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TO BE HUMAN: COMPARISON OF DYSTOPIAN EXPRESSIONS IN MODERN
EASTERN AND WESTERN LITERATURES BASED ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Abstract

Over time, humans have envisioned the perfect civilization built on the best of all things. Beginning with the early utopian society mentioned in *Republic* by Plato (427 BC – 347 BC), to one based on science and Christian philosophies as described in *Christianopolis* by Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1586 – 1654), and to a pagan utopia founded on reason and philosophy by Sir Thomas More (1478 – 1535), utopia is based on varying principles of idealism, but idealism nonetheless. In the modern century – specifically twentieth century after World War II – rapid advancement of science and technology also brought forth the idea of progress. With groundbreaking discoveries and inventions bringing significant improvements to the way people live, utopia could finally overcome the age-old restriction that limited its potential: scarcity.

After the war, the impact of multiple industrial revolutions echoed throughout the world. Wealth and technology that accumulated in the relatively intact Western economies found their ways into war-ravaged countries in forms of foreign aids and direct investments. Production of goods and services grew exponentially as workers and machines became more efficient. Industries demanded more and more laborers, and cities expanded at great speed to accommodate the exploding population. Hungry investors poured money into newly established stock exchanges and industrializing nations around the world had all the access to global capital they wanted. Profit surged in many thriving economies, and everyone had more money than before. Twentieth century seemed like a great step forward for humanity, with economic utopia now within reach for all.

However, people began to notice that the consequences of unfettered economic growth reached far beyond raising living standards. As these consequences began to appear in tangible forms – i.e. the violent labor movements – society itself began to shift away from uncritically lauding the ideal world that utopians thought that science, technology, and wealth would bring. Industrialization had led to modernization that adapted societies and civilizations to artificial features instead of humanity. Although modernizing societies initially appeared to be headed in the right direction of progress, there were qualities that were not part of what utopian promised, and people suspected that perhaps economic gains should not be a part of utopia after all.

Thus came modern dystopia – a sect of anti-utopia that formally reversed the ideals of utopia. For most nineteenth century intellectuals, utopia was the inevitable future. They saw it as the development being prepared by all the most powerful and progressive movements of modernism: democracy and science. To dystopians, those forces were instead feeding depravity and misery. The impact of the new developments was already evident in their own times and societies. Literature became one of the primary grounds on which, and tools through which, to examine the budding sense of dystopia: a vision of society overrun by oppression, brought on by the ‘evils’ of modern economic growth.

Reflecting the birth of technological utopia in Europe – the frontier of scientific progress in the nineteenth century – dystopian thought appeared first and developed most rapidly in the sophisticated nations of Western Europe, and later in America as the United States surpassed rest of the world in economic power. Further into the twentieth century, newly industrializing nations that mirrored the Western development showed similar social and economic patterns. At first, they embraced and exploited technology for all the riches it could bring, and then realized that without proper reform, technology was simply

a modern gateway to human suffering.

Like globalized industrialization and modernization, dystopia was no longer limited to the West. Adapted and nuanced by their own background, dystopian literatures of the world share similar themes of dissatisfaction with modernization, but still stand apart through culturally unique characters, plots, and settings. This thesis compares the differences and similarities between modern cross-cultural literatures with concentration on dystopian expressions based on economic growth. The works are drawn from both sides of the Eastern and Western cultures, specifically from South Korea, Japan, and the U.S.

Utopia carried humanity's potential for a better future until the Soviet Union's experiment with socialism proved disastrous and the world saw man's capacity for violence and destruction in two world wars. The pieces of utopia that survived early twentieth century were invested in science and technology in hopes that without the human element, they could finally achieve favorable results. However, the society's economic growth, according to some, another failure for also causing degradation of humanity. The repeated disillusionment with the idea of 'perfect world' led to rise of dystopia that now threatens utopia's survival as a social construct. Whether one will win over the other cannot be decided in the near future, but as sociologist and utopian Karl Mannheim (1893 – 1947) wrote, "the elimination of the reality-transcending power of utopia would mean the decay of human will... with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it" (236).

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Acknowledgements

Three years ago, there was a professor at the college of business who taught business ethics, one of many required courses for all business majors. He was a passionate liberal who believed in corporate social responsibility, curbing executive pay, and extensive corporate regulations. Not a day went by without him arguing with students who disagreed just as passionately, those who chose business because of its promise of fame and riches, and did not want to hear someone tell them how the rich and powerful are plaguing the society.

He had worked for five years at Penn State before he left to teach at another university. On his last day in class, he lamented today's profit-driven business models and business education that identified wealth with success. I felt sorry to see him leave, but with minimal interest in the business world at the time – I had my eyes set on going to law school since high school – I had difficulty sympathizing with his concerns and regrets.

After four years of studying finance, I now see and understand what he tried to tell us. There are those in the world who have no motivation, no passion, no goal in life other than money, and nothing will stop them from getting as rich and powerful as possible. How many zeros a person has in his paycheck determines how much respect he gets, and any interest, area of study, or profession that does not promise a high income is deemed worthless. I am saddened by hubristic business students who use false resumes to get jobs that they do not qualify for, lie through their teeth in interviews, and act as if higher salaries make them better than everyone else. I am conflicted and frustrated that these students will one day grab hold of great wealth and power, while having no

understanding of humanity.

The truth is, there are infinite things more important in life than money: freedom, respect, ethics, morals, integrity, family, spirituality, love, etc. I can never hope to fully understand what makes us human as prominent intellectuals have, but I do believe that physical, material, ephemeral objects have no place in the definition of humanity.

I humbly thank my loving family and extend my deepest gratitude to my thesis adviser Charlotte Eubanks and honors advisers Sydney Aboul-Hosn and James Miles for providing the teachings and foundation for me to build such ideas upon. If not for the serendipitous encounter with Sydney's comparative literature course four years ago, I would be leaving undergraduate education without a sense of fulfillment and enrichment. Never again will I have the opportunity to explore such vast and profound intellectual world far beyond my grasp that continues to search for answers. It is my greatest wish, as I set foot into the world of Wall Street and its infamous reputation for greed, that I never lose sight of what I have learned through writing this thesis, what is most important in life, and what it means to be human.

Prologue

From the beginning, utopia was largely a Western idea dating back to the Roman Empire, a classical religious vision of theocentric societies in which men pursued happiness through worship of God. However, as rationalism gained ground – notably after the Renaissance – and European societies paved the way to science and technology, utopia came under attack. Believers of reason and realism instead of God eventually overthrew the religious ideology that initially promoted utopia, asserting that the utopian strive for perfection meant that it had to abandon all blemishes, even the Christian tenets of ‘Original Sin’ or mankind’s corrupt nature. Such utopia did not sit well with orthodox Christians such as Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874 – 1936), who wrote:

The weakness of all utopias is this, that they take the greatest difficulty of man and assume it to be overcome, and then give an elaborate account of the overcoming of smaller ones. They first assume that no man will want more than his share, and then are very ingenious in explaining whether his share will be delivered by motor-car or balloon (Sargent 179).

As Chesterton challenges, there was a general disagreement as to whether man is essentially good, and whether utopia is indeed the pinnacle of perfection. If man were on the whole, good, the need for governance in the society of man would be redundant. On the other hand, if the utopian society were so perfect, it could mold corrupt man to be good. Sir Thomas More’s (1478 – 1535) explanation of the matter has shaped the basic utopian model of modern times, in which he says that utopians are neither naturally good nor naturally evil. They are not so good that the laws and institutions of utopia are redundant, nor are they so evil that they are incapable of conforming to the perfect society. In essence, utopia is the best of all institutions, and its constituents are the best of men, not because they are ‘more good’ than any other men, but because the effective

utopian laws lead the men to live to the fullest capacity for good, while suppressing their natural evil. Original Sin could still exist, as long as utopia set the ground rules to suppress it (Richter 53).

Under this compromise, paired with the scientific and technological boom of the early twentieth century in the West, intellectuals began to vision a ‘revised’ utopia. This modern utopia was not stagnant; it matured and progressed as men and technology did. The fact that utopia could become more ‘human’ rather than a mere disembodied idea was evidence to them that it was close to reality. As French writer Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740 – 1814) asked, “Where can the perfectibility of man stop, armed with geometry and the mechanical arts and chemistry?” (Lyman 213).

However, if these utopians saw promise for the golden society when the American inventor Thomas Edison (1847 – 1931) introduced the first electric light bulb, another group of intellectuals saw the very opposite. They were the anti-utopians, those who were convinced that modernism would lead to a new era of slavery and barbarism.

Just as early utopian ideas were heavily based on classical and Christian thought, anti-utopia, on the whole, was manifested in expressions of profound skepticism of man’s potential for ‘progress.’ There have always been those who, due to individual psychology or social ideology, fell on the other side of the hopeful claims made on behalf of humanity by social and technological reformers. ‘Men are evil,’ they claimed, ‘Men are sinful. Men are animals. They are weak, and in need of authority and guidance.’ Such mentality was at odds with the idealists even before the term ‘utopia’ became universal. “Never hope to realize Plato’s Republic,” noted Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius (120 – 181), “for who can change the opinions of men? And without a change of

sentiments, what can you make but reluctant slaves and hypocrites?” (Molnar 34). For centuries, the anti-utopian message was clear: men cannot and will never be saints or angels.

Anti-utopians resisted the utopian movement in a number of ways, including rejecting its ideals outright and challenging the logic behind idealism. However, one that perhaps left the deepest impression on modern thought was by thinkers of a particular sect of anti-utopianism, called the dystopians. The term ‘dystopia’ was first recorded in a speech given by John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) in front of the British House of Commons in 1868:

It is, perhaps too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dys-topians, or caco-topians. What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favour is too bad to be practicable (Lyman 118).

The followers of dystopia were not devout conservatives, a reputation that often put them in the same classification as persistent realists. They had little in common with those who defended hierarchy, property, and religion. Their response was not a mere rejection of modernity; rather, they passionately believed in equality and reason. It was the modern society’s abuse of progress that outraged them. To them, the utopians’ wishful attempts of applying principles to practice ended up in perversion of their promises – democracy became tyranny, science depravation, and reason unreason. The ideas that were considered progressive were the very same ones that devalued humanity and delivered people into moral prisons. Dystopians saw for themselves that it was the utopian ideal itself that was to blame for the contemporary troubles. Science and democracy were no doubt noble ideals – good in themselves – but the attempt to merge them with societies had produced the opposite of utopian hopes. In two world wars,

Soviet communism, German Nazism, growing division of wealth, and cruelty of technology, dystopians found ample evidence for their vision. They did not have to invent their own terms, but simply needed to draw on a tradition of social criticism that was already well-developed by anti-utopians in the late nineteenth century.

Dystopians were unique from anti-utopians in that instead of getting in a back-and-forth argument, they took the same tactics employed by utopians and turned them around, creating whole social orders, structures, and worlds in their writings. Instead of concentrating on the positive, the latter painted the darkest, most negative view possible of the present and future to come. While utopia was the ideal, dystopia was the tyranny of the ideal. In both cases, the intellectuals invited the audience to live in a society ruled by principles, whether they are of trust or mistrust. But in one life they experienced happiness, in the other, suffering.

Utopia has always borne within itself the seeds of its own deconstruction; seeds which did not sprout, perhaps, until much later. Yet, even though the two genres of utopia and dystopia sparred on different sides, as positive and negative, they were a unit from the beginning, never separated. The tension between the two poles kept them in a necessary unity for their continuing mutual survival. Part of this is due to the fact that dystopias contain many of the same elements as utopias – intense measures of social control, humans united in one, harmonious body. If utopia did not create a universal genre with these ideas already, dystopia would have had little to satirize. They are contrast concepts, getting their meaning and significance from their mutual differences. The formal literary dystopia had to wait for the establishment of the formal literary utopia. Therefore, there is no appearance of it before More's *Utopia*, but it has a fairly

continuous history of its own afterward.

For a considerable time after More, utopia carried the function of dystopia as well. Its satire presented a negative world similar to the modern dystopia, to which the writer's utopia was the positive response. Near the end of nineteenth century, the strategy began to show age. Utopia could incorporate a sense of anti-utopia only so long as its own utopian ideals remained a fantasy. Once, however, utopia appeared to show signs of becoming real, utopia lost its role as the map that led to the perfect society. The modern world's troubles and ills seemed out of place in the world that utopians had envisioned. It was under such circumstances that dystopia took the role of describing a world that utopians considered wrong. Beginning in the twentieth century, utopia and dystopia were carried between famous intellectuals such as utopian Herbert George Wells (1866 – 1946), and dystopians Aldous Huxley (1894 – 1963) and George Orwell (1903 – 1950).

Of those who have held the banner of utopia over the modern period, Wells was perhaps the greatest modern utopians that pushed such relationship between the two opposing concepts forward. He never created a proper utopia, but he heavily advocated the utopia of science and technology with an emphasis on planning and organization. Yet his visions of apocalyptic disasters that science may bring were the source of many dystopias of the twentieth century, along with the breakout of modern warfare.

After World War I, utopias were in full retreat. The 1920s through 1940s were dystopia's prime, overrun by mass unemployment, persecution, brutal dictatorships, and death. Notable utopians like Wells continued to preach their ideals, but they had little influence on the disillusioned new generation. For them, it was grotesque to see reason – the foundation of science and technology – as the great deliverers of humanity. If reason

provided any guide to the future, it was in the nightmare form of their perverted use. The urge to look into the future remained, but it was now a future to be feared. In a number of books with powerful imagery – Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – the future was portrayed as a totalitarian hell that extinguished all hope for humanity.

Due to people’s discomfort toward institutions at the time, the latter work especially attracted its share of speculation and controversy, becoming a canonical modern dystopian work. Is *Nineteen Eighty-Four* a prophecy? A satire much like Jonathan Swift’s (1667 – 1745) *Gulliver’s Travels*? An outspoken attack on the present and a warning of worse things to come? Orwell could have easily accomplished a combination of all. After much political and social debate by the public, Orwell made a statement of his intentions:

My recent novel is not intended as an attack on socialism or on the British Labour Party, but as a show of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been partly realized in Communism and Fascism. I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily will arrive, but I believe (allowing for the fact that the book is satire) that something resembling it could arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences (Talmon 14).

In the eyes of dystopians, for all practical purposes, Orwell’s account of his novel breaks down into two parts: satire and prophecy. The focus on the satirical aspects of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is to concentrate on the novel’s function primarily as a warning: do not let it get worse; everything is already bad. But at the same time, he is equally concerned that it could happen, implying that there is a prophecy to be made from the contemporary world: as bad as the current state is, a totalitarian world such as the one in the novel would be worse, and is well on its way to coming true.

Regardless of how critics analyze Orwell's novel, one message was becoming quite clear: the death of twentieth century utopia was at hand. Canadian literary theorist Herman Northrop Frye (1912 – 1991) wonders whether we are seeing “a running down of the utopia-making machine of the West, a paralysis of utopian thought and imagination” in contemporary literature (36). There is little disagreement about the fact that modern history has rendered all utopian aspirations false. Modernism, writes British bibliographer Ignatius Frederic Clarke (1918 – 2009), broke “the golden link between progress and posterity,” and man did nothing to restore the link (165). Even Wells seemed to have given up on hopes for the future and humanity. In *The Fate of Man*, he writes:

This world is at the end of its tether. The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded. There is no way out or round or through... Our universe is not merely bankrupt; there remains no dividend at all; it has not simply liquidated; it is going clean out of existence, leaving not a wrack behind. The attempt to trace a pattern of any sort is absolutely futile... the human story has already come to an end and... *Homo sapiens*, as he has been pleased to call himself, is in his present form played out (Wells 153)

Utopia has, for four centuries, accompanied that hope of progress and that striving for betterment. It has been itself a principle expression of that belief. Now, the idealism struggles in a losing battle against a widespread sense that this has been an illusion, an impossible, impractical dream. While utopian ideas still persist – striving for reason, order, and equality – utopia as a form of the social imagination has lost its former strength.

The failure of utopia has been dystopia's opportunity. The latter has seized it with much excitement and vigor as the former when it first came to being. *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have not only dominated the first half of the twentieth century, but have continued to attract a considerable following. Huxley's and Orwell's outlook on

the modern world can readily accommodate many of the political and social development of the postwar decades. The novels and their makeup are no trivial terms of contemporary vocabulary.

However, due to the symbiotic relationship that utopia and dystopia share, dystopia has suffered much of the same fate as utopia. As utopia lost its vitality, so too did dystopia. The power and imagery of utopia have always been the driving force and indispensable material of dystopia. No great dystopian novel has captured the popularity or become the center of public debate since *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and there has been no true Orwellian dystopian world in the contemporary society. The bulk of the dystopian writing has now migrated to more popular forms of entertainment such as film, and thus has lost much of their literary integrity as a philosophical school of thought.

Thus, instead of creating an entire dystopian society, modern dystopia has narrowed its focus on specific elements of society. This fragmentation gave rise to sub-genres such as social commentary, a form of dystopian literature with highly specific targets that tend to address highly specific audiences. They have kept close to immediate social and political trends, communicating little with dominant trends that attempt to define the contemporary dystopia.

Interestingly, in many ways, this new approach to dystopia was not limited to Western society. While scientific and technological progress was mainly based in the West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much of the playing field had evened out in better part of twentieth century. Many developing countries in East now have access to modern science and technology, which they used to further their welfare and achieve unprecedented rate of economic growth. This meant that the rest of

the world began sharing the very same troubles that West was experiencing now, or had experienced before. Dystopia, in its fragmented form, had found a global audience.

Economic growth was one of the topics that frequently got the attention of dystopian writings in developed countries, but they were fairly uncommon until men became consumed by pursuit of happiness through material riches. As wealth became abundant but concentrated in the few, as money became the symbol of influence and supremacy, dystopians became troubled by the societies that strived for economic power at the cost of humanity. There was little value left in satirizing political ideals when everything could be changed by who had the greatest wealth. Naturally, modern dystopians began targeting wealth as the root of modern societies' ills. Economic dystopia is hardly an isolated topic, and is present in many modern novels in East and West, all sharing a common view of the societies that were supposed to be closer to perfection through progress and wealth. The following section will examine three particular examples of dystopian writing from the two regions – “The Strange Land” by Hwang Sok-yong from South Korea, *Gold Rush* by Yū Miri from Japan, and *Player Piano* by Kurt Vonnegut from the United States – followed by a look into patterns of economic growth in each respective countries.

Dystopian Literatures

Humanity and Expansion: Hwang Sok-yong and “The Strange Land”

The life of one generation is fixed, but the nation and its people are immortal. What we strive to accomplish today is not for this generation to live well, but to pass them down so that our people’s spirit may live on. Compared to other countries, we have lost at least a generation of progress. We cannot afford to lose any more. While others accomplish one we must complete ten, and while others rest, we must work and keep practicing... Regardless of changes in times and societies, labor is human being’s most fundamental and important life skill (Bahn 1A).

– President Park Chung-hee’s 1963 inauguration speech

Born during the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula, Park Chung-hee came from a modest family in a rural farming region of South Korea. After getting a degree in education and teaching at various elementary schools, he enrolled in Army Staff College and served in the Eighth Infantry Division of the Manchukuo Army near the end of World War II. After the war, he was allowed to return to South Korea, where he excelled as a strategist during the Korean War and rose to the rank of general – a position that allowed him to travel and study Western culture and practices that he would eventually bring to his country. Political chaos engulfed the nation after the war, and constant student protests resulted in deadly clashes between the frustrated public and demoralized law enforcement. Amidst the poor attempt by few politicians to adopt parliamentary rule, Park led a military coup on May 16, 1961, officially ending the Second Republic of Korea and becoming the first President of the Third Republic of South Korea in 1963.

Park was an ardent nationalist. He could not accept the fact that South Korea had lower per capita income than any of the surrounding Asian countries, including North Korea, at only about seventy-two dollars (Minns 176). With his expanding political

power, he initiated a series of Five Year Economic Plans and created the ‘New Community Movement,’ a plan to modernize agricultures and industries through “hard work, innovation, and unity” (Bahn 1A). He personally directed agricultural developments in small farming towns and wrote the official song of the movement. His great national pride inspired the Korean people to believe that together they have the strength and intelligence to someday rival the greatest countries and peoples in the world.

Unfortunately, Park’s military background that made him so passionate about his country also prevented him from being an altruistic civil servant. Using his widespread support, his Democratic Republican Party fixed the electoral system in his favor, and later staged a self-coup with the passing of the Yusin Constitution that effectively made him a legal dictator. As the resulting authoritarian rule slowed down economic growth, the public – mostly college students – carried out nationwide protests to restore democracy. In 1979, after eighteen years in office, countless demonstrations and protests against him, and surviving two assassination attempts, Park was shot to death by a member of his own cabinet, the director of Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

Nonetheless, Park’s dictatorship could not tarnish his glowing nationalist reputation that still stands firm years after his death. The economic plans and reform movements he created were great successes that are studied and copied by many developing nations today. Park was not afraid to make controversial decisions, such as normalizing relations with Japan for their capital and technology, a sensitive political move taken only fifteen years after the end of Imperial Japan’s occupation. Thanks to the vast economic power the country gathered under his regime – now fondly called ‘The Miracle of Han River’ – Park is still highly regarded by many Koreans as the most

respected president in South Korean history (Bahn 2A).

However, like in many developing countries, behind ‘The Miracle’ of exponential economic growth and rising living standards, there were the ordinary everyday laborers who built and worked in the factories before workplace regulations and labor movements came about. Park took advantage of the times of unrest and uncertainty, uplifting the country with songs and chants of national and people pride that drove the peasants and workers into hard labor. To control the direction of the economy without impeding on free market principles meant that Park had to give private companies an incentive to follow his plans. Unfortunately, that incentive was to give them great power and control over the working class. As industrialization progressed through 1970s and 80s, Korean factory workers received just eleven percent of the wages paid to workers in the US and worked much longer weekly hours – around fifty to sixty hours (Minns 180). They worked in deplorable conditions, as described by a textile workers’ public appeal to the government in 1983:

Our life in the factory is really miserable. The company oppresses us by intervening in our personal lives... We are endlessly plagued by various diseases... workers have yellow, swollen faces from inadequate sunlight. We are struggling to free ourselves from these miserable conditions which are too many to enumerate. (Minns 181)

Starting a labor union, while technically allowed by law, was extremely difficult due to numerous legal hurdles, not to mention the efforts by the government intelligence and enforcement agencies to squash any signs of labor organization or disputes.

Hundreds of agents acted as secret police to uncover agitators who were considered ‘enemies of the regime,’ and they ignored the violence against laborers by the police and privately employed enforcers – often gang members. But these forceful methods could

not keep up with the rapid rise of working class during the two decades of growth. By 1970s, nearly half the population was wage and salary workers, and this workforce began a long journey towards a new labor movement through protests, sit-ins, strikes, and even suicides.

This new labor movement was not limited to the manufacturing industries. It spilled over to the entire culture, acting as a catalyst for a new anti-establishment literary movement that exploded onto the scene. The Korean literature during this period was marked for its concern for various social issues that began to appear during industrialization. As part of the generation that was right in the middle of the national struggle, Hwang Sok-yong pioneered the social commentary genre with his 1971 short story “The Strange Land.”

Hwang based the story on his experience doing hard labor in construction sites around the country, going on strikes, protesting against the regime, and getting beaten and arrested several times by the police. “The Strange Land” is widely regarded as the prototype of Korean labor literature, portraying the lives of rough, uneducated laborers in the middle of undeveloped land, hired to fill the swamps and build factories for the expanding city. What should be a celebrated moment of national expansion and victory of labor – turning unlivable land into valuable real estate – is instead the setting for Hwang’s cruel dystopia.

In Hwang’s story, the laborers are stuck in a perpetual cycle of mounting debt. Their daily wages are reduced to a fraction of the original value after the company deducts a number of petty fees. The remainder is hardly enough to save, forcing the workers to borrow money from the company. Labor exploitation is so great that the men

could work every hour of the day and still owe the company more and more everyday. The men have become mere numbers and machines, abused and beaten or immediately replaced if they ‘malfunction.’

The conditions described in “The Strange Land” are reflective of the general sentiment of the country during rapid growth. While the rich emphasize the value of labor and the powerful preach the importance of national pride, the poor who have nothing offer pay the price of growth with their bodies. Outside the parochial view of government authorities who usually turned a blind eye to labor abuse, “The Strange Land” describes a world in which the rich and powerful are free to practice their productivity doctrine, as expressed by the company spokesman when faced with demands for better benefits:

At the present time, employers and managers are concerned only with increased productivity. This form of capitalism is substantially inconsistent with the theory and accusations that we capitalists seek only profit maximization. It is the real reason why capital-labor collaboration is so urgently needed and why the doctrine of class struggle should be discarded. (Hwang 194)

The story picks up after many attempts to form a labor union and go on strikes have failed due to police and gang interference. The leaders have been dragged away from the construction site by the intelligence agents and never heard from again. As punishment and warning to the rest of the laborers, the malicious site manager has boarded up the only cafeteria in the site for five days, forcing them to either travel hours to the nearest town for food or starve. Every time the ‘rabble rousers’ are removed from work, only those who have surrendered their wills to stand up are left behind. They are dissatisfied with their positions, but have simply given up hope after seeing movement after movement crumble under the weight of the wealthy and powerful.

Among the new laborers brought to the site are young college dropout Lee

Dong-hyuk and an overzealous ex-soldier everyone simply calls Captain. Despite their contrasting backgrounds – college students often clashed with military personnel during protests – they immediately form a brotherly bond. Lee, with his youthful optimism and hope, is able to understand the brutality and instinctively knows what must be done in order to get what they want. On the other hand, Captain is restless, bold, and itching for action, but is not able to fully grasp what he should do to start the movement effectively. He often unwisely lashes out against the manager and ends up getting beaten by the privately hired gang members. If Captain is the doer, Lee is the planner, and they take advantage of each other's skills to rally other laborers.

Together, they decide to lead another strike, a “strike to end all strikes” (Hwang 199). The timing seems perfect; a group of politicians were planning to visit the construction site, a week of bad weather has backed up the work schedule, and the weary laborers were fired up from the manager's brutal beating of Oh-ga, one of the laborers, a docile mute who never got in anyone's way. Company managers assembled a large police force and gang members to quell the strike as quickly as possible. The list of demands were simple, direct, and by today's standards, fair:

“We only ask for four things, and you'll never to deal with these troubles again,” Dong-hyuk said. “One, we want the same wages as those laborers in the city. Two, set a regular work time. Three, fire the management and let the workers take turns managing ourselves. Four, fix the cafeteria and houses and let outside companies provide our food.” The manager looked at Dong-hyuk, not sure if he should laugh. (Hwang 203)

But in the 1970s environment where sacrifice of the weak and poor are required – and expected – for the sake of growth, these demands were completely unacceptable. Strike soon turned violent. The police manage to detain some of the laborers, including Captain, and the rest are forced to hide in the nearby woods for days. While cold and

starvation slowly eat away the strikers' morale, the manager schemes that he will pretend to accept the terms, turn over the leaders to the government as usual, and force everyone back to work in time for the politicians' visit. With Captain no longer by his side, Lee knows that he has lost the strength or ability to keep the laborers, and all of them eventually buy the manager's lie and get out of the woods. Cold, hungry, alone, and overcome with disappointment and anger, Lee reaches for an explosive kit used for clearing the woods for construction. "It doesn't have to be tomorrow, but it will be someday," says Lee, and then he bites down a stick of dynamite (Hwang 231).

Lee's character is a tribute to Chun Tae-il, a famous name in South Korean social studies. The first signs of surging labor movement in the early 1970s came from the textile industry, centered in the now-historic Peace Market in Seoul. After appeals to authorities for the enforcement of legal minimum standards went ignored, several large-scale demonstrations broke out. When the police beat the crowd back, Chun, a twenty-two-year-old worker, set himself on fire in protest. Lee's role as the martyr is an unmistakable resemblance to Chun, who became the inspiration for many workers throughout the country to participate in the demonstrations. Hwang does justice to the historical figure by realistically portraying the struggle – notably, his accurate use of rough peasant language and depiction of the bond between laborers. He also liberally inserts his thoughts in Lee's voice, and this is most evident during the heat of the strike, when Lee argues with the manager:

The manager sneered at Dong-hyuk, "don't you know that rousing the workers and start messy fights is illegal?"

"Why is it illegal?" asked Dong-hyuk.

"You really don't know? Because only dirty commies do things like that."

"Do we kiss ass to the politicians to suck the poor's blood, or steal food and money meant to feed and pay the workers, lie to win contracts, you sons of

bitches. You tell me that I'm a commie? You call us commies, us who shed sweat and blood make an honest living, and you people don't even know how to clean your own shit. I might leave quietly if you bastards get the hell out of here first... before then, you could bury me in the swamp for all I care. I will never leave."

"What if you don't get what you want? You know the people upstairs don't care about dirt like you. What is it you really want? You just want to stir up trouble and complain for the hell of it."

"If we don't get our rights today, those who follow us tomorrow will get them. If not tomorrow, the day after, and the day after that. You people don't understand. What we're doing is not about today." (Hwang 218)

This exchange is powerful in more ways than one. In just a few lines of dialogue, Hwang describes what is at the heart of all labor protesters and demonstrators, those who give their lives to the movement: They know that diligence and effort alone cannot immediately win the struggle, but they still choose to make the stand. Altogether, this individual courage becomes the people's spirit that can bring great change in the future. To those in power and unwilling to give up control, righteous revolutions appear as just the opposite – senseless and unjust – and they are crushed accordingly. Up against this reality, against all hope, Lee becomes a part of the people's spirit when he, like Chun, sacrifices himself for his people's future.

However, a noble tribute to martyrdom is not the main reason why "The Strange Land" is notable in the study of Korean literature today. Its significance stems from how Hwang modernized the idea of 'minjung' in literature in only a few pages of text. Minjung, literally meaning 'people' or 'populace,' encompasses age-old principles of popular democracy and nationalism, and is used to describe the will of the people, usually in terms of oppressed communities. For example, resistance to foreign invaders of the Korean Peninsula is considered to have been suffered by minjung, as was resistance to the division of Korea, and the great foreign involvement in the country – by countries such as the U.S. and Japan (Choi 351). While the nation was united as a whole after

liberation and Korean War, the political and economic unrest beginning in the 1960s divided the powerful from the weak, and this oppression brought minjung back into the people's sentiments. Minjung settled well in the labor movement because the laborers were at the forefront of the struggle, but it was not fully established until students and intellectuals stepped in. Many opponents of the regime, including students, writers, journalists, and church leaders, saw the labor movement as an opportunity to form a large-scale offensive against the authoritarian regime, and sought to mobilize the workers and peasants. In the hands of intellectuals, minjung grew prominently through sociology, literature, theology, and art.

Lee's last line before his death – "It doesn't have to be tomorrow, but it will be someday" – is very much at the heart of minjung: self-sacrifice, hope, resilience, and pride. The focus of Hwang's dystopia is not misery, corruption, or immorality, and how they have degraded the society as a whole, even though all those elements are present in the story. Rather, his dystopia is a reflection of 1970s reality that calls attention to the strength of people's will, minjung. "The Strange Land" is a message of hope – ironically in line with President Park's beliefs – that the Korean people have the power to change even the worst of all situations, and what they sacrifice today will bring much prosperity and well-being for their sons and daughters.

"The Strange land" and Hwang's following works, along with many songs, artworks, books, and speeches by intellectuals allowed the labor movement to evolve into a greater populist movement against dictatorship. The parliamentary and legal opposition coupled with a militant strikes by workers proved a force to reckon with, as evidenced by Pusan riots and strikes in 1979 (Minns 186). Nationwide protests in support of the Pusan

workers left Park's regime unsure whether to employ even greater oppression or to make concessions. After Park's assassination, another military regime took over and used much more force against the labor movement. Between 1980 and 1983, all autonomous unions were destroyed, five hundred news reporters and eighty professors were sacked and another five hundred politicians either arrested or banned from taking part in politics (Minns 190). However, as more males joined the workforce to fill the demand heavy industries during the 1980s – car manufacturing, shipbuilding, steel making – the resistance became more hostile and violent, which attracted more media and public attention.

The mounting tension broke out in January 1987 when the police tortured and killed a Seoul National University student, Baek Chong-chul. With Chun's sacrifice in 1970 still fresh in people's memories, the nation as a whole rose up against the government in a series of marches that was the largest movement of protest in history of the country (Bahn 2A). With majority of the country sympathizing with the labor movement, the regime had no choice but to concede. This eventually marked the end of authoritarian regimes in Korea's history. Democratic oppositions soon declared a new constitution stating that the next President would be directly elected, and leading labor unions seized opportunity of the liberalization to acquire substantial power. With the formation of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, the first recognized national labor movement, the country took the first step toward establishing fair labor rights. As a result labor disputes have decreased substantially in the 1990s, and the economy has been able to maintain sustainable growth since without disruption of violent strikes and protests (Minns 194).

Compared to its scarred history, Korea has achieved much political and economic stability today. Although the influence and strength of minjung is not as commonplace today without a great struggle or oppression, the passionate nationalism – bordering on insecurity about the country’s reputation – is still strong in international affairs. When a Korean individual succeeds or fails on an international scale, the entire nation feels great pride or shame. Such uniformity of sentiments was strengthened in the modern economic dystopia, and Hwang’s “The Strange Land” played a pivotal role in transforming the decentralized labor movement into the people’s movement that eventually brought about the modern Korean democracy and prosperity.

Thus, in the beginning stages of industrialization, the tangible dystopia that could be easily seen, felt, and heard made it convenient for people to comprehend the effect of forceful drive for economic growth; the pain was very real. However, as industrialization successfully led to modernization of societies that universally raised the standard of living to some degree, that pain became shadowed by modern material comforts. Consequently, dystopians faced the challenge of making the pain – still very real to them – emerge from under the covers once again. One way they successfully met the challenge was to transcend from realism into surrealism, as seen by the Japanese novel *Gold Rush* by Yū Miri.

Dystopian Literatures

Humanity and Wealth: Yū Miri and *Gold Rush*

It's only when I kill that I am liberated from the constant hatred that I suffer and that I am able to attain peace. It is only when I give pain to people that I can ease my own pain. (Chen)

– Excerpt from Sakakibara Seito's letter to the local Kobe newspaper

On May 27, 1997, a janitor found a decapitated and mutilated head wrapped in trash bags in front of Domogaoka Middle School in Kobe, Japan. The head belonged to Jun Hase, a mentally handicapped sixth grade student who had been missing for three days. A note found stuffed in the boy's mouth read, "This is the beginning of the game... You police guys stop me if you can... I desperately want to see people die, it is a thrill for me to commit murder. A bloody judgment is needed for my years of great bitterness" (Chen).

The note was signed Sakakibara Seito, a self-given identity, along with cryptic symbolism that led the investigators to believe that a violent psychotic serial killer was on the loose. Parents accompanied their children everywhere, and playgrounds sat eerily empty and silent. On June 6, in midst of media frenzy, Sakakibara sent a 1,400-word letter to a local newspaper. The letter was a jumbled mix of harangue against Japan's "highly regimented, highly disciplined education system," derision of police and investigators, and threat to kill more people, not just children (Eido).

Three weeks later, to the shock of everyone following the case, the police arrested and convicted a fourteen-year-old student who went to the same school as the victim. Not only was he just a teenager from a fairly affluent and stable family, further investigations revealed that he was also responsible for the murder and attempted murder of two ten-year-old girls back in March. During questioning, he showed no sign of remorse,

instead swelled with pride of the message he sent to the society he hated so much. The boy, who became simply known as ‘The Kobe Killer,’ revealed a slew of problems rising among broken youth in Japan and prompted numerous social reforms that attempted to shield the young from the society’s ills.

No one thought that a fourteen-year-old could carry out such sadistic murders. The Japanese society was particularly shocked because the imagination and thoughts of children went far beyond their expectations. They saw that hidden behind the abundance of wealth, convenience, and peace in their daily lives, there is a burden of depravity and evil that children are exposed to. I couldn’t help but feel stunned at the boy’s language and delusion, but at the same time, I could also feel the darkness he kept under his shell. As a writer, I felt compelled and responsible to constantly question and push the Dostoevsky-esque idea of crime and punishment. (S. Kim 14B)

– Yū Miri’s response to the Kobe murders

Yuminaga Kazuki is Yū’s Sakakibara Seito, and Kogane-chō is Kazuki’s Kobe.

Altogether, the characters and setting are the making of Yū’s dystopia in *Gold Rush*.

Inspired by the Kobe Killer to explore the modern disturbed youth, Yū dives into the minds of a murderer, and unapologetically so. “To be direct, when a writer is writing about a murder’s state of mind, she must be the murderer herself. If that seems obsessive, then I believe I intentionally became obsessed,” said Yū, in response to criticism that *Gold Rush* exposes too much about Kazuki that the work itself loses focus on the holistic view of society, “Modern society itself has lost its focus, so why should there be one within modern literature?” (S. Kim 14B).

However, in the novel, Yū does not merely make a reflection of the modern Japanese society by introducing a fictional equal of the Kobe Killer. Her Kobe Killer does not kill his peer or a child of lesser mental state. Kazuki deliberately and violently commits patricide, and plans to murder another adult. Yū predicts that if the state of today’s societies is to continue, teenagers and young adults will direct their rage toward

superior figures, namely fathers in patriarchal societies such as Japan. “In the past, the younger generation rebelled against structure and hierarchy, but as the country flourished in the 1980s, the culture of defiance faded away behind prosperity and convenience,” she said (S. Kim 14B). The anger and frustration that fueled the rebellions stayed behind, eventually leading them astray as to what actual struggles they face and how to address them. With the novel’s main character, Yū describes such a teenager, dangerously confused about his place in society and life in general. Kazuki is not able to wake up from this state of detachment from reality and mistakenly targets his father as the one responsible for his helplessness. Yū goes beyond describing Kazuki’s bumbling words and deeds to masterfully mold her writing into a work that convincingly captures Kazuki’s state of mind. She also succeeds in weaving in strong images and themes that incorporate her own ideas about the cause of modern societies’ ills.

The novel’s structure is a strong reflection of Kazuki’s chaos and confusion. Yū finds several ways of achieving this, first by doing away with traditional chapter breaks that clearly mark where one narrative ends and another begins. She employs few and inconsistent pauses that signal chronological breaks, ranging from few hours to months. As a result, the narrative becomes restless and tense, and the audience can only guess how much time has passed. In some passages, this also creates an impression that months have gone by, while only few days have passed, and vice versa.

However, Yū mainly creates confusion by taking liberties with whose thoughts the audience can access. While the story is told mostly from the main character’s perspective, Yū often conveniently and deliberately drops in and out of other characters’ thoughts. She does not present their thoughts as perceived by Kazuki; she pays just as

much attention to them as she does to him, as if he is no longer the main character for those few sentences, paragraphs, even pages. This is not limited to ‘protagonists’ – although it is difficult to divide the good and the evil in *Gold Rush* – along with other seemingly unimportant characters; Kazuki’s father Hidetomo gets the same treatment:

“Here’s the doctor’s report on Miho,” said Kazuki, setting a sheaf of papers on the table. “I don’t think they’ll send it on to the police.” His announcement had the intended effect of silencing his father.

Hidetomo was not even particularly angry at this point, just disgusted with himself for the idiotic thing he’d done. And too, he wondered why all children were so utterly worthless, why they were all such brats. But this one was particularly strange, not normal; and it’s not that he’s just at a difficult age... Somehow he’s made a detour into some horrible world all his own, and he stands there looking back, sneering at all of us. (Yū 119)

Crossing multiple streams of consciousness adds a level of unique objectivity by providing opportunities for other characters to express their thoughts and opinions, a fairly uncommon practice in films or literary works that often attempt to draw sympathies for the main character or the protagonist. In *Gold Rush*, the two sides in conflict may appear clear-cut enough: Kazuki versus Hidetomo. However, the insight into Hidetomo’s mind that Yū gives the audience may instead draw sympathy for him, not Kazuki. Through the passages where Yū delves into Hidetomo’s thoughts, the audience learns that his father, who first opened the pachinko parlors and later handed them down to Hidetomo, raised him no better than how he treats Kazuki. Although his obsession with money and indulgence teaches Kazuki a life lesson that he unfortunately takes to heart, the question of blame is not so black-and-white anymore. Kazuki may be a victim, but he is also a perpetrator.

Because of this literary device that Yū applies so well, there is hardly a character in the novel the audience could easily side with. The characters’ inner thoughts often

contradict what Kazuki believes, and reveals that even those who appear to be the most good have flaws that taint their image. For example, Kazuki relies on Kanamoto to take care of everything, turns to him for advice, and he eventually asks him to be his father. However, Kanamoto is member of the yakuza – a Japanese organized crime syndicate – and in his stream of consciousness, Yū reveals his past full of causing harm and suffering, which he had “never been particularly bothered by” or “felt particularly guilty about” (199). Through Kanamoto and other characters, Yū progressively reveals the bleak and murky morality everyone in *Gold Rush* appears to be caught up in. As she does so, she leads the audience to stop questioning who is right or wrong and no longer attempt to sympathize with anyone, especially Kazuki, as he becomes more and more lost.

On top of character-driven devices, Yū adds another layer of disorder by weaving hyperrealism and hyper-surrealism together. The neighborhood and the people Kazuki comes across are nothing close to the ideal. From the river full of “black, stagnant water, like used tempura oil” (10) to the gang rape that Kazuki’s friends carry out as he watches, Kogane-chō is where people simply survive, not live as civilized human beings:

To outsiders, the violence and corruption of Kogane-chō were almost audible, discouraging them from coming near. To the uninitiated, it was a dangerous place to be carefully avoided. Here, desire had settled in and set up shop. Other places like this had come and gone with the times, but Kogane-chō had never lost sight of its basic commodities, continuing to offer sex and drugs at a fair price. (Yū 9)

Stuck in the middle of such violent reality, Kazuki often lets his fantastically surreal imaginations and dreams take over his thoughts, but in such a way that makes the real and the surreal nearly indistinguishable. Yū treats Kazuki’s two separate realities much like how Yū moves freely between different character’s thoughts. The result is ‘surreality,’ where Kazuki’s two perceptions are merged into one. His dreams are just as

violent and lucid as his reality, and his reality seems detached from the people around him, as if one of them has permeated the other. The trouble is that Kazuki oftentimes does not know which one has taken over his view of the world, and neither does the audience.

Altogether, the audience is immersed in Kazuki's chaos. As if he is caught in a perpetual trance, Kazuki cannot separate his dreams from reality, and he does not know what is right or wrong. He is lost not because he is a child or an adult, but because he wants the luxuries of both:

What do adults have that I don't have? Kazuki wondered. Nearly all my problems come from adults who think I'm a child and refuse to let me into their little adult club. That's why I can't get things done, why people don't do what I want them to. What I need is the ability manipulate people with smooth talk, like Kanamoto can; and for that, it seems you need to know all about law... He wanted to learn it all: the gin-soaked expression, the dusky voice, the cruel superiority. But most of all, he wanted Kanamoto to love him. (Yū 240)

Yet he is still confused, confused about how to be both, and confused about why he cannot be both. This is what drove the Kobe Killer to kill, according to Yū. The 1,400-word letter he sent to the media revealed a particularly disturbed mind of a mentally unstable adult, but also a peculiar child-like curiosity for violence. With little evidence aside from letters and newspaper articles – due to confidentiality of crimes committed by minors in Japan – Yū had to use her own interpretations, and she successfully creates an image that most would think is reminiscent of the Kobe Killer's world.

Of all that can be surmised about the Kobe Killer's life, there is an aspect that Yū takes considerable creative liberties with, and she easily makes it the strongest theme behind the story of *Gold Rush*. "I was fascinated, yet not surprised, that the killer came

from an affluent family, structured neighborhood, and good education,” said Yū, “Not much can be learned about his life, but I wanted to make it true and relevant to everyone in the society today. Money and riches are what everyone can relate to today” (S. Kim 14B). Indeed, the abuse of wealth is a very prevalent theme, one that is hard not to notice throughout the novel, and Yū clearly intends it to be that way.

The influence of money and wealth usually appears in the presence of gold, a universal symbol of wealth. Kazuki’s grandfather’s original pachinko gambling business is headquartered in Kogane-chō, and the name ‘Kogane-chō’ uses the character for ‘gold’ in its words. Hidetomo keeps a stash of gold ingots in his basement vault. Sada, an old man in Kogane-chō whom Kazuki’s particularly attached to, owns a rundown ramen restaurant called Golden Pavilion. Hidetomo gave Kazuki a golden dog tag to wear, which he does every day. Gold appears in every one of Kazuki’s several surreal and bizarre nightmares:

...The rays of light swirled around him, forcing their way between his lips. Once in his body, the light became a chilly liquid that slithered down his throat, piercing him like prickly thorns. Soon it had transformed into shreds of gold, but as he waited for it to float to the surface, it suddenly metamorphosed once again, this time into a huge moth that went flying around the room, landing gently on top of the underground vault... he held it in his hand and examined it before closing his fingers and crushing it. As he opened his palm a fine film of gold leaf fluttered to the floor. Countless solid-gold moths. No matter how long it took, he would kill them all, he thought, laughing hollowly. He straightened himself and a determined look appeared on his face as he crushed the moth nearest him; but as he opened his hand again, the moth flew away unharmed. When he opened his mouth in shock, the moth flew in and a scorching pain ran down his throat. The gold faded and an uncanny blackness engulfed him. (Yū 220)

The near-omnipresence of gold explains the title of the book, *Gold Rush*, which alone describes a dark chapter in U.S. history, one that is filled with anarchy and chaos – the wild rush for Californian and then Yukon gold, massacre of Native Americans – the

extension of Manifest Destiny, and greed – the onset of violent outlaws. This sets the stage for Yū to chronicle Kazuki’s journey downward in a similarly troubled society.

However, instead of relying entirely on gold or any other symbols or features of wealth, Yū chooses a more unique approach to presenting her dystopia: Characters, all playing certain deliberate roles in the plot. She accomplishes making characters the central part of *Gold Rush* in two ways. First, there are no characters in the novel that do not have some kind of role in Kazuki’s moral decline. Even the ‘minor’ characters that never appear again after the first few pages are significant in shaping Kazuki’s psyche. For example, early in the text, Kazuki is described spending much time with Reiji, Kiyoshi, and Takuya, his peers from around the neighborhood. Although he is often too afraid to participate in heinous and violent acts they commit, he is present nonetheless, and the consequences of their actions make a clear impression on him:

Reiji started to pant as his hips moved more rapidly, and at the last moment, he pulled back and shot onto her stomach. “If you know what you’re doing, you don’t come inside,” he said, lighting a cigarette as he quickly got dressed. Seeing him, Takuya and Kiyoshi jumped up and scrambled into their pants. “They’re done,” Reiji said, turning to look at the boy. “You want a turn?” “I... already came just from watching,” Kazuki answered, hoping to sound as pitiful as possible. (Yū 18)

Despite violently raping a young girl – which they have done numerous times before – Kazuki’s friends show no signs of remorse. In fact, they are punished with only a few months in juvenile detention center, because Hidetomo pays off the boys’ and victim’s families millions of yen to keep the case out of court, afraid that the case involving his son would damage his reputation. From this episode very early on in the novel, Kazuki learns an important lesson: wealth is power, and it can buy anything and everything. Kazuki meets with his friends one last time after they get out of detention,

and he never sees them again, as if he had absorbed all evil and corruption from them and is now moving on.

Second, Yū surrounds Kazuki with remarkably compelling and extreme characters, creating a black-and white world of deeply contrasting morals regarding wealth. Such conflict made by two opposite extremes shows that some sense of right and wrong still exists around Kazuki, and that his environment is not entirely to blame for his crimes and state of mind. Some of these characters come across as perhaps too extreme, making it convenient for Yū to form her message, but they also emphasizes the degree of Kazuki's progressing corruption.

On one side of the extremes, there are Kazuki's older brother Kōki, and his mother Miki. Kōki was born with Williams Syndrome, a neurological disorder characterized by unusually cheerful demeanor, ease with strangers, and physical and mental retardation (Dobbs 15). Kanamoto describes him as, "if you could strip away the egotism from a human being and give him an extra measure of sociability, you'd come up with someone like Kōki" (82). He does not know the value of money and he has never stepped a foot inside the family business. All he cares about is having someone he loves by his side, and being happy. In a world full of gambling parlors, prostitutes, friends that use him to buy drugs, a sister who sells her body for fun, a runaway mother, and a negligent father, Kazuki keeps his last shred of humanity for Kōki. He seems to genuinely love, not pity, his handicapped brother, and perhaps wishes that he could share Kōki's ignorance. Part of Kazuki is convinced that he killed his father to protect Kōki, believing that he could use the money and power to save what is left of his broken family. Even in the end, he turns himself in only after Kyōko convinces him that she will take

care of Kōki while Kazuki is in detention, and that admitting guilt will get him a shorter sentence that should allow him to get back to Kōki as soon as possible.

While Kōki is a blank slate with an inability to desire wealth, Miki has already ‘sinned’ and wishes to rid herself of even the slightest greed. When Kōki was seven-years-old, a fortune-teller told Miki that his disease is a curse, brought on by one of her ancestors who committed a great sin concerning money, and that if she could live an “exemplary life of poverty,” he would be cured (163). Because of this, Miki developed a neurotic aversion to money, so extreme that she left the family after Hidetomo refused to quit his pachinko business. She wanted to take Kōki with her, but the knowledge that even a little bit of money was necessary to protect him only made her hate it more. She earns barely enough money to feed herself and persistently prays to Buddha, believing that the spiritual contact with her son is better than physical contact. But Kazuki cannot understand why she would abandon her children to live in poverty, and while considering himself a mature adult, he shows child-like desperation and stupidity by offering her money to come back home. Taking the money only to burn it in front of Kazuki, Miki makes her belief clear:

“Please listen carefully,” she said. “Your mother earns the money that buys the food she eats. I have no desire for anything beyond that. I make no provision for my old age. When I am old and can no longer work to buy food, I will simply starve to death in this room. Better that than bow to the power of money. Human beings who live by money will die by it. This is the utter fickleness of gold.” (Yū 171)

She recognizes how far Kazuki had fallen. She sees that money has seized his soul and knows he must have done something strange and terrible – murder, she suspects. In this moment, despite the urge to throw him out of her shed and never see him again, she feels dutiful as a mother and reaches out to pull him ashore. But Kazuki, overcome by

rage at the sight of burning cash, beats his helplessly weak mother and leaves, never to return.

On the other side of the extreme, fighting against this innocence and freedom from wealth are the characters completely entrenched in greed: Hidetomo and Mai, his mistress. Hidetomo completely relies on money to get what he wants, and there are plenty of examples in his actions that show such reliance and obsession. He donates millions of yen to a prestigious school so it would accept Kazuki, even though he does not care if Kazuki learns anything; he wants him to do just enough to have the school's name in his record. He completely neglects his handicapped son, savagely beats prostitute daughter, and throws Kazuki money every now and then so that his children survive on their own. He cannot abuse Kazuki as he does the others, because he needs him to be his successor. Hidetomo actually tries to win Kazuki's favor in his twisted ways, by showing him the luxuries of being rich, indulging his every whim and wants, and even paying a prostitute to service him.

After Hidetomo's murder, Mai carries on the obsession with money. She has a rather short part in *Gold Rush*, but her role is important nonetheless. Hidetomo had paid her monthly allowance to be with him, and she intends to do anything to keep it coming, including sleeping with Kazuki. She comes to suspect that Kazuki killed his father, but she keeps it to herself in order to continue the financial arrangement. As she spends more time with him, she falls deeper and deeper into greed, and later blackmails him for enough money for her to leave Kogane-chō:

...she decided it was time to get her money and get out. Since Hidetomo had disappeared, she had been thinking of almost nothing but money during every waking hour. Money, money, money... she had to get her hands on enough money so she could stop thinking about... money. If she had to keep thinking

about it like this, she'd go crazy...thinking...about money. (Yū 262)

Using these characters' interactions with Kazuki, Yū shows how far a mere fourteen-year-old can fall. Caught in the middle, Kazuki does not necessarily pick one side over the other. He certainly embraces unnatural obsession with money, but where he ends up is far more depraved and corrupted than Hidetomo or Mai. Violently murdering of his father was merely the first step. After slashing Hidetomo with a sword, Kazuki has the clarity of mind to hide his body in the basement, clean up the blood, and then go about as best as he can to start taking over the business. He is convinced that with his father gone, the empire and its people are now under his control. He beats his mother when she reaches out to save him from the lure of money. He plots to kill Mai after she blackmails him. In these moments, Kazuki becomes something much worse than his father – at only fourteen years of age.

In an unconventional way, *Gold Rush* is a coming-of-age novel, albeit a very disturbing one. For most of the novel Kazuki is both an adult and a child. He considers himself an adult, telling himself that he can make wise decisions and stand up for himself. However, no matter what he thinks, from the way he feels fear and anger, he is still very much a child. He gets easily frustrated at his fumbling deeds and cannot understand why adults will not give him what he wants. But by the end, he comes to terms with the inevitable, and in a showing of adult-like maturity, decides to turn himself in, so that he can be free to take care of his brother in the closer future.

The novel is not complex, much like Yū's foundation of her dystopia: The influence of wealth and riches is so great that it permeates the minds of children, who do not know any better than to act on their desires and wants. She speaks through Kazuki's

stream of consciousness when he decides to kill Mai:

He would have to kill her... who would suspect a kid like him? The social fabric was tightly knit by fixed ideas and self-interest, and anything that wasn't caused by one or the other was likely to slip through a hole or a tear. In fact, adults didn't seem to realize how extraordinarily susceptible children were to the same things that motivated them-fixed ideas and greed. With kids committing so many crimes, you would think that adults would realize that the motives weren't so different. (Yū 263)

Kogane-chō is the microcosm of what Yū believes will become of all societies if human beings continue its modern obsession with money: nonexistent morality, rampant violence, detachment from reality, and complete isolation. She reinforces her ideas through multiple streams of consciousness of multiple extreme characters. Even those who break out of their shells to help others will be rejected and choose to isolate themselves further, like Kanamoto after Kazuki viciously lashed out at his sympathetic advice:

Kanamoto leaned against the wall and poured gin from the bottle straight down his throat. He would try to ignore everything from now on – that was the only solution. The whole idea of trying to connect with someone had been wrong from the beginning. There was no one else out there-he was all alone. (Yū 243)

Through *Gold Rush*, Yū explains what she sees must be behind Kobe Killer's inexplicable actions. Although many of her scenes and characters are conveniently exaggerated, Yū maintains an appropriate balance between realism and surrealism to make her argument effective. Her ideas are clear: modern obsession with money is the root of modern societal ills, and that is what ultimately drove the Kobe Killer to commit senseless and violent murders. If such material greed continues to thrive and humanist values are not restored, the society will continue to degrade to the point where adolescent anger will target authority figures. If Sakakibara Seito were left to live freely in the society, he would have gone on to kill his elders, not just children.

As for The Kobe Killer today, a person under the age of sixteen could not be charged as an adult at the time of the murders. He was sentenced to a youth reformatory for treatment for indefinite amount of time, and his crimes slowly faded from people's memories. On March 10, 2004, medical officials deemed The Kobe Killer 'cured' and released him on parole (Eido). Despite public outcry about how such brutality can be cleared away from a person's mind in a few years, the government supported the parole board on the decision, and his crimes were soon forgotten again. Still protected by anonymity and no longer required to report to the parole board, The Kobe Killer now lives among the general population in an unknown location.

In a society that seemed as organized and disciplined as post-industrialization Japan, Yū's unforgiving and surreal look into the modern dystopia succeeded in bringing the public's attention to the effects of the country's strict, profit-driven economy. However, success of dystopia through surrealism was temporary; detachment from reality became too commonplace in post-modernization societies that it was not considered a problem anymore. Dystopians once again faced the challenge of arguing their case through new means, and thus gave rise to the popular modern science fiction genre that made the grim outlook into the dystopian future widely accessible. One example of such early dystopian science fiction works is Kurt Vonnegut's very first novel *Player Piano*.

Dystopian Literatures

Humanity and Technocracy: Kurt Vonnegut and *Player Piano*

He saw God, with all the people who had died long ago engaged in their old time sports and occupations, all happy and forever young. It was a pleasant land and full of game. After showing him all, God told him he must go back and tell his people they must be good and love one another, have no quarreling, and live in peace with the whites; that they must work, and not lie or steal; that they must put away all the old practices that savored of war; that if they faithfully obeyed his instructions they would at last be reunited with their friends in this other world, where there would be no more death or sickness or old age. (Mooney 770)

– Wovoka, the Ghost Dance Prophet

The nineteenth century is one of the darkest periods in the history of the U.S. As Manifest Destiny and limitless greed of Americans continued, resulting in the seizure of Native American lands, some of the oldest, bravest, and most venerable tribes met their ends. The Plains Indians disappeared from Midwest after white settlers hunted bison to near-extinction. Even those who assimilated to ‘the white man’s ways – building homes, farming, educating the children, and accepting Christianity – were no longer welcome after gold was discovered on their lands. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 unconstitutionally forced the Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Cherokee tribes out of Georgia and the Carolinas to the barren lands of the Dakotas, killing tens of thousands en route and destroying centuries-old traditions and ties to ancestral homelands (Moses 339). Defeated militarily, concentrated onto arid reservations, exploited by broken treaties, starving from lack of hunting game, separated from tribal leadership, and forced to accept new laws laid down by the U.S. government, some warlike tribes became more aggressive and vicious, but most Native Americans became demoralized to such an extent that they awaited any sign of deliverance from their depression and suffering. They scraped a living for few more decades with flickering hope of ever restoring their lands

and traditions.

Throughout the ages frightened and oppressed humans have longed for salvation, and the Ghost Dance was the divine message of renewal, rebirth, and revitalization that captured the Native Americans' dying spirit. Delivered by Wovoka the Prophet – a full-blood Paiute Indian who was raised by a white family with Christian teachings – the Ghost Dance was a ritualistic dance that “connected people with the great spirits” and must be continuously performed in order to hasten the coming of the new world (Moses 341). The ritual soon became the largest social and religious movements among Native Americans in the nineteenth century.

The Ghost Dance was a message of peace, meant to bring about a world where men and women of all color live together happily. However, as the rumor of a Native American messiah spread throughout the West, Wovoka's message became distorted and adapted. Most tribal leaders thought that the dance would bring about the death of all white men and the land would be given back to the Native Americans. Some hostile tribes took it as a call to arms. One of these tribes was the Sioux, who introduced some changes to the dance that Wovoka had never preached. They held guns high up in the air during the dance, and in June of 1890, they first wore new clothes during the dance, called “Ghost Shirts” (Johnson 43). Made of white buckskin, the shirt was considered sacred; the Sioux believed that it would block the white men's bullets, and, uncharacteristically, even the women were permitted to wear the war garment.

Tragically, the Sioux learned at Wounded Knee that the Ghost Shirts did not protect them as ‘promised’ by the divine. On December 15, 1890, in the last armed conflict between the Great Sioux Nation and the U.S., the American soldiers gunned

down and killed three hundred Sioux men, women, and children after a disarmament attempt went wrong. While the soldiers went around to strip off the Ghost Shirts from the bodies as souvenirs, one dying woman tore at her bloodstained shirt. "Take it off," she said, "it was no good after all" (Johnson 50). The Ghost Dance and Ghost Shirts could not save the dying Sioux, as they failed many other tribes; their ancestors did not come across the plains from the mountains driving herds of lost bison and wild horses, white men and Native Americans never reconciled, and like a gust of wind blowing out a lone candlelight, what remained of the great Native American tribes faded into history.

Nearly a century later, after the great wars have ended, in a society that is "rich beyond the wildest dreams of the past," has "seventy-seven percent of all the world's automobiles," and generates seventy-one percent of world's power, the Ghost Shirts have returned – in the world created by Kurt Vonnegut in his first novel *Player Piano* (218):

"Don't you see, Doctor?" said Lasher. "The machines are to practically everybody what the white men were to the Indians. People are finding that, because of the way that machines are changing the world, more and more of their old values don't apply any more. People have no choice but to become second-rate machines themselves, or wards of the machines." (Vonnegut 289)

This modern America oppression takes place some year after 1952, and this time around, humans are not oppressing each other; the machines instead are the oppressors and according to the Vonnegutian Ghost Shirts, all human beings regardless of race are the oppressed. The oppression is not as evident or violent as forced systematic assimilation or the Trail of Tears that killed tens of thousands of Native Americans; the humans still have control over the machines – in a sense that humans can either turn them on or off – and there is no overtly violent conflict between the two 'races.'

In fact at first glance, the society teeming with machines and technology in every corner seems like what every progressive civilization wants, and it nearly resembles what one expects to be the future of today's leading industrial countries. Vonnegut conveniently summarizes the benefits of this 'oppression by machines' in *Player Piano* through an exchange between a man not satisfied with his position in the society, and a young engineer who convinces him that his life is much improved by technology and machines. This dialogue is cleverly presented during a play put on for the top engineers and managers in the country:

YOUNG ENG. John, tell me – before [the machines took over]... did you by any chance have a twenty-eight-inch television set?

JOHN. (Puzzled) No, Sir.

YOUNG ENG. Or a laundry console or a radar stove or an electronic dust precipitator?

JOHN. No sir, I didn't. Them things were for the rich folks.

YOUNG ENG. And tell me, John, when you had all that money, did you have a social insurance package that paid *all* of your medical bills, all of your dentist bills, and provided for food, housing clothes, and pocket money in your old age?

JOHN. No sir. There wasn't no such thing then, in those days.

YOUNG ENG. But you have them now, haven't you?

JOHN. Yessir, that's right, I do. (216)

However, the futuristic U.S. Vonnegut portrays hardly resembles the country today or in the past. Technology has changed people's lives in more ways than providing everyday comfort and convenience; it has changed the entire societal structure. Although the characters in *Player Piano* deny it, the Vonnegutian U.S. is under socialism. The traditional free market economy has disappeared because competition between organizations and people was deemed needless and wasteful by machines' calculations. Therefore the entire private industry has come under one organization: National Industrial, Commercial, Communications, Foodstuffs, and Resources Board. This

committee of leaders from private industries exercises as much power as – if not more than – the government, making the President practically a puppet of the oligarchy.

This national “holy trinity” of Efficiency, Economy, and Quality led to standardization of everything, especially the ‘average man’ (Vonnegut 63). They live in factory-made houses with all the appliances and benefit packages provided. The machines continuously and artificially raise the standard of living, track and control consumer habits, so that the country is protected from economic volatility. The moment children are born, they are broken down into numbers and statistics that are constantly tracked and updated by machines. When they grow up to be young adults, their futures depend entirely on the standardized exams that determine their I.Q. This means that engineers, managers, and government officials are at the top of the social hierarchy, and vast majority of the population are forced to take unskilled jobs from which they cannot climb their way out. Most are placed in the Army or the Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps, and are essentially glorified construction workers – affectionately called the “Reeks and Wrecks” by the privileged. All these decisions and analyses that determine the makeup of the society is made by EPICAC XIV, a supercomputer that is “dead right” about everything and based solely on logic:

EPICAC XIV...already at work, deciding how many refrigerators, how many lamps, how many turbine-generators, how many hub caps, how many dinner plates, how many door knobs, how many rubber heels, how many television sets, how many pinochle decks-how many everything America and her customers could have and how much they would cost. And it was EPICAC XIV who would decide for the coming years how many engineers and managers and research men and civil servants, and of what skills, would be needed in order to deliver the goods; and what I.Q. and aptitude levels would separate the useful men from the useless ones, and how many Reconstruction and Reclamation Corpsmen and how many soldiers could be supported at what pay level and where, and... (Vonnegut 118)

Vonnegut's vision of the future is unlike popular science fiction today that often pits the human race against machines in a war for survival. Enchanted by the wealth that efficient, economic, and high quality machines provide, the humans in power are gradually relinquishing control over to the machines, adapting ourselves to them, not the other way around. In technological 'utopian' society without tragedy or conflict, without competition, without fear, Vonnegut says that the humans have the look of "people who have come to the end of things and who failed to find it amusing" (129). The result is the making of Vonnegut's dystopia: a society built on 'technocracy.'

In 1919, an engineer named William Smith coined the term 'technocracy,' but the term did not become widely known until the 1930s when a group of engineers began a movement dedicated to social reform (Sibley 258). Influenced heavily by Edward Bellamy's (1850-1898) utopian novel *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, Thorstein Veblen's (1857-1929) economic theories, and Frederick Winslow Taylor's (1856-1915) principles of scientific management and efficiency, the proponents – technocrats – proposed that engineers and technicians should replace administrators and politicians, effectively creating a class of technical elites. The idea may sound odd today, but during the Great Depression when the unemployed and poor were desperate for answers and solutions, the argument that the rapidly industrializing economy made the "corrupt politicians and businessmen obsolete" was widely appealing (Sibley 261).

Since 1930s movements like Technocracy sparked the debate over the impact of technology on jobs. Amid rising unemployment, many began to reject the idea that technology and progress are raising the national welfare. The view that mechanization deskilled and displaced the working population has won sympathy of the Roosevelt

administration, but engineers and managers maintained that technology increased consumer demand and shifted employment from dangerous industrial to clean service sectors. While one side dreamed of paperless offices and workerless factories, the other side saw a dark picture of meaningless work.

The latter is what comes true in *Player Piano*. Vonnegut's fears are portrayed through a number of characters, but mainly through the eyes of Dr. Paul Proteus – “the most important, brilliant person” in Ilium, New York (1). The son of most important engineer in modern history of the U.S., the one man who “made all this possible for the rest of us,” Proteus is far from walking in his father's footsteps (28). He is unhappy in his position as an engineer, but he cannot figure out – and perhaps does not want to face – the source of his unhappiness. He feels uncomfortable among the machines he manages; he stubbornly holds onto malfunctioning equipment and gets joy out of constantly fixing them; he drives a broken-down Plymouth instead of new electric cars. Outside opinions easily manipulate him, and he often lacks the confidence to speak out or make a stand.

As the plot progresses, Proteus gradually comes to self-realization, and although it is never fully developed, the outcome is still significant to the novel. Admittedly, most of his development is due to outside influences, such as his friend Ed Finnerty, who quits his government job after seeing the wrongs of technocracy, and new acquaintance Reverend James Lasher, who tells Proteus:

“When I had a congregation before the war, I used to tell them that the life of their spirit in relation to God was the biggest thing in their lives, and that their part in the economy was nothing by comparison. Now, you people have engineered them out of their part in the economy, in the market place, and they're finding out – most of them – that what's left is just about zero” (Vonnegut 90)

Nonetheless, Proteus begins to see the problem with his own eyes – how the less-privileged live, how the people gave up self-direction for material, and how machines have robbed humans of humanity. Upon his partial-enlightenment, he tries to convince his wife to leave Ilium with him:

“...things haven’t always been this way. It’s new, and it’s people like us who’ve brought it about. Hell, everybody used to have some personal skill or willingness to work or something he could trade for what he wanted. Now that the machines have taken over, it’s quite somebody who has anything to offer. All most people can do is hope to be given something” (Vonnegut 184)

Initially, he only wants to quit his job, erase technology out of his life, and let the world take its course without him. But as usual with his affairs, right before Proteus wants to tell the highest members of the Board, “I quit,” he is fired under pretense, so that he can spy on the mysterious Ghost Shirt Society on the board’s behalf. What happens afterward is a whirlwind of events that puts him in the leadership of the Ghost Shirts, who use his high-profile name for their recruiting efforts. Mostly made up of lower-ranking members of the society – ex-soldiers, secretaries, Reeks and Wrecks workers – their stated aim is to destroy the technocracy and restore humanity to the U.S.:

“The sovereignty of the United States resides in the people, not in the machines, and it’s the people’s to take back, if they so wish. The machines have exceeded the personal sovereignty willingly surrendered to them by the American people for good government. Machines and organization and pursuit of efficiency have robbed the American people of liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” (Vonnegut 314)

Coordinating with other major cities, Ilium’s Ghost Shirts stage riots that kill many people and destroy all machinery in the area, but the Army quickly puts down the violence and isolates Ilium from the rest of the country. With resources dwindling and victory far out of reach, Proteus and the leaders surrender to the authorities, hopeful that they have made a point, that history will remember their cause.

Unlike his authoritative titles as ‘former manager of Ilium Works’ and ‘the leader of the Ghost Shirt Society’ may suggest, Proteus never achieves full self-realization, which prevents him becoming a realistic hero. Even near the end when he wants to affirm his beliefs, his character lacks the confidence or will that inspires others to follow. He never firmly grasps how he believes human beings should live and the meaning behind the rebellion against technocracy, nor does he figure out why he really abandons the society that rewards him well for his intelligence. He cannot convince his wife of lesser I.Q. or his superiors that he truly intends to quit, and his anti-machine thoughts are hardly original; they are rather planted by the more aggressive characters.

The only time Proteus finally comes to a self-made decision and stands on his own is when he admits his role in the Ghost Shirt Society. “I am [the leader],” he says. “And I wish to God I were a better one” (Vonnegut 310). But the moment is short-lived; during the trial, prosecutor’s questioning reveals that Proteus’s crusade against technology is really “hate and resentment for one of the greatest true patriots in American history” – his father. “This man before you is little more than a spiteful boy,” the prosecutor argues, “to whom this great land... economy... civilization of ours, has become a symbol of his father! A father whom, subconsciously, he would have liked to destroy!” (Vonnegut 316). The accusation is confirmed as truth by the polygraph, and Proteus makes no denial.

Instead, he speaks about what makes us human, how humans are not meant to serve as mere accessories to machines, organizations, and systems. Humans are imperfect, frail, and inefficient, but there must be virtue in all three, for man is a creation of God. The world they have created seeks to prove that the people are “no good,” just

because they are human. “Sordid things, for the most part, are what make human beings...move,” he says. “That’s what it is to be human, I’m afraid” (Vonnegut 318). He desperately tries to argue that even though his intentions may be undermined, the movement can still be righteous. Before he can continue, the Ghost Shirts storm the courthouse and begin rioting.

Vonnegut’s self-insertion in Proteus’s brief discourse is hard not to notice. An honorary president of American Humanist Association during his time, Vonnegut was an passionate humanist who believed that “the purpose of human life is to love whoever is around to be loved” (Reilly 11). Humans are the most important, in a sense that every aspect of a human being must be respected and protected, including physical well-being, capability, rationality, and – especially in *Player Piano* – human dignity. He believed that any materialistic development of the future can only get in the way of the main business of humanity, to do a “good job of being human beings” (Vonnegut 315). Unlike utopians of the nineteenth century, who saw progressive tendencies in industrialization, he preferred the past to the imminent future. “Human beings will be happier, “ he said, “not when they cure cancer or get to Mars...but when they find ways to inhabit primitive communities again. That’s my utopia” (Reilly 27).

Despite Vonnegut’s humanist beliefs, in truth he was caught in a deep conflict between what he wished and what he believed, between what he wanted for mankind and what he thought mankind is fated to have. A witness to the terrible bombing of Dresden during World War II and atrocities by both Allied and German armies, Vonnegut held a relentlessly pessimistic vision of man, one that was far worse than the standard eventual victory of evil over good after an epic struggle; he did not believe that there could be a

victory if mankind were doomed to begin with. In regards to technology, he argued that if unrestrained technological advance is the immediate problem, then it must be true that the human nature is the underlying problem (Messent 110). Most of Vonnegut's writings express such idea of hopeless dystopia, and his first novel *Player Piano* is no exception.

This is apparent in his choice of Sioux's Ghost Shirts as the movement against machines and automation. Lasher finally explains to Proteus before their surrender that the Ghost Shirts were an illusion; they never protected the Native Americans:

“They found out that the shirts weren't bulletproof, and magic didn't bother the U.S. Cavalry at all.”

“So—?”

“So they were killed or gave up trying to be good Indians, and started being second-rate white men.”

“And the Ghost Dance movement proved what?” said Paul.

“That being a good Indian was as important as being a good white man – important enough to fight and die for, no matter what the odds. They fought against the same odds we fought against.”

Paul and Ed Finnerty looked at him incredulously.

“You thought we were sure to lose?” said Paul huskily.

“Certainly,” said Lasher, looking at him as though Paul had said something idiotic.

“...If we didn't have a chance, then what on earth was the sense of—?”

“It doesn't matter if we win or lose, Doctor. The important thing is that we tried. For the record, we tried!”

“What record?” said Paul. (Vonnegut 333)

Lasher cannot answer Proteus's last question, but Proteus still tries to find comfort by convincing himself that the rebellion was a meaningful symbolic gesture, a fist shaken at an oncoming tank, a drop of water on a raging inferno. History and the world will know and remember what they have done for the sake of humanity everywhere. There is still hope that The Ghost Shirt Society was not a pointless venture after all.

However, in the final passage, Vonnegut's pessimism, cynicism, resignation, and despair does not let any hope to escape from mankind's damnation. Such a kindling of hope for restoration of humanity is defeated by relapse to dependence on technology. As the leaders of the Ghost Shirt Society are on their way to surrender themselves, they see a group of people crowded around a mechanic fixing a broken vending machine:

The [mechanic] had been desperately unhappy until then. Now he was proud and smiling because his hands were busy doing what they liked to do best, Paul supposed – replacing men like himself with machines. (Vonnegut 338)

People whoop and cheer when a simple beverage vending machine starts whirring and churning out cold drinks by the gallon. Excited by what they are able to create with their hands, people quickly disperse, looking for other broken machines to salvage. In the dying sunset, The Ghost Shirt Society's leaders walk through the barren streets strewn with bits and pieces of destroyed machinery, leaving behind the people of Ilium, "already eager to recreate the same old nightmare" (Vonnegut 340). With their anticlimactic surrender, Vonnegut's process of dystopian self-defeat is completed. The technological progress that saves labor and resources has undermined the social order and conquered personal initiative, uniqueness, and dignity – destroying what make human beings human.

Like the leaders of Vonnegut's fictional Ghost Shirt Society, Native American chiefs were eventually forced to abandon the Ghost Dance under threat of death. With their last dying spirit broken, they would never see another revitalization movement of the same scope again. Wovoka, the Prophet who wanted peace but sparked war and death, saw that his misinterpreted vision had put more of his people in danger, and quietly resigned to work on a farm in Nevada. He passed away forgotten in 1932 at the

age of seventy-eight (Moses 351). Unable to fully adapt to a culture and society so vastly different from theirs, many in the Native American population and tradition continue to suffer under the white men's dominance today.

Connecting Literature to History: New Historicism

Recently in the study of literary theories, a new school of thought rose as a reaction to the growing dissatisfaction with post-structuralism and deconstruction, whose strict strategies seemed dry and obsolete. This theory, called New Historicism, in turn offered the wealth of an ongoing multi-textual sense of wonder and surprise that derive from contingencies of history. Over the few decades after its birth, New Historicism has become a universal term for much of the critical work that emphasizes the historicity of the text.

The principles of New Historicism are strongly opposed to the view that the study of literature should be done independently of social and political contexts. Instead, they call for a rethinking of the relationship between writing and culture, asserting that literary study should be focused on uncovering the interplay between text and history.

In New Historicist interpretation, the three writings examined cannot begin to be understood without first analyzing their respective background cultures and histories, analyses that should indicate how an individual in those societies came to interpret their world in such ways. Given that “The Strange Land,” *Gold Rush*, and *Player Piano* all have strong economic aspects that play discernible roles, the modern economic and financial background of each culture must be explored in order to draw proper conclusions regarding the relationships between the three cultural dystopias.

Patterns of Economic Growth

The Miracle on the Han River: The Republic of Korea

The Empire of Japan's fifty-year-long occupation of the Korean Peninsula was devastating to the Korean culture and people, but it built the foundation of the industrialization process that opened Korea to modern economic growth. For centuries before 1900, Korea had a closed-door agricultural economy that earned itself the nickname 'The Hermit Kingdom.' Most people lived as subsistence farmers of rice and other grains and satisfied their needs through labor or barter system. Traditional artisans scattered throughout the few populated areas in the country manufactured and sold basic goods – fabric, food, paper, woodwork, etc – that in time found their way to remote villages.

Following the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan enacted a series of social changes that effectively forced a sudden industrial capitalism on the country. Many of the measures were those that proved effective in modernizing Japan's own economy during the Meiji period – building a strong foundation through investing in infrastructure and human capital. By the end of World War II, Japan built an extensive transportation and industrial infrastructure in Korea – albeit to serve its own military needs – that the newly independent country could use to bring about its own modernization.

However, liberation from Japanese control was not immediately a blessing for the Korean economy. Resource-rich North and labor-rich South were separated from each other due to rivaling international superpowers, and the losses of Japanese capital, markets, and technical expertise left Korea in a state of disarray. The Korean War that followed only five years later destroyed what vital infrastructure the peninsula had left

and further devastated the country. In the 1950s foreign aid was the only source of funds for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the economy. The remnants of Japanese industries were generally turned over to private owners, who were chosen more often for their political loyalty to President Rhee Syng-man than for their business sense or nationalism. Rhee granted certain businessmen and companies with government contracts in exchange for financial support of his political endeavors, which were hardly democratic practices (E. Kim 180).

In nearly a decade after the Korean War, the economy was largely stagnant. Rhee had paid too much attention to securing his political power that he ignored the severe poverty and suffering the people were going through. In 1960, protests broke out across the country that forced out his regime altogether and ended the First Republic of South Korea. After only a year in existence, the following Second Republic was also overthrown, this time by General Park Chung-hee and the military in 1961. An ardent nationalist who was educated in Japan during the period of modernization, Park wanted to see South Korea join the ranks of modern industrial nations that would significantly raise the overall standard of living. Despite his authoritarian rule that continued until his assassination in 1979, his vigorous economic development programs left a legacy that launched South Korea into the forefront of global economic drive.

Park's regime faced numerous issues that could not be addressed in a linear fashion; he would have to tackle them all at once in order to jumpstart the economy. He decided that the central government had to play the key role in economic development, because no other domestic institution had the resources or authority to direct such ambitious changes. Fortunately, the foreign aid from the U.S. during Rhee's rule gave

Park some capital to begin with. Recognizing that military leaders around him had little knowledge of the economy, Park opened his regime to academics and economists who formed the Economic Planning Board in 1961. The Board implemented multiple policies and programs promoting rapid export-based industrialization – namely the multiple Five-Year Economic Plans, each with different goals, last of which occurred from 1992 to 1996 (E. Kimm 298).

The economic system for the next two decades incorporated elements of both state capitalism and free enterprise. The economy was dominated by a group of ‘chaebol’ – large family-owned conglomerates – and supported by a significant number of public corporations in resource and management-heavy industries, such as iron and steel, utilities, communications, fertilizers, and chemicals. All banks and financial institutions were nationalized, giving the government complete control over the flow of capital within the country. Private industry was kept on a short leash through series of production and growth target requirements, although corporations that performed adequately often had the government’s blessings to step outside legal boundaries as necessary.

Such expansion of industrial force was an investment to become competitive in areas where other industrial nations had already seen high returns. Park presumed that the well-educated and highly motivated work force would produce high quality goods at low cost that would find markets in the West. Revenues generated from the sale of exports would offset the cost of raw material imports, and profits made would be used to further expand capital, provide new jobs, and eventually pay off debts. Toward these ends, the

currency was greatly devalued in 1961 and 1964 and import restriction on raw materials eased (Cathie 74).

In only a few years Park's economic overhaul saw immediate success on one front: South Korea's industrial economy had become sustainable, no longer relying on waves of foreign aid that had kept the country afloat. With financial assistance stabilized, Park could now use financial diplomacy to borrow money on commercial credit. He boldly normalized relations with Japan in 1965 and brought Japanese funds in the form of loans and compensation for the damages suffered during the occupation. The availability of funds and increasing level of exports elevated the country's credit rating, making it possible to access the international financial markets.

With abundant capital, policy planners selected a group of strategic industries to back, including electronics, shipbuilding, and automobiles. New industries were nurtured by making the importation of related goods difficult through tariffs and trade restrictions. Through strong government backing, key industries achieved international competitiveness and high efficiency level in unprecedented amount of time, and increasing profits fed into higher employment and constantly evolving management systems. The overall export-led program took off in the 1960s and continued through the 1970s, during which period Seoul led the world's most productive economy. The annual industrial production growth rate was about twenty-five percent, and gross national product (GNP) from 1965 to 1978 increased five-fold. In the 1970s, exports grew at an average of forty-five percent a year (Cathie 119).

However, the export-oriented growth of the 1970s inevitably produced side effects that intensified in 1978 but were only revealed after Park's assassination and fall

of the Fourth Republic. The emphasis on exports had produced a shortage of domestic consumer goods that was exacerbated by constantly rising wages and living standards. Artificial price controls could not suppress the rapidly expanding money supply, and as a result, consumer prices rose thirty percent in 1978 (E. Kim 212). Continuing high inflation, combined with the poor international economic climate of the 1980s, prompted the first recession since the end of Korean War and increased unemployment.

The new military regime under General Chun Doo-hwan that came to power after Park's death took stringent anti-inflationary measures to get the country back to expansion. In only four years, South Korea achieved economic recovery with 8.1 percent annual GNP growth rate and 7.6 percent increase in exports (Cha 89). To prevent such economic downturn, the government launched the fifth Five Year Economic Plan that called for steady growth, low inflation, and reduced foreign borrowing. The annual growth rate was planned to average about 7.5 percent, but actual performance was higher. The real GNP growth rate was 7 percent in 1985, but for the next three years 12.9 percent, 12.8 percent, and 12.2 percent, respectively (Cha 94).

However, the most historically significant part of the economy in the 1980s was the liberalization of economic control and policies. During Park's regime, the Economic Planning Board assumed sole control of all economic matters, but Chun restored the control to functional ministries and organizations that were assigned specific roles, the structure that still remains today. The Board now primarily deals with policy writing, complemented by the Korea Development Institute – an independent economic research organization, Office of the Secretary of economic affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Labor. In addition, 1980s saw an

increase in portion of the budget devoted to social services, including healthcare, housing, welfare, and education. While national defense and economic development still took priority in government spending, the trend was indicative of the move toward progressive democracy that would end the long period of military regimes in South Korea's history.

South Korea's rapid export-fueled growth, industrialization, and overall rise in economic status are now called 'The Miracle on Han River,' referring to the river that runs through the capital city of Seoul (E. Kim 8). The establishment of democratic government in 1987 and the Seoul Olympic Games of 1988 were major signals to the international community that South Korea had grown out of the developing stage in only a few decades. Although the economy suffered a few setbacks in the 1990s – notably during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, during which growth decreased 6.6 percent – the liberalizing government pushed financial reforms that allowed private industries to direct investments and drive the market (Cha 370). Today, the economy relies on finished-product export to fuel its growth, and South Korea is home to some of the largest automobile, electronics, and heavy machinery companies in the world, maintaining healthy growth despite downturn in global economy.

Development of Financial Markets

The very first form of stock exchange in South Korea was established in 1932 by the Japanese government, and its trading structure closely mirrored the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Of the 284 companies listed, 201 of them were Japanese, and 82 of the Japanese companies held 90 percent of the market capital (Chwa 152). This 'branch' of

Tokyo Stock Exchange operated until two days before the Korean liberation on August 15, 1945.

The official Korean Stock Exchange opened its first trading day in March 1956 with twelve listed companies. However, because people barely had enough money to feed themselves and the market had no investor protection system in place, the early stock exchange was merely a government bond market. Market crashes were frequent and the exchange had to close and reorganize itself several times before providing access to the wider public.

After Park initiated economic growth measures, however, the stock market grew rapidly, particularly because to meet growth targets set by the Five Year Economic Plans, the country needed much higher domestic savings and investment rate. Additionally, they needed the future development financing to come entirely from domestic sources. Through promotion and reform of the securities markets, especially the stock market, and decreased foreign investment, the plan encouraged the diversification of equity finance.

Domestic savings and investment rate before the 1960s was equivalent to less than two percent of GNP. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, the rate reflected the growth in GNP. It jumped to ten percent between 1970 and 1972 when banks began offering interest rates of twenty percent or more on savings accounts, increasing again to seventeen percent of GNP in 1975 and twenty-eight percent in 1979. The surge of the savings rate to 36.3 percent in 1987 and 35.8 percent in 1989 reflected the sharp growth of GNP in the 1980s (Cathie 255). By the late 1980s, domestic savings accounted for more than two-thirds of total stock market.

Throughout the 1980s, the financial sector underwent significant expansion, diversification of products and services, and structural changes brought about by Rhee's economic liberalization policies. Financial deregulation eased interest ceilings and increased competition in financial markets, which in turn accelerated product diversification. To provide a simple indicator of market performance, Ministry of Finance introduced the Korea Stock Price Index whose methods mimicked the Dow Jones Industrial Average in the U.S. As a result, in 1987 more than 350 companies were listed on the exchange with an average daily trading volume of ten million shares and a turnover ratio of eighty percent (Choe 799).

The Korean Stock Exchange is now modernized similarly to the New York Stock Exchange. Not only does it open doors for foreign investors to access few of the largest companies in the world, the Stock Exchange has also taken up a role in improving corporate governance practices in South Korea. With automated systems and creation of new financial derivatives market, Korean Stock Exchange continues to be the strongest support of the growing South Korean economy.

Behind the massive economic overhaul that launched South Korea into the global spotlight, there were the millions of laborers who slaved under the banner of nationalism. Although strong visionary leadership played a necessary role, the common laborers, not the rich bureaucrats and conglomerates, brought 'The Miracle' to reality firsthand. In 1970, when the laborers were being forced to sacrifice themselves to pay the price of growing wealth, Hwang Sok-yong's short story "The Strange Land" helped the people realize their worth and importance to the industrialization. He launched an age of protests against the government and took the first step on a long journey toward progressivism

that united minjung, a journey that culminated in victory for labor and civil rights, without sacrificing the country's economic prowess.

While South Korea's closest foreign neighbor did not face as many labor uprisings or political instability during industrialization, due to the island nation's highly regimented and disciplined system, Japan experienced economic growth that came attached to a string of its own unique brand of problems.

Patterns of Economic Growth

The Rising Sun of the East: Japan

Since the nineteenth century, when the Tokugawa government first opened the country to Western commerce and influence, Japan went through two significant periods of economic development. The first, called the Meiji period, began in 1868 and extended through World War II. The government implemented a new Western-based education system that sent thousands of students to the U.S. and Europe to learn modern science, mathematics, technology, and English. They also understood that the government was the only power strong enough to stimulate the economy effectively, so various government agencies built railroads, roads, factories, and buildings, and then sold them to private businesses at a steep discount. The overall goal was to launch Japan out of the backward, agricultural period, into the future as one of the richest and most powerful nations in the world.

The economy grew only modestly at first as people adjusted to industrialization, but by the turn of the century, growth rate in manufacturing out surpassed that of agriculture. In the 1930s, the Japanese economy suffered less from the Great Depression than most of the other industrialized nations, expanding at the rapid rate of five percent of GNP per year. Manufacturing came to account for more than thirty percent of GNP, compared to agriculture's fourteen percent (Drysdale 302). The country reinvested the manufacturing gains into improving infrastructure not only in Japan, but also in the Southeast Asian colonies.

As the Empire of Japan came to an end with its defeat in World War II, so did the national drive for industrialization, since most of the growth was concentrated in building

military strength that had occupied most of East Asia. About forty percent of the nation's infrastructure was destroyed, and economic output reverted to 1930 levels. However, instead of giving up, the Japanese took the opportunity to start anew.

The U.S. occupation of Japan resulted in the rebuilding of the nation and the creation of a democratic state. With access to massive foreign aid, the newly established Japanese parliament initiated the country's second period of economic development. A variety of U.S.-sponsored measures during the occupation, such as land reform, contributed to the economy's later performance by increasing overall competitiveness. In particular, the postwar purge of industrial leaders allowed new talent to rise in the management of the nation's rebuilt industries. New factories were equipped with state-of-the-art machines, cities were rebuilt to accommodate more people, and millions of well-disciplined soldiers and highly educated young adults were eager to enter the workforce to rebuild Japan to its former glory. U.S. assistance totaled about 1.9 billion dollars during the occupation, or about fifteen percent of the nation's imports and four percent of GNP in that period. About fifty-nine percent of this aid was in the form of food, fifteen percent in industrial materials, and twelve percent in transportation equipment (Drysdale 361)

Japan's labor force contributed significantly to the rebuilding, not only because of its availability and competence, but also because of its reasonable wage demands. Before and immediately after World War II, the transfer of numerous agricultural workers to modern industry resulted in rising productivity and only moderate wage increases. As population growth slowed and the nation became increasingly industrialized in the 1960s, wages rose significantly, but labor union cooperation generally kept salary increases

within the range of gains in productivity. The Japanese government was quite fortunate in that they did not have to go through an extensive period of labor ‘revolutions’ that industrializing nations often experience at some point.

The early postwar period was dedicated to increasing industrial output. Because the country lacked the funds to compete in advanced technology, where the high-growth market was at the time, the plan was to gain capital through exporting goods demanded by the West at much lower prices. The Ministry of Finance advocated a ‘growth first’ approach, with a high proportion of government spending going to capital accumulation, and minimal government spending overall, which kept taxes and deficit spending down, making more money available for private investment.

Major investments were made in electric power, coal, iron and steel, and chemicals. Even without the demands of military regime, in only a decade, production matched the prewar levels and outpaced earlier growth rates. Between 1953 and 1965, GNP expanded by more than nine percent per year, manufacturing by thirteen percent, construction by eleven percent, and infrastructure by twelve percent. The number of workers in the industry was double that of agriculture in 1965.

International trade became the livelihood of Japan’s economy. Imports and exports grew rapidly, reaching 522 billion dollars in 1990, just behind the U.S. and West Germany (Drysdale 413). Because the mountainous island nation lacked raw materials, Japan was most vulnerable to trade embargos or blockades that would prevent the flow of raw materials. Realizing its weakness, and also facing heavy manufacturing and industrial competition from modernizing neighbors – South Korea, Taiwan, China – the Japanese government encouraged policies to move away from simple labor-intensive

exports toward more technologically advanced products. They saw an opportunity in selling assembled goods - automobiles, ships, and heavy machinery – and became the first Asian country to enter heavy-manufacturing industry. This ‘value-added’ sector grew at the rate of seventeen percent per year between 1965 and 1970 (Drysdale 424).

Japan did not fare well through the world oil crisis in 1973 as it had the Great Depression, due to its heavy dependence on oil imports. Again, the optimistic Japanese leadership and the resilient and industrious labor force saw the stalled growth as the chance to invest in reducing dependence on foreign petroleum while increasing productivity. Although the cost barrier was high, they opened the advanced technology sector that produced microcircuits, processors, and semiconductors and gave rise to today’s Japanese electronic giants – Sony, Hitachi, Mitsubishi, Panasonic, etc. With the establishment and growth of ‘knowledge-intensive’ industry, Japan effectively entered the post-industrial, service-intensive economy. Growth rate in manufacturing and industry plateaued at about eight percent between 1970 and 1973 as more of the workforce shifted to service industries that were becoming more established and stabilized.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, economic growth slowed as the economy matured, attaining annual rates no better than four to six percent. However, these rates were relatively high for a nation with few natural resources competing in a world of expensive petroleum. Japan's average growth rate of 5 percent in the late 1980s, for example, was far higher than the 3.8 percent growth rate of the U.S. (Itō 114). Despite further petroleum price increases in 1979, the strength of the Japanese economy was apparent. It expanded without the high inflation that afflicted other industrial nations and that had

bothered Japan itself after the first oil crisis in 1973.

By the 1980s, Japan had caught up. Now an advanced industrial nation, it faced new economic changes, on both domestic and international fronts, such as demands to supply more foreign aid for other developing nations and to end protectionist policies. It had become a leader in certain markets, and 'Japanese-made' became synonymous with unparalleled quality and attention to detail. These were epochal changes for Japan, after a century in which the main national motivation was to catch up with the West.

However, the consequences of Japan's economic growth were not always positive. Large advanced corporations existed side-by-side with the smaller and technologically less-developed firms, creating a kind of economic dualism in the late twentieth century. Often the smaller firms, which employed more than two-thirds of Japan's workers, worked as subcontractors directly for larger firms, supplying a narrow range of parts and temporary workers. Excellent working conditions, salaries, and benefits, such as permanent employment, were provided by most large firms, but not by the smaller firms. Temporary workers, mostly women, received much smaller salaries and had less job security than permanent workers. Thus, despite the high living standards of many workers in larger firms, Japan in 1990 remained in general a low-wage country whose economic growth was fueled by highly skilled and educated workers who accepted poor salaries, unsafe working conditions, and poor living standards.

Additionally, Japan's preoccupation with boosting the rate of industrial growth during the 1950s and 1960s led to the relative neglect of consumer services and also to the worsening of industrial pollution. Housing and urban services, such as water and sewage systems, lagged behind the development of industry. Social service programs,

despite considerable improvement in the 1970s and 1980s, still lagged well behind other industrialized nations at the end of the 1980s. Agricultural subsidies and a complex and outmoded distribution system also continue to keep the cost of living very high by international standards. Many of these issues raise questions today as to whether the highly regimented system that brought extraordinary economic growth to Japan is also withholding the country from adapting to the increasingly progressive international community.

Development of Financial Markets

The Tokyo Stock Exchange's history effectively started in May 1878 when Imperial Japan enacted the Stock Exchange Ordinance. There had been calls for some form of public trading system since the 1870s when a securities system was introduced and Japanese bond negotiations had started. Trading officially started on the Tokyo Stock Exchange on June 1, 1878.

By the 1920s, when Japan experienced fast-paced economic growth, trading stocks over bonds, gold, and silver currencies became the norm. In response to World War II, there was a reorganization of the Japanese stock markets in 1943. Eleven stock exchanges in Japan, including the Tokyo Stock Exchange, were combined to form the Japan Securities Exchange, back then partially run by the government. Today, five Japanese exchanges operate in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka, and Sapporo (Werner 54).

After the war, trade was once the primary form of Japan's international economic relationships, but in the 1980s its rapidly rising foreign investments added a new and

increasingly important dimension. While the U.S. was becoming a debtor nation due to its debt-fueled government spending, Japan became the world's largest creditor and Tokyo a major international financial center. Four of the biggest banks in the world were Japanese at that time, and Japan had the world's largest insurance company, advertising firm, and stock market. In the remainder of the 1980s, Japan's financial and banking industries grew at unprecedented rates.

The main elements of Japan's financial system were much the same as those of other major industrialized nations: a commercial banking system, which accepted deposits, extended loans to businesses, and dealt in foreign exchange; specialized government-owned financial institutions, which funded various sectors of the domestic economy; securities companies, which provided brokerage services, underwrote corporate and government securities, and dealt in securities markets; capital markets, which offered the means to finance public and private debt and to sell residual corporate ownership; and money markets, which offered banks a source of liquidity and provided the Bank of Japan with a tool to implement monetary policy.

Japan's stock market increased its trade volume rapidly during the late 1980s, led by rapidly expanding domestic and international securities firms. There were three categories of securities companies in Japan, the first consisting of the 'Big Four' securities houses: Nomura, Daiwa, Nikko, and Yamaichi. The Big Four played a key role in international financial transactions and were members of the New York Stock Exchange. Nomura was the world's largest single securities firm, with net capital in 1986 that exceeded Merrill Lynch, Salomon Brothers, and Shearson Lehman combined (Werner 112). In 1986 Nomura became the first Japanese member of the London Stock

Exchange. Nomura and Daiwa were primary dealers in the U.S. Treasury bond market. The second tier of securities firms contained ten medium-sized firms. The third tier consisted of all the smaller securities firms registered in Japan. In 1986, eighty-three of the smaller firms were members of the Tokyo Securities and Stock Exchange. Japan's securities firms derived most of their income from brokerage fees, equity and bond trading, underwriting, and dealing. Other services included the administration of trusts. In the late 1980s a number of foreign securities firms, including Salomon Brothers and Merrill Lynch, became players in Japan's financial world.

The Tokyo Securities and Stock Exchange became the largest in the world in 1988, in terms of the combined market value of outstanding shares and capitalization, while the Osaka Stock Exchange ranked third after those of Tokyo and New York (Werner 207). Although there are eight stock exchanges in Japan, the Tokyo Securities and Stock Exchange represented eighty-three percent of the nation's total equity in 1988. Of the nearly two-thousand publicly traded domestic companies in Japan at the end of 1986, about eighty percent were listed on the Tokyo Securities and Stock Exchange.

Two developments in the late 1980s helped in the rapid expansion of the Tokyo Securities and Stock Exchange. The first was a change in the financing of company operations. Traditionally large firms obtained funding through bank loans rather than capital markets, but they increasingly began to rely more on direct financing. The second development came in 1986 when the Tokyo exchange permitted non-Japanese brokerage firms to become members for the first time. By 1988 the exchange had 124 members, 16 of which were based in foreign countries.

Japan's stock market dealings increased dramatically in the 1980s, with rapidly rising stock prices and trade volume. The trading recorded by the Nikkei stock index, compiled by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun newspaper, grew from 6,850 in October 1982 to nearly 39,000 in early 1990. During a six month period in 1986, total trade volume on the Tokyo exchange increased by 250 percent with wide variance in the Nikkei measure. After the plunge of the New York Stock Exchange in October 1987 the Tokyo stock market dropped by fifteen percent, but sharp uptick recovered most of the losses by early 1988. In 1990 five types of securities were traded on the Tokyo exchange: stocks, bonds, investment trusts, rights, and warrants (Lehmann 7).

Today's the Tokyo Stock Exchange is the second largest stock exchange in the world based on monetary volume, just behind the New York Stock Exchange. The major functions of the exchange are to provide a market place, monitor trading, list securities, monitor listed securities, and supervise trading participants. It currently lists 2,375 domestic companies and 27 foreign companies, and accounts for 90.6 percent of all securities transactions in Japan, dwarfing domestic and international rivals (Furukawa 358).

Despite Japan's extraordinary economic success that made the country rise above the rest of its Asian rivals, the submissive culture that allowed the government to dictate the industrialization process stood at odds with the subsequent modernization. The Western idea of freedom that entered the society through exchange of cultures frustrated the people, namely teenagers and young adults, who were stuck in the mechanical system of education and profession designed to reduce individualism and increase efficiency. Consequently, teenage violent crimes and suicides rose to an unusually high level for a

civilized society, and they still remain one of Japan's most troublesome domestic issues today.

Yū Miri's 1999 novel *Gold Rush* not only reflects the Japanese society in the middle of rising teenage violent crime rate, it addresses the underlying cause of the problem and predicts greater consequences of Japan's wealth-based system. Unlike Hwang and his "The Strange Land," Yū does not instigate a widespread social movement due to relative societal stability of post-industrialization Japan, but the impact of her assertions is powerful enough to strengthen the foundation for necessary social reforms.

Unlike the Eastern countries that forced through rapid economic growth in only a few decades – and in return had to deal with resulting severe social and political issues concentrated in that short period – the U.S. enjoyed peaceful and largely undisturbed progress since the nineteenth century. However, the virtue of being the economic pioneers of the world could not save today's largest global economy from suffering its own problems that inevitably followed industrialization and modernization.

Patterns of Economic Growth

From Rags to Riches: The United States

The U.S. near the end of the nineteenth century was in better shape compared to the rest of the world. While major European powers were caught in political unrest that stalled the Industrial Revolution and the wave of modernization had barely reached Asia, the U.S. saw steadfast recovery from the American Civil War, aided by industrial tycoons who amassed great financial wealth and political influence. By 1890, the U.S. surpassed Great Britain in total industrial output (Bensel 41).

Just before the turn of the century, the economy suffered a severe depression – The Panic of 1893 – due to uncontrolled expansion of railroad companies without secure financing. Such economic stresses sparked the Progressive Era, during which various social and labor programs and successfully established themselves. For the first time, the government interfered in the economy and imposed controls on large companies that put corporate social responsibility before profits. As a result, 1900 to 1920 saw heavy progressive financial regulatory measures that created the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Federal Reserve. These policies initially held back overall economic growth due to reluctant corporations that were prevented from monopolizing, but thanks to the growing middle class that enthusiastically participated in the industries that compensated them well, the U.S. entered 1920s with prevailing prosperity that earned the moniker ‘The Booming Twenties.’

The economic policies in 1920s were based on the idea that if government did what it could to support domestic private business, prosperity would eventually

encompass the rest of the population. Along with protectionist policies that imposed high tariffs – a measure highly opposed by leading economists – the federal government launched a series of tax cuts, reflecting Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon's belief that income taxes prevented the rich from investing in new businesses. Similarly, Congress passed laws that either repealed outright or drastically reduced wartime income taxes, excess profit taxes, and corporate taxes. The quote by President Calvin Coolidge (1872 – 1933) describes the economic climate of the 1920s well: “The chief business of the American people is business” (Chandler 58). As a result, businesses expanded, construction of factories, office, and residences increased substantially, and the population as a whole benefited from rising standard of living.

However, the prosperity was short lived. The famous stock market crash in October 1929 that erased forty percent of value of the common stock began a period of economic contraction that came to be called the Great Depression. Despite optimistic economic forecasting by the politicians immediately following the crash, the depression deepened; by 1933, the value of the New York Stock Exchange was below twenty percent of its peak in 1929. Businesses closed, factories shut down, farms lost fifty percent of revenue, and banks failed across the country. Unemployment rose to highest levels in U.S. history at over twenty percent (Chandler 61).

At the core of the problem was the great disparity between the country's productive capacity and the ability of people to consume. Great innovations in productive techniques during and after World War I raised industrial output beyond the purchasing capacity of the consumers. The savings of the upper and middle class – increasing far beyond the possibilities of rational investment – had been feeding the wild speculative

game in stocks or real estate. Therefore, the stock market collapse of October 1929 had merely been the first of several crashes in that leveled the crumbling structure of speculation. The subsequent economic breakdowns had many repercussions, first of which ousted the Republican Party and introduced Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (1882 – 1945) bold experimental recovery plans – the New Deal.

The New Deal was largely a continuing abandonment of the 'laissez-faire' capitalism – idea that the economy and financial markets must not be regulated – that began during the Progressive Era. Many social and economic reforms were quickly administered to put people back to work and get the economic cycle turning again. Inflation was deliberately increased to put more value into commodities and provide relief to debtors. New government agencies, such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation that insured bank deposits up to five-thousand dollars, eased credit restrictions and loan availability, and also imposed severe regulations on securities sales and trading (Allen 152).

However, early years of the New Deal that sparked modest increases in production and prices could not lift the economy out of the Depression entirely. As the sense of immediate crisis faded, new ideas and proposals emerged from both left and right sides of politics. While business magnates lobbied for return to deregulation, liberals wanted larger social benefits for the middle class and poverty. Facing such pressures, Roosevelt devised a second set of measures that aimed to tackle more of the social issues. In 1935 one of these measures created the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a new unemployment relief agency that attempted to provide jobs for the unemployed and poor instead of welfare. The agency hired laborers to build

transportation and industrial infrastructure, and paid various artists through Federal Theater, Art, and Writers Project. By the time the WPA closed in 1943, it had hired a total of nine million people (Allen 168).

But the New Deal's cornerstone, according to Roosevelt, was the Social Security Act of 1935 (Allen 182). Social Security created a system of insurance for the aged, unemployed, and disabled based on employer and employee contributions. Many other industrialized nations had already enacted such programs, but calls for such an initiative in the U.S. by the Progressives in the early 1900s had gone unheeded. Social Security was funded in large part by taxes on the earnings of current workers, with a single fixed rate for all regardless of income. Although its origins were initially quite modest, Social Security today is one of the largest domestic federal programs.

Despite the administration's efforts, none of Roosevelt's programs brought the immediate recovery that people had hoped for. The GNP had turned around by mid-1930s, but it did not get back to the 1929 levels until decade after the stock market crash. Until the beginning of World War II, unemployment level still hovered around fifteen percent (Allen 204). Although the war consumed the lands in Europe, Africa, and Asia, military conflicts that took place away from the continental U.S. were the drive that the economy needed to fully recover from the Great Depression.

The postwar period that solidified U.S. as the richest country in the world, the escalating Cold War maintained the pace of U.S.'s economic growth. GNP increased from two-hundred billion dollars in 1940 to three-hundred billion dollars in 1950, and to more than five-hundred billion dollars in 1960, as the growing middle class claimed larger and larger pieces of the national wealth each decade (Bruchey 182). Much of the

growth was due to a wave of mergers that paved the way to large conglomerates with significant holdings in a number of industries. Workers found their lifestyles change fewer workers produced goods and more provided services. Agriculture also shed farmers as corporations took over agribusiness and forced out small family farms. By 1956 the majority held white-collar jobs, working as managers, teachers, and office employees. In the economic boom, most firms granted many benefits to attract the best workforce, including guaranteed annual wage, long-term employment contracts and health insurance.

The growth lost steam in the 1970s as oil supply shocks and high inflation brought politicians to question the effectiveness of the New Deal era government regulations. After President Richard Nixon resigned, the deregulation movement culminated in President Ronald Reagan's famous economic policies called 'Reaganomics' in 1981. A proponent of supply side economics – theory stating that a greater supply of goods and services is the fastest road to economic growth – Reagan cut federal income taxes by twenty-five percent to promote greater private sector spending, saving, and investment (Bruchey 259). While income tax revenue decreased, the Reagan administration also significantly increased defense spending to modernize the nation's military and counter what it felt was a growing threat from the Soviet Union.

Early years of Reaganomics was marked by a recession that hit nearly all sectors of the economy, but it quickly led to one of the longest periods of sustained economic growth since World War II. GNP fell by 2.5 percent in 1982, 30 percent of factories owned by major companies such as General Electric and Boeing closed doors, and the unemployment rate increased above 10 percent (Bruchey 253). Although the recession took away much of U.S.'s share of international trade to emerging industrializing nations

– South Korea, Japan, Germany – it also lowered inflation, contributing to the rebound in 1984. The federal tax cut led to increased consumer spending and optimistic buying spree in the stock market. Over the following five-year period, GNP grew at an annual rate of four percent, inflation rate remained between three and five percent from 1983 to 1987, and the economy added more than thirteen million new jobs (Bruchey 285).

However, the numbers behind the substantial growth under Reagan was largely driven by deficit spending that tripled the national debt. The increased budget resulted in the government spending far more than it received in revenues each year. From 74 billion dollars in 1980, the deficit soared to 221 billion in 1986 before falling back to 150 billion in 1987 (Perkins 120). Furthermore, nearly all the accumulation of wealth took place in the highest income group, while poverty and middle class families actually lost income.

The stock market crash in late 1987 dramatized investors' doubts about the stability of the economy. On October 19, 1987, 'Black Monday,' the markets fell twenty-two percent across the board. The causes of the crash included anxiety about U.S. international trade and federal budget deficits, concern about the high level of corporate and personal debt, and a new stock market innovation known as 'program trading' – computerized automated buying or selling of large volume of shares – that inflated certain stocks' values (Perkins 122). Nevertheless, the nation recovered in a remarkably short time. Although many Americans turned from stocks to safer forms of investment, the economy still grew at a stable rate, cutting down the unemployment rate to a fourteen-year low of 5.2 percent in June 1988 (Bruchey 328).

In the 1990s and 2000s, the economy maintained slight growth, but national debt still increased to record highs. The stock market gained much from emerging information

technology firms – ‘dot-com’ companies – but had to give much of the gains back after many of the upstarts could not meet investor expectations and the bubble burst. Another significant crash came in 2008, during which the housing bubble burst combined with high default rate on mortgages led to the financial crisis that wiped out forty percent of the stock market and twenty percent of housing prices (Powell 2A). Banks and businesses across the country failed and the U.S. government was forced to protect the integrity of the country’s financial system by providing billions of emergency funds that prevented large firms from going bankrupt. Although the economy is seemingly on the road to recovery – the last quarter in 2009 saw 0.6 percent GNP growth – and the government is considering numerous reforms to prevent such crises, unemployment rate still hovers around 10 percent and the stock market has yet to recover past 80 percent of its peak value in 2007 (Powell 2A). Before the economy can see the end of this ‘Great Recession,’ there are still many issues and questions that must be addressed, but most of them unfortunately will not be properly sorted out until after all data are available.

Development of Financial Markets

The financial markets in the U.S. originated during the colonial period over two-hundred years ago, when the government sold bonds to finance the war. Around the same time period, small private banks began issuing stocks or shares on behalf of companies looking for new sources of capital. This early form of stock sales was largely local and disjointed, resulting in limited areas of trade and value.

As a result of the 1792 Buttonwood Agreement, a group of sizeable stock merchants gathered to form a rudimentary stock exchange forum. These twenty-four

brokers agreed to trade stocks and bonds on behalf of greater public in exchange for commissions. At this time there were only five securities traded, three of which were government bonds created to finance the Revolutionary War. The other two were bank stocks, with Bank of America as the first officially listed stock. The exchange began to grow in the early 1800s and in 1817 a constitution with stock exchange rules and regulations was developed. The organization was given a formal name, the New York Stock & Exchange Board, which was changed to the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in 1863 (Aitken 334).

In mid-1800s, the Industrial Revolution brought rapid growth to the economy that increased companies' demand for capital. More and more companies realized that investors would be interested in buying stock in exchange for partial ownership in the company that would also entitle them to portion of the profits. Furthermore, a large secondary market developed, in which investors could trade stocks with each other instead of buying directly from the company. The stock market became a major portion of national economic activity, but volatility increased due to highly subjective speculation about companies' futures.

By 1886, the NYSE was trading a million shares per day. In 1896 the Wall Street Journal began publishing the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) with a starting value of 40.74 (Aitken 339). The DJIA was initially made of twelve stocks and became an overall indication of the NYSE's daily performance. The 1920s marked a period of great stock market expansion, with the DJIA growing from 60 to its 1929 peak of 381.17. However, the stock market crash of 1929 cut down the index to 145. Such sudden loss, combined with the uncontrolled growth of the number of market participants, convinced

the government that regulation was necessary to prevent another crash. In 1934, the Securities and Exchange Act created the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) that continues to monitor and regulate stock market activities. The influence of the SEC constantly changes to adapt to evolving financial instruments and markets.

After the Great Depression, the DJIA did not fully recover for twenty-five years, unable to surpass its pre-crash peak until 1954. After another significant drop in the Dow in 1987, the NYSE implemented the 'circuit breaker' rule to avoid crashes in the stock market. The rule states that if the stock market falls ten, twenty, or thirty percent at any time, trading will be stopped for an hour, two hours, or the rest of the day, respectively. Despite several significant drops in the market over the years, in 2007 the Dow reached its all time high of 14,164.53 (Ley 312).

Today, the financial systems in most modern countries have undergone a remarkable transformation. Of the international markets the NYSE is the largest and highly regarded, primarily because the exchange only trades in large and well-established companies. The general public's heightened interest in investing in the stock market, either directly or through mutual funds, has been an important factor in facilitating such growth. In the current decade, liquid assets with very little risk make up less than twenty percent of individuals' and families' wealth, compared to nearly sixty percent in the 1970s (Arrow 510). The majority of the shift has been redirected to stocks, but the most now take part in various kinds of institutional investment for groups – pension funds, mutual funds, hedge funds, etc. This movement towards higher tolerance for risk was helped by new investor protection policies and insurance, allowing a higher proportion of shares to bonds. Other industrialized countries have also shown such trend, and similar

tendencies are showing in emerging stock markets across the world: saving has moved away from traditional less risky bank deposits to more risky investments such as individual company's shares, options, or financial derivatives.

In vast contrast to South Korea and Japan, the U.S. followed a more 'natural' course of economic growth, allowing laissez faire principle to reign for most of the time – until the government realized the dangers of unrestrained economic cycle during The Great Depression. Prolonged period of progressivism ensured that individualism was protected throughout industrialization, so businesses promoted more 'humane' labor practices that attempted to their employees content. The economy grew to unprecedented heights while the rest of the world struggled to recover from the devastation of warfare.

So it may be surprising that Kurt Vonnegut felt compelled to publish his first dystopian novel *Player Piano* in 1952, in the middle of America's prosperity. But to Vonnegut, the increasing mechanization of jobs and adoption of technology to daily lives for the sake of efficiency were abominations that only sent the civilization deeper into corruption; no matter how comfortable or rich people's lives were becoming thanks to technology and wealth, widespread issues such as unemployment and violent crimes were still ineradicable. Thus, his futuristic vision of automation epidemic was no better than the primitive nightmare that technology supposedly saved the civilization from.

Dystopia that plagued South Korea during industrialization and Japan during modernization was still steadfast and unwavering in the U.S., and despite occurring in different stages of economic growth in the East and the West, all three dystopias shared a quality that essentially united them in the larger movement against utopia.

To be Human: Comparative Analysis

In 1960, four American labor economists collated surveys of worldwide industrializations during nineteenth and twentieth centuries, searching for social consistencies of the past and hoping to peak into the future of industrialization. The results, published in the book *Industrialism and Industrial Man*, are today one of the most widely-studied and quoted work on social sciences (Merrifield 19). “The age of utopias is past. An age of realism has taken its place,” write the authors, in a declaration that lost its novelty after traumas of early twentieth century had already shattered much of utopian ideals (Kerr 4). However, instead of leaving utopia in pieces, they go on to give it a new form to take on: the glories of industrialism. Civilizations seemed like they could finally achieve its final stage of development through industrialism that would put humanity closer to utopia.

The book represented a marked change in attitude compared to the earlier part of the century. The devastation of world wars could not stop the wheels of industrialization from turning, not even for the defeated nations – Germany and Japan – that surprised even the most optimistic observers by their speed of recovery. Great Britain’s historic growth as the first industrial nation appeared trivial by comparison. Looking back, the cruelty of the 1900s until then could be likened to a coming of age period of now fully-developed and mature civilizations in the West, like the U.S. John Maynard Keynes (1883 – 1946) – one of the most influential economists in history – had taught how to avoid recurrences of the Great Depression; economist and social reformer William Henry Beveridge (1879 – 1963) had written the guide to eliminating poverty and social oppression. The widely-preached social democratic state, accepted by essentially all

political ideologists in the West, seemed to promise an end to all social conflicts.

Given the political will, there was no real basis for irreconcilable views of social and political development, because everyone generally agreed on what defined a ‘good’ and ‘happy’ life. This meant that there was no valid reason not to pursue economic growth and social stability – essentially considered to be the same – and there was no want for other form of utopia. All of the desires were now together in the international industrialization drive, which was to be led by science and technology, because nothing else could deliver the economic growth that would bring utopia closer. And this was not solely an American or even Western idea. In the early stages of globalization during twentieth century, industrialism as developed by Western societies had become “the goal of mankind and the essence of national aspiration” (Kerr 260)

Such aspiration was clear in the case of Japan, the earliest non-Western industrialized nation. Early-nineteenth-century Japan had a closed-door foreign policy. After Western explorers and naval forces applied pressure to open ports in East Asia for commerce, Japan, unlike its strongest neighbor China, could not keep up the isolation any longer. The pressure was both internal and external; shogunate bureaucrats – military commanders – and struggling rural population wanted access to foreign capital that would list technological limitations and allow fast-paced economic growth. Eventually the lure of the Western lifestyle and wealth – automobiles, modern weapons, efficient industrial machinery – proved too powerful for conservative daimyos – feudal lords – who feared losing their political influence.

The end of isolation was not a one-dimensional move; its consequences would change the future of the once-diminutive island nation forever. Even before most

European countries took on the daunting task of new economic overhaul, Japan recognized what had to be done to make up for the decades of lost time. For example, although the U.S. grew at a much lower rate during the nineteenth century, compounding growth, abundant natural resources, solid infrastructure, relative political peace, and little international competition allowed the U.S. economy to flourish to the point that seemed out of everyone's reach. Thus, the direction of the new capitalism was clear: catch up to the West as soon as possible. The Japanese Empire took every step to abandon the old ways and model itself after the West, namely the U.S. and Great Britain, abolishing feudalism and creating a centralized administrative government. Former feudal lords were sent to the West to study economies, technologies, and political systems, and then teach them to the future generations of the Empire. Seeing that the West was already moving from production-intensive to consumption, Japan fully committed to manufacturing intermediate goods. A Western-style army and navy with proper ranks and weapons were formed. The Tokyo Stock Exchange copied the structure of the New York Stock Exchange. People dressed and acted like Westerners, adopting social practices such as the modern calendar and metric system to their daily lives.

Unfortunately for greater East Asia, Japan's desire to claim a piece of mounting global wealth led them to brutal imperialism, raping and pillage most of the countries around the mainland. Although its economic practices were extended to the newly acquired lands, mainland Japan remained the heart of all businesses that rarely shared its profits with the colonies. As a result, aftermath of World War II left a slew of impoverished nations with broken economies, while Japan recovered with relative ease, continuing its adoption of Western capitalism and becoming today's second richest

country in the world (Werner 2).

Despite being ravaged by colonization, war, and political unrest, South Korea was motivated to follow the example of their geographically closest neighbor. The scars of Japanese occupation would not fade for generations, but Western- and Japanese-educated South Korean military leaders could not live with the thought of having a second-rate economy – symptoms of the inferiority complex South Korea suffers from to this day (Choi 362). Intense nationalism drove the Korean people to participate in the national initiative to build an economy based on Japan, even though it was essentially driven by dictatorship.

South Korea's economic growth was fairly obviously based on Japan's recent transformation more so than the Western countries. Aside from occurring nearly a century apart and social issues that resulted from cultural differences, the patterns are remarkably similar, from the government's role to principle industries. But altogether, akin to Japan, South Korea's motivation was mostly based on desire for wealth that would open the door to Western lifestyle and comfort. The motto for President Park Chung-hee's (1917 – 1979) 'New Community Movement' – economic initiative to modernize agriculture – summarizes the attitude behind industrialization succinctly: "Let us too live well and prosper" (Cha 49). All three countries succeeded in realizing their dreams of economic growth; the U.S., Japan, and South Korea today enjoy the luxuries of being the first, fourth, and fourteenth largest economies in the world, respectively (E. Kim 191).

Yet, according to the dystopian school of thought, these economic achievements came at great cost and only removed humanity from utopia that perhaps had some

potential. Dystopian arguments were not entirely unfounded; strains of industrialization and modernization were tangible in both East and West, notably in all three countries at hand. The U.S., being the first to modernize, saw these ‘side effects’ materialize before any other country did: violent labor movements, increasing income inequality, uncontrolled urbanization, environmental pollution, unemployment, etc. Because they were the first to face these problems on a national scale, they also had to devise solutions that would set the precedent for the rest of the world to follow. Thanks to the socially liberal politics of the Progressive Era, the Americans quickly implemented numerous social reforms that would relieve most of the problems to some degree.

On the other side of the world nearly half a century later, Japan and South Korea were not so fortunate. Even though the industrializing East faced the same problems as the U.S., Japanese and South Korean cultures were strictly conservative compared to most of the West. They were both relatively young capitalist states, still growing out of emperors in which the country’s achievements took priority over an individual’s rights, and the government’s ruling was absolute. On top of these old political and cultural relics, each country’s regime mandated such rigid and rigorous economic growth schedules that they could not afford the time or resources for social reforms. Instead, the governments pressed nationalism over individualism, emphasized great value of sacrificing for good of the nation, and when all else failed, they used force to limit dissent. After decades of violent struggle against authority – motivated in part by Western social liberalism – both Japan and South Korea have adopted social programs that granted individual rights and benefits. But regrettably, some practices that brought great economic growth to the countries still remain, notably the highly regimented and

competitive education system that diminish individuality down to mere numbers and statistics.

Was this all worth the big houses, expensive cars, comfortable beds, ready-made meals, and other luxuries of post-industrialization modern life? Not according to dystopians like Hwang, with his doomed protagonist, or Yū, with her dangerously corrupt post-industrial society, or Vonnegut, with his nightmarish vision that renders humans worthless. Granted, modernizing countries in the twentieth century continued to attract utopian hopes – the U.S. leading the way – but with nothing like the fervor they have previously aroused. The surplus created by industrialization and modernization was used not to abolish want but to shore up ‘surplus repression.’ Instead of satisfying the actual human needs of all, the consumer industry ceaselessly stimulated new artificial needs, which kept humans on the treadmill of increasing income constantly chasing novelty goods and services. The contrived condition of ‘rising expectations’ led to war on all levels of societies, in the end, the weakest creating new areas of severe poverty amidst unprecedented riches. Now, faced with unanticipated damages, modernizing countries inspire dystopia more so than utopia.

The three works examined in this study – *Player Piano* by Vonnegut, *Gold Rush* by Yū, and “The Strange Land” by Hwang – are selections from literatures of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea respectively, portraying dystopias that arose as consequences of various stages of industrialization and modernization; Hwang wrote “The Strange Land” in the middle of intense economic drive in South Korea, Yū’s *Gold Rush* is based on Japan right before the new millennium, and Vonnegut published *Player Piano* after the U.S. economic growth had peaked and stabilized. Each work has its own nuances based

on its background, and the authors all clearly have different motives and styles of writing, which collectively illustrates dystopia's ability to adapt to multiple cultures and time periods.

“The Strange Land” is heavy on realism – based on Hwang’s experiences as hard laborer and protestor – and more intended to be a social commentary, revealing the labor abuse and exploitation by the wealthy conglomerates in the industrializing 1960s and 1970s South Korea. The cruelty of actual labor practices then meant that Hwang needed no bells and whistles for exaggeration; his story was pure expository muckraking. Unlike the Western fictional dystopias, Hwang’s dystopia was very much real and defeating his fellow laborers in their everyday lives. The realism allowed the public to naturally sympathize with and share the laborers’ suffering, gathering much-needed support for the labor movements that eventually won labor rights, and later mounted to wider national struggle to overthrow the oppressive authoritarian regime.

Gold Rush uses hyperrealism and hypersurrealism to depict a violent contemporary world – inspired by actual murders in Kobe, Japan – that Yū describes is exacerbated by extreme material greed and flawed social structure. In the post-industrialization Japan riddled with social troubles, hyperrealism could have been sufficient to describe the corruption, and there is a good amount of disturbing reflection of the contemporary society in the novel. However, Yū goes on to show that the destructive obsession with wealth not only expresses itself in the outward behavior of the characters, but also in the subconscious, in the form of hypersurreal episodes that make evident the psychological corruption. Thus, she argues that the damage of modernization is two fold, exceeding morality and physical actions, and reaching deep inside the human

psyche, causing a definite detachment from reality that effectively excludes the individual from the civilization.

In *Player Piano*, Vonnegut creates a futuristic U.S. in which technocracy has taken over and most of the humans, except for the select few – intelligent, and by that virtue also rich and powerful – who are reduced to menial and meaningless work, while machines assume the important responsibilities. Vonnegut humorously ridicules the rampant automation that modernization has brought, and argues that machines only devalue ‘honest’ human labor and abilities. His prime use of humor may seem out of place in the vision full of misery and bleakness, but humor rather than realism or surrealism was more appropriate for his dystopian message in the 1950s post-modernization America, a relatively stable society that had already grown out of many common consequences of industrialization and modernization. Instead of reaching directly into the lost dystopian memories, Vonnegut presents an absurdly automated society that stands at odds with the world today. No matter how unrealistic his future may seem, the humorous comparison of the two extremes allows him to illustrate the ludicrousness of modernization’s final destination, thereby successfully criticizing the direction of economic growth.

All three works are quite unlike each other in their own terms; even “The Strange Land” and *Gold Rush*, despite coming from two neighboring countries and separated in time by thirty years, have very limited commonalities in terms of literary devices. As a science fiction novel *Player Piano* stands out the most among the three, and seemingly does not belong in the same category as the others in most conventions.

However, more than mode or literary devices, dystopia is a genre that can be

defined by one key attribute: its rigorous and relentless questioning of what it means to be human. This is a uniquely dystopian quality in all three works that unifies Hwang, Yū, and Vonnegut across cultures and time periods. It is the quintessential question and concern that unites all dystopian arguments: the abuse of utopian ideals – socialism, economic welfare, equality, etc. – in their eventual destruction of humanity. But one has to first define the nature of humanity before attacking utopia on its basis, and there is a great divide among dystopians as to what it exactly means to be ‘human’.

On one side is the age-old argument that humans are by nature full of greed, evil, and corruption. “I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire for power after power that ceaseth only in death,” writes British philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) in *Leviathan*, “And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight that he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more” (29). By the Hobbesian interpretation of human nature, utopia – the best of all institutions and its constituents the best of all men – simply could not exist; men would destroy what good there is in the world for his individual gain, or perhaps for no reason at all. For centuries such view bolstered the dystopian movement and became the point of attack for many notable critiques of utopia.

Perhaps no one more than Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud has so powerfully and persuasively undermined the foundations of utopian hopes – what he called ‘lullabies of heaven’ – using Hobbes’s arguments. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud portrays a world in which pain and unhappiness are the norm, and conflict and

degeneration are omnipresent. All civilized morality, all laws and institutions, are the necessary but precarious barrier against men's innate affinity for aggression, destruction, and domination. Civilization achieves some stability by setting up individual morality to guard against the destructive impulses of the unconscious, but the primal instinct lodged in the unconscious is "imperishable," breaking out regularly in individual and collective acts of violence and war. "Judged by our unconscious wishful impulses, we are a gang of murderers," he writes, "The commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself... is really justified by the fact that nothing else runs so strongly counter to the original nature of man" (Freud 138). Freud was particularly contemptuous of socialism – idea that once carried the banner of all utopian hopes – that aimed to end aggression and greed through collective ownership:

In abolishing private property we deprive the human love of aggression of one of its instruments... but we have in no way altered the differences in power and influence which are misused by aggressiveness, nor have we altered anything in its nature. Aggressiveness was not created by property. It reigned almost without limit in primitive times, when property was still very scanty, and it already shows itself in the nursery almost before property has given up its primal, anal form; it forms the basis of every relation of affection and love among people... If we do away with personal rights over material wealth, there still remains prerogative in the field of sexual relationships, which is bound to become the source of the strongest dislike in the most violent hostility among men who in other respects are on an equal footing. If we were to remove this factor, too, by allowing complete freedom of sexual life and thus abolishing the family, the germ-cell of civilization, we cannot, it is true, easily foresee what new paths the development of civilization could take; but one thing we can expect, and that is that this indestructible feature of human nature will follow it there (76).

Freud's fundamental dystopian message that human nature is "the greatest impediment" to any hope of civilization is certainly hard to swallow for utopians who envisioned societies that would protect individualism.

One of such utopians was the pioneer of liberalism English philosopher, John

Locke (1631 – 1704), who deemed that men are free and capable by nature to be good, advocating ‘tabula rasa’ – idea that humans are born without predetermined characteristics. Such idea, paired with social determinism that emerged during the Enlightenment, would argue that in a civilization that encouraged freedom and pursuit of happiness, humans could truly be good:

Freedom of men under government is, to have a standing rule to live by, common to every one of that society, and made by the legislative power erected in it; a liberty to follow my own Will in all things, where the rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary Will of another man: as Freedom of Nature is, to be under no other restraint but the Law of Nature (Locke 61).

The Lockean view was encouraging to utopians who believed that science and technology in the twentieth century would bring the ideal civilization that political and social systems could not. Even when consequences of industrialization first appeared, utopians held onto positive view of human nature, believing that the human ability to persist and persevere would make the troubles pass. But the consequences lingered, which gave dystopia new breath of life. Because of dystopia’s resurgence in the twentieth century, the Hobbesian interpretation has gained higher ground, but the ills of industrialization and modernization still beg the question: Has wealth destroyed humanity that is inherently good, or is the nature of humanity essentially corrupt that the tyranny of wealth was inevitable?

The American, Japanese, and Korean authors each answer the question very differently. Vonnegut is caught in a deep self-conflict; he believes humans have the capacity to preserve and practice what defines humanity – individualism, dignity, pursuit of happiness – but at the same time, humans have an ill-fated tendency of unknowingly bringing about self-destruction. The less-privileged people of technocracy in *Player*

Piano revolt against the society that robbed them of the Vonnegutian humanity, but after all machines are destroyed and primitive life is about to begin – a life that Vonnegut has said is his utopia – people return to developing the very machines that replaced them. Although he would like to convince his audience that humans are capable of good, Vonnegut’s lean towards the Hobbesian interpretation is obvious in the ending of *Player Piano*.

Yū however, disagrees. Her world in *Gold Rush* is unmistakably dystopian; desire for wealth – equivalent of power – has penetrated morals and values of the society so deeply that a fourteen-year-old child is led to horrific acts of violence. But the child was not born evil, just corrupted by external influences that sparked uncontrollable temptation. Yū believes that human nature is good, and if not innately good, humans can renounce corruption and become good. Two of her characters are exemplary in that one knows not the value of money and the other completely rejects materialism only fulfills the most basic necessities.

Hwang agrees with Yū. In “The Strange Land,” the powerless laborers who are the target of cruel exploitation that only gets the rich richer have no obvious ambition for wealth. Like the labor movements in the 1960s and 1970s South Korea, the protesters risk their livelihoods – one gives his life – not to usurp the upper class but to gain and protect their individualism as civilized men, for the present and the future. Here, the Lockean view explains that the laborers – without direct exposure to wealth or power – are able to embrace humanity, which serves as the argument that humans are fundamentally good. By this rationale, one could presume that the wealthy and powerful in “The Strange Land” – politicians, construction site director, and company personnel – were also good

before coming corrupt. In the end, Hwang is uncertain whether the laborers would also lose their humanity if they rise to higher socioeconomic status, but similar to Yū, he seems to believe that the ability to resist and renounce obsession with wealth depends on individual strength and integrity.

While both sides make compelling arguments using culturally-unique motifs, the debate over human nature will go on as it has for centuries without a clear victor. For now, the authors can all agree that dystopia exists in both East and West, throughout the beginning, middle, and end of industrialization and modernization. Whether or not humans have a natural affinity for evil is irrelevant. Created by the reckless, brute-force international drive for rapid economic growth and accumulation of wealth regardless of possible outcomes, modern dystopia has corrupted humanity with greed, violence, and destruction.

Modern dystopia has developed under certain convenient myths. The prime motivation behind industrialization and modernization has been wealth accumulation, which is accepted as legitimate, even admirable, on the grounds that if private wealth leads to public gains, any means of doing so can be justified. Now, it is understood that a society that is based on this principle will destroy itself in time. It can only persist, with whatever suffering and injustice that it carries, as long as humans can pretend that its destructive consequences are limited, that the world is infinitely accommodating, and that the cost to humanity is negligible.

Can humans and civilizations be saved from current predicament, or is humanity damned for eternity? In line with their views on human nature, the authors share different views on the future of humanity. *Player Piano* is a fair indication that Vonnegut has little

hope for the future – humans will continue to self-destruct without hope for salvation – while Yū and Hwang are more optimistic. *Gold Rush* and “The Strange Land” share the hope that if humans are able to recognize how far they have fallen and renounce corruption, humans can regain humanity. If there is to be salvation, seeing how today’s dystopia stems from industrialization and modernization, the solution seems rather simple – one that perhaps Vonnegut would even agree with if he were less pessimistic. In the words of American historian Thomas Roszak (1933 –) in *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*, only through universal abandonment of modern industrial civilization can humans restore humanity to the world:

We should undertake to repeal urban-industrialism as the world’s dominant style of life. We should do this, not in the spirit of grim sacrifice, but in the conviction that the reality we want most to reside in lies beyond the artificial environment. And so we should move freely and in delight toward the true post-industrialism: a world awakened from its sick infatuation with power, growth, wealth, efficiency, progress as if from a nightmare (122).

While leaving behind over a century of wealth-driven civilization model is extreme to say the least, today’s environmental- and social-awareness movements are minute steps in the direction toward reclaiming humanity. However, to transcend beyond the modernized world while retaining awareness of its existence is ability most rare and limited to deeply devout spirituals. Universal abandonment of mankind’s material achievements, while ideal, will only perpetuate the Vonnegutian cycle of self-destruction. Unless tabula rasa can be artificially imposed on all current and future humans, civilizations will continue to strive for ‘betterment’ through “power, growth, wealth, efficiency, [and] progress” (Roszak 122); Roszak’s solution cannot be realized.

Rather, humans must acknowledge and accept the damages done to humanity in

the past, and learn to put their obsession with progress toward humanity's healing, not the material surroundings. Progress itself can be good; it is the abuse of progress that has created the modern dystopia. Whether humans have the capacity for self-recognition to know the difference between the two remains uncertain. Fortunately, or rather unfortunately, this means that dystopia can continue to carry on its main function as a literary mode of relentlessly pondering the age-old question that drives the ongoing utopian-dystopian debate: what does it mean to be human?

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Appendices

Appendix A: Populations of the United States, Japan, and South Korea, 1900 – 2000

thousands	United States	Japan	South Korea
1900	76,391	44,103	-
1901	77,888	44,662	-
1902	79,469	45,255	-
1903	80,946	45,841	-
1904	82,485	46,378	-
1905	84,147	46,829	-
1906	85,770	47,227	-
1907	87,339	47,691	-
1908	89,055	48,260	-
1909	90,845	48,869	-
1910	92,767	49,518	10,096
1911	94,234	50,215	10,258
1912	95,703	50,941	10,422
1913	97,606	51,672	10,589
1914	99,505	52,396	10,764
1915	100,941	53,124	10,911
1916	102,364	53,815	11,086
1917	103,817	54,437	11,263
1918	104,958	54,886	11,443
1919	105,473	55,253	11,627
1920	106,881	55,818	11,804
1921	108,964	56,490	12,040
1922	110,484	57,209	12,281
1923	112,387	57,937	12,526
1924	114,558	58,686	12,777
1925	116,284	59,522	13,005
1926	117,857	60,490	13,179
1927	119,502	61,430	13,356
1928	120,971	62,361	13,535
1929	122,245	63,244	13,716
1930	123,668	64,203	13,900
1931	124,633	65,205	14,117
1932	125,436	66,189	14,338
1933	126,180	67,182	14,562
1934	126,978	68,090	14,789
1935	127,859	69,238	15,020
1936	128,681	70,171	15,139
1937	129,464	71,278	15,260
1938	130,476	71,879	15,381
1939	131,539	72,364	15,504
1940	132,637	72,967	15,627
1941	133,922	74,005	15,859
1942	135,386	75,029	16,094
1943	137,272	76,005	16,332
1944	138,937	77,178	16,574
1945	140,474	76,224	17,917
1946	141,940	77,199	19,369
1947	144,688	78,119	19,886
1948	147,203	80,155	20,027
1949	149,770	81,971	20,208

1950	152,271	83,805	20,846
1951	154,878	85,164	20,876
1952	157,553	86,459	20,948
1953	160,184	87,655	21,060
1954	163,026	88,754	21,259
1955	165,931	89,815	21,552
1956	168,903	90,766	22,031
1957	171,984	91,563	22,612
1958	174,882	92,389	23,254
1959	177,830	93,297	23,981
1960	180,671	94,092	24,784
1961	183,691	94,943	25,614
1962	186,538	95,832	26,420
1963	189,242	96,812	27,211
1964	191,889	97,826	27,984
1965	194,303	98,883	28,705
1966	196,560	99,790	29,436
1967	198,712	100,825	30,131
1968	200,706	101,961	30,838
1969	202,677	103,172	31,544
1970	205,052	104,345	32,241
1971	207,661	105,697	32,883
1972	209,896	107,188	33,505
1973	211,909	108,707	34,073
1974	213,854	110,162	34,692
1975	215,973	111,573	35,281
1976	218,035	112,775	35,860
1977	220,239	113,872	36,436
1978	222,585	114,913	37,019
1979	225,055	115,890	37,534
1980	227,726	116,807	38,124
1981	229,966	117,648	38,723
1982	232,188	118,455	39,326
1983	234,307	119,270	39,910
1984	236,348	120,035	40,406
1985	238,466	120,754	40,806
1986	240,651	121,492	41,214
1987	242,804	122,091	41,622
1988	245,021	122,613	42,031
1989	247,342	123,108	42,449
1990	250,132	123,537	42,869
1991	253,493	123,946	43,318
1992	256,894	124,329	43,805
1993	260,255	124,668	44,296
1994	263,436	125,014	44,781
1995	266,557	125,341	45,264
1996	269,667	125,645	45,730
1997	272,912	125,956	46,174
1998	276,115	126,246	46,590
1999	279,295	126,494	46,973
2000	282,339	126,700	47,351

(Source: International Monetary Fund Statistical Database)

Appendix B: GNP of the United States, Japan, and South Korea, 1900 – 2000

\$ mil	United States	Japan	South Korea
1900	312,499	52,020	-
1901	347,681	53,883	-
1902	351,303	51,089	-
1903	368,377	54,671	-
1904	363,720	55,101	-
1905	390,624	54,170	-
1906	435,636	61,263	-
1907	442,362	63,198	-
1908	406,146	63,628	-
1909	455,814	63,556	-
1910	460,471	64,559	-
1911	475,475	68,070	8,361
1912	497,722	70,507	8,789
1913	517,383	71,653	9,206
1914	477,545	69,503	9,709
1915	490,996	75,952	11,433
1916	558,774	87,703	11,286
1917	544,804	90,641	12,596
1918	593,956	91,573	13,689
1919	599,130	100,959	14,705
1920	593,438	94,654	12,889
1921	579,986	105,043	14,069
1922	612,064	104,757	13,075
1923	692,776	104,828	14,165
1924	713,989	107,766	14,420
1925	730,545	112,209	14,557
1926	778,144	113,212	15,177
1927	785,905	114,860	15,913
1928	794,700	124,246	16,105
1929	843,334	128,116	15,328
1930	768,314	118,801	14,583
1931	709,332	119,804	14,767
1932	615,686	129,835	14,899
1933	602,751	142,589	18,156
1934	649,316	142,876	18,275
1935	698,984	146,817	20,084
1936	798,322	157,493	21,753
1937	832,469	165,017	23,827
1938	799,357	176,051	24,895
1939	862,995	203,781	22,315
1940	929,737	209,728	25,001
1941	1,098,921	212,594	25,347
1942	1,318,809	211,448	25,203
1943	1,581,122	214,457	25,569
1944	1,713,572	205,214	24,462
1945	1,644,761	102,607	12,236
1946	1,305,357	111,492	13,295
1947	1,285,697	120,377	14,295
1948	1,334,331	138,290	15,383
1949	1,339,505	147,534	16,548
1950	1,455,916	160,966	17,800

1951	1,566,784	181,025	16,430
1952	1,625,245	202,005	17,497
1953	1,699,970	216,889	22,570
1954	1,688,804	229,151	23,894
1955	1,808,126	248,855	25,191
1956	1,843,455	267,567	25,311
1957	1,878,063	287,130	27,262
1958	1,859,088	303,857	28,691
1959	1,997,061	331,570	29,803
1960	2,046,727	375,090	30,395
1961	2,094,396	420,246	31,930
1962	2,220,732	457,742	32,898
1963	2,316,765	496,514	35,797
1964	2,450,915	554,449	38,888
1965	2,607,294	586,744	41,230
1966	2,778,086	649,189	46,195
1967	2,847,549	721,132	49,555
1968	2,983,081	813,984	55,880
1969	3,076,517	915,556	64,350
1970	3,081,900	1,013,602	69,877
1971	3,178,106	1,061,230	76,695
1972	3,346,554	1,150,516	82,304
1973	3,536,622	1,242,932	96,231
1974	3,526,724	1,227,706	104,605
1975	3,516,825	1,265,661	111,548
1976	3,701,163	1,315,966	124,664
1977	3,868,829	1,373,741	137,531
1978	4,089,548	1,446,165	150,442
1979	4,228,647	1,525,477	161,172
1980	4,230,558	1,568,457	156,846
1981	4,336,141	1,618,185	166,581
1982	4,254,870	1,667,653	179,220
1983	4,433,129	1,706,380	199,828
1984	4,755,958	1,773,223	217,167
1985	4,940,383	1,851,315	231,386
1986	5,110,480	1,904,918	258,122
1987	5,290,129	1,984,142	287,854
1988	5,512,845	2,107,060	320,301
1989	5,703,521	2,208,858	340,751
1990	5,803,200	2,321,153	373,150
1991	5,791,931	2,398,928	407,582
1992	5,985,152	2,422,245	429,744
1993	6,146,210	2,428,242	453,344
1994	6,395,858	2,454,919	490,745
1995	6,558,151	2,504,246	534,517
1996	6,803,769	2,590,265	571,926
1997	7,109,775	2,636,148	598,526
1998	7,406,631	2,608,549	557,500
1999	7,736,163	2,605,014	610,387
2000	8,019,378	2,667,151	662,185

(Source: International Monetary Fund Statistical Database)

Appendix C: Per Capita GNP of United States, Japan, and South Korea, 1900 – 2000

\$	United States	Japan	South Korea
1900	4,091	1,180	-
1901	4,464	1,206	-
1902	4,421	1,129	-
1903	4,551	1,193	-
1904	4,410	1,188	-
1905	4,642	1,157	-
1906	5,079	1,297	-
1907	5,065	1,325	-
1908	4,561	1,318	-
1909	5,017	1,301	-
1910	4,964	1,304	-
1911	5,046	1,356	815
1912	5,201	1,384	843
1913	5,301	1,387	869
1914	4,799	1,327	902
1915	4,864	1,430	1,048
1916	5,459	1,630	1,018
1917	5,248	1,665	1,118
1918	5,659	1,668	1,196
1919	5,680	1,827	1,265
1920	5,552	1,696	1,092
1921	5,323	1,860	1,169
1922	5,540	1,831	1,065
1923	6,164	1,809	1,131
1924	6,233	1,836	1,129
1925	6,282	1,885	1,119
1926	6,602	1,872	1,152
1927	6,576	1,870	1,191
1928	6,569	1,992	1,190
1929	6,899	2,026	1,118
1930	6,213	1,850	1,049
1931	5,691	1,837	1,046
1932	4,908	1,962	1,039
1933	4,777	2,122	1,247
1934	5,114	2,098	1,236
1935	5,467	2,120	1,337
1936	6,204	2,244	1,437
1937	6,430	2,315	1,561
1938	6,126	2,449	1,619
1939	6,561	2,816	1,439
1940	7,010	2,874	1,600
1941	8,206	2,873	1,598
1942	9,741	2,818	1,566
1943	11,518	2,822	1,566
1944	12,333	2,659	1,476
1945	11,709	1,346	683
1946	9,197	1,444	686
1947	8,886	1,541	719
1948	9,065	1,725	768
1949	8,944	1,800	819
1950	9,561	1,921	854

1951	10,116	2,126	787
1952	10,316	2,336	835
1953	10,613	2,474	1,072
1954	10,359	2,582	1,124
1955	10,897	2,771	1,169
1956	10,914	2,948	1,149
1957	10,920	3,136	1,206
1958	10,631	3,289	1,234
1959	11,230	3,554	1,243
1960	11,328	3,986	1,226
1961	11,402	4,426	1,247
1962	11,905	4,777	1,245
1963	12,242	5,129	1,316
1964	12,773	5,668	1,390
1965	13,419	5,934	1,436
1966	14,134	6,506	1,569
1967	14,330	7,152	1,645
1968	14,863	7,983	1,812
1969	15,179	8,874	2,040
1970	15,030	9,714	2,167
1971	15,304	10,040	2,332
1972	15,944	10,734	2,456
1973	16,689	11,434	2,824
1974	16,491	11,145	3,015
1975	16,284	11,344	3,162
1976	16,975	11,669	3,476
1977	17,567	12,064	3,775
1978	18,373	12,585	4,064
1979	18,789	13,163	4,294
1980	18,577	13,428	4,114
1981	18,856	13,754	4,302
1982	18,325	14,078	4,557
1983	18,920	14,307	5,007
1984	20,123	14,773	5,375
1985	20,717	15,331	5,670
1986	21,236	15,679	6,263
1987	21,788	16,251	6,916
1988	22,499	17,185	7,621
1989	23,059	17,943	8,027
1990	23,201	18,789	8,704
1991	22,849	19,355	9,409
1992	23,298	19,482	9,810
1993	23,616	19,478	10,234
1994	24,279	19,637	10,959
1995	24,603	19,979	11,809
1996	25,230	20,616	12,507
1997	26,052	20,929	12,962
1998	26,824	20,662	11,966
1999	27,699	20,594	12,994
2000	28,403	21,051	13,985

(Source: International Monetary Fund Statistical Database)

Academic Vita

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Education:

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Schreyer Honors College
College of the Liberal Arts
Smeal College of Business
Bachelor of Arts Degree in Comparative Literature
Bachelor of Science Degree in Finance
Honors in Comparative Literature and Finance
Thesis Supervisor: Charlotte D. Eubanks
Honors Advisers: Sydney R. Aboul-Hosn, James A. Miles
Thesis Title: To Be Human: Comparison of Dystopian Expressions in Modern Eastern and Western Literatures Based on Economic Growth

Experiences:

KPMG Advisory Services, New York, NY 2009
Transaction Services Department Intern

- Worked in teams of senior associates, directors, and partners in the department.
- Practiced financial due diligence through valuations of target companies
- Took part in business consulting projects and presented recommendations and results to private equity clients

Triple Overtime Promotions, State College, PA 2007 – 2009
Sales and Product Development Manager

- Collegiate merchandising company founded by Schreyer Scholars
- Streamlined sales strategy to establish wider market exposure
- Coordinated with Partners to develop new product development plans
- Guided a team of Schreyer Scholars to create new business plan

Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC, Philadelphia, PA 2008
Corporate Law Department Intern

- Supported teams of attorneys in representing and advising clients on wide variety of transactional and regulatory matters
- Participated in legal seminars and summer law programs hosted by the firm
- Completed rotational program in Emerging Growth & Technology, Financial Institutions, Corporate Finance, and Nonprofit Law

Activities:

The Schreyer Honors College Student Council 2008 – 2010
President

- Worked with the Dean and College Coordinators in planning recruitment, academic, service, and social events to promote the missions of the Schreyer Honors College
- Led and coordinate meetings with executive and general council of over 300 members to create and implement signature community-building programs
- Actively participated in the External Advisory Board of the Schreyer Honors College as the Student Representative

The Schreyer Honors College 2008 – 2010
Scholar Assistant

- Identified academic advising resources, organized diverse activities, increased awareness about the opportunities available in the Schreyer Honors College, and provided opportunities to network within the community of Scholars
- Used leadership and organizational skills to build community among students, faculty, and administrators, while collaborating with multiple constituents within the entire university, including commonwealth campuses

National Public Issues Forums 2007 – 2010
Central Pennsylvania Student Representative, Forum Discussion Leader

- Planned monthly public forums for the consideration and education of public policy issues for all groups from high school students to senior citizens
- Headed forum discussions and trained moderators to present the overall problem and approach the solution in neutral manner to search for common ground for action

Penn State Department of Economics 2007 – 2008
Head Teaching Assistant

- Assessed lesson plans and put together creative learning activities
- Conducted review sessions and office hours for over 50 students per class
- Mentored new teaching assistants and directed team of undergraduate assistants

Honors and Awards:

Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society Member
Dean's List, all semesters
Penn State Outstanding Student Leader Scholarship Award
Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society Member
Smeal College of Business Sapphire Honors Scholar

Skills:

Technical: Proficient with the uses of Microsoft Office Suite and Adobe Creative Suite
Language: Korean first language