korean Language's *Korean Standard Dictionary* (<http://stdweb2.korean.go.kr/main.jsp>).

40. Here I refer to the website of “Protection for Taiwanese Family” (台灣守護家庭), which is established and maintained by Taiwan Religious Groups Protect Family Alliance (台灣宗教團體愛護家庭大聯盟) and Happiness of the Next Generation Alliance (下一代幸福聯盟). See <https://taiwanfamily.com/>

41. Here I particularly refer to the lines “Knowledge of the oppressor / this is the oppressor's language / yet I need it to talk to you,” extracted from the poem “The Burning of Paper Instead of Children” (1971).

42. For more information on the dictionary revision and debates, see Arthur Jung, “사랑의 사전적 정의와 국립국어원의 퇴행” [The Definition of Love, and the Backwardness of National Institute of the Korean Language]. *The Story of Art*, 12 April 2014. <http://arthurjung.tistory.com/404>.

43. “The National Language Dictionary ‘Destroys’ People Tirelessly.” *Intermargins*, 11 March 2003. <http://intermargins.net/Forum/2003/dictionary/dic01.htm>.

44. See Chen (2010); Roy and Ong (2011); Chua (2015).

45. For an illuminating discussion of these critiques, see Chatterjee (1993); Hobsbawm (1990); Marx (2003).

46. The vision of “cross-categorical” imaginary is inspired by Dipesh Chakrabarty's project of revisionist history and appeals to what he terms “History 3” as “models of cross-cultural and cross-categorical translations that do not take a universal middle term for granted.” See Chakrabarty (2000, 83).

47. Ibid.

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