

GRAB BAG

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Found in translation: context, understanding

Married for almost forty years, Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton have spent more than thirty of those years working to translate literary works from Korean into English.

She is Korean born-and-raised, but is fluent in English and has lived in the U.S. for many years and

earned a Master's degree from the University of Washington. He's a native English speaker, but earned his doctorate at Seoul National University and now holds the Young-Bin Min Chair in Korean Literature and Literary Translation at the University of British Columbia.

The latest effort from the Seattle-based couple is "Sunset: A Ch'ae Manshik Reader." This is an anthology featuring a wide selection of works by Ch'ae Manshik, who lived and wrote in Korea in the first half of the 20th century.

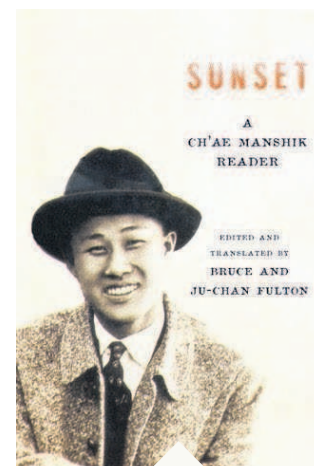
That was a turbulent time in Korea's history. Japan occupied the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945. The Japanese embarked on an ambitious modernization campaign in Korea, which before then had been described as a hermit kingdom. The changes came at the bitter cost of repression and

disruption of a culturally distinctive society that had developed over a thousand years, and Korean writers during this period were subjected to scrutiny and intimidation by their colonial overseers.

In an introduction that really needs to be read twice — once at the beginning in order to understand the general historical context, and then again after reading through the anthology so as to connect the dots further — the Fultons trace Ch'ae's navigation of tricky ideological waters as his writings contribute to a "national literature" that was constantly being tugged in two opposite directions: the expectation that it would support the occupiers, and the inclination to give voice to the occupied.

In a short essay written in 1935, "A Writing Worm's Life," Ch'ae mulls over these pressures: "I can't tell what's clean and what's murky in my life ..."

The Fultons also pro-



"Sunset: A Ch'ae Manshik Reader"
Edited and translated
by Bruce and
Ju-Chan Fulton
Columbia University
Press
224 pp
Paperback \$30

vide transcripts from later roundtable discussions in which Ch'ae further reflects on the challenges of being a writer in Korea at that time.

Today, much of Ch'ae's work is characterized as satire, and readers who pay

attention will note passages that on the surface appear to pay lip service to the power structure, but also contain undercurrents that suggest otherwise.

Ch'ae started out as a reporter, and that surely informs the keen details he transmits in his fiction — from a young woman "vivacious as a minnow," to the description of a drug addict's body: "a hideous infestation of scabbed-over boils surrounded by black-and-blue bruises, along with new boils of mung bean-like protuberances with an angry red halo around them — all of them coated with a gummy black salve."

"Sunset," the title novel, was published in 1948. This piece investigates the ways different characters attempted to game a newly post-colonial system that had become unpredictable and even treacherous.

It's fascinating to contemplate the bifurcated Korea of today and consider the insights this anthology offers from the not-too-distant past. The Fultons' work makes that possible.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com

AUDITION NOTICE

A Christmas Carol

THE MUSICAL



Originally Presented By Radio City Entertainment
At The Theater At Madison Square Garden

Join us for a chance to be a part of a holiday tradition at the Coaster Theatre. We are looking for men ages 18-65+, women ages 18-65+ and children ages 8 and up to fill out the cast of this timeless holiday classic.

AUGUST 7,8,14 & 15, 2017

Time: 6:00pm Location: Coaster Theatre Playhouse

Visit coastertheatre.com/calendar/auditions for more information.

*Participants under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

Crossword Answer

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