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1. Introduction

Although literary imaginations of desolation in Los Angeles seem to be quite common, Cynthia Kadohata's second novel *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* published in 1992, which mainly depicts the survival of a young girl, Francie, in dilapidated Los Angeles in 2052, can be distinguished from other Los Angeles disaster narratives. Some critics have pointed out that beneath intermittent fictional demolitions of Los Angeles there is a white fear of racial hybridization and an obscure anxiety about the racial balance of the city. Mike Davis, for instance, asserts that "the abiding hysteria of Los Angeles disaster fiction . . . is rooted in racial anxiety," and states directly "after 1970, with the rise of a non-Anglo majority in Los Angeles County, the city turns from an endangered home into the Alien itself; and its destruction affords an illicit pleasure not always visible in previous annihilations" (281-82). In addition, David Fine and Paul Skenazy extending the analysis to the state level indicate that "part of the grafting or hybridization process that is so characteristic of so many California stories is the mingled fear and sense of foreboding" (15). However, these racially tainted perspectives on Los Angeles disaster fiction do not necessarily correspond to Kadohata's treatment of desolation which foregrounds resilience of non-Anglo characters who try to cope with the

desolated urban environment.

This is important because with numerous futuristic Los Angeles disaster narratives having been published, it has been said that Kadohata's implication of disaster in this novel lacks novelty. Michiko Kakutani, for example, criticizes the novel for being "not sufficiently original or compelling" (15).¹⁾ Furthermore, prior to the publication of this novel, an apocalyptic Los Angeles disaster novel, Carolyn See's *Golden Days* (1987) with the survival of a wealthy woman in Los Angeles after a nuclear holocaust as its theme, was published. Since these novels set the similar condition of devastated Southern California, David Fine and J. Scott Bryson simply bundle them into a category of post-apocalyptic survival novels set in Los Angeles (Fine 237 ; Bryson 171). That is, it is possible that this novel has sunk into obscurity as just one of many Los Angeles disaster fictions.

In the Heart of the Valley of Love is, however, an ambitious work examining the concept of contamination in two ways: one is the notion of "racial contamination" in the city and the other is "ecological contamination." Firstly, through the resilience of Francie, an orphan of Asian and African descent, Kadohata counters the above-mentioned racial contamination theory of Los Angeles disaster fiction which assumes that the city has been taken over and "contaminated" by non-whites. Secondly, Kadohata's treatment of desolation suggests an environmental awareness which overrides the concept of the "contaminated environment" as I will demonstrate below. That is, Francie's sense of place in the wasteland invites a new perspective on the narrative of desolated Los Angeles being contaminated in two senses.

Kadohata's treatment of ecological corruption may remind readers of Lawrence Buell's term "toxic discourse" which is defined as "expressed anxiety arising from perceived threat of environmental hazard due to chemical modification by human agency" (*Writing* 31). Buell's concept of toxic discourse which will be "a common

denominator: a shared vocabulary, a shared concern” assumes pollution is a common enemy and urges solidarity of all humans regardless of race, nationality, gender or class (*Writing* 34). However, this is still based on the anthropocentric dichotomy of purity and pollution. As Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky point out, pollution or impurity implies “some harmful interference with natural processes” (36). Pollution is, in other words, the opposite of a human construct of the concept of “natural.” In this respect, Sarah Jaquette Ray observes that the culturally constructed distinction between “good ecological subjects and impure, dirty, unusual ‘ecological others’” shapes mainstream environmental discourses (2). Kadohata’s novel’s sense of coexistence, however, raises the possibility of overriding the anthropocentric dichotomy of the pure and the polluted which toxic discourse assumes. The setting in which the protagonist resides, an ecologically devastated city, reveals an environmental awareness which deviates from dichotomous environmentalism based on constructed binaries such as pure/pollution, natural/unnatural and civilization/nature.

Directing attention to the representation of desolation, this paper analyzes Kadohata’s inclusive ecological awareness which challenges environmental exclusion. Kadohata’s description of desolation in Los Angeles, on the one hand, distances from itself racial contamination theory of the representation of the city. At the same time, her sense of acceptance of the ecologically contaminated city suggests the possibility of overriding anthropocentric views of waste. Her “positive” interpretation of desolation challenges prejudicial ideology informing the narrative of racially and environmentally contaminated Los Angeles.

This paper first studies the discrepancy between Kadohata’s pose of rejecting her ethnicity and her actual writing around that. As I will show, although Kadohata claims that she wants to reject her Asian American background when she writes this novel, the novel includes clear implications of her ethnic identity. The novel’s

literary blending of the inescapable nature of her ethnic identity and the sense of acceptance of the devastated environment leads her writing to environmental speculation. One aspect of that can be seen in the treatment of skin. Juxtaposing skin disease with tattooing in the novel proposes a framework of acceptance. Environmental awareness, which reveals the sense of acceptance of external agency, finally reconceptualizes the idea of waste. Kadohata's positive treatment of waste dumps and discarded materials in this novel demonstrates an inclusive ecological awareness.

2. Ethnic Background

Some scholars interpret the skin disease called “black pearl” in this novel as an ethnic marker demonstrating political resistance.²⁾ Viet Thanh Nguyen, for instance, regards the black pearl as the possibility of racial resistance: while it marks “the bodies of the nonwhite as political, as different, as poor and marginalized,” the pearls can be “reclaimed or resignified with resistant political meaning, in the same way that black skin was reclaimed and resignified during the 1960s” (151).³⁾ Jinqi Ling, to take another example, argues that the black pearl is an “embodied form of the expanding but lifeless content of the black desert that recurs in Kadohata's novel” which “registers the profound consequence of the wartime internment on the Japanese American psyche” (503).

Previous analysis of the metaphorical disease, however, ignores the perspective of environmental injustice that poor nonwhites inhabiting the toxic environment are at risk of economically determined health disparities. In this novel, some marginalized people reside in the devastated area and suffer from diseases which are presumably caused by environmental factors. Francie's parents, for example, die of lung cancer because “they'd probably both been exposed to a chemical or something awful” (Kadohata 4). In addition, Jewel, a friend of Francie, suffers

from uterine cancer and intermittent coughs, and she says "I've had a cold for a long time. Or maybe it's the pollution getting to me. I hate this rotten town" (Kadohata 134).

Here, I will make sense of the discrepancy between Kadohata's pose of rejecting inscription of her ethnicity and her actual inscription of ethnic materials in order to complicate Kadohata's treatment of environmental injustice. Reconsideration of her emphasis on environmental issues and her pose challenges the uncompromising interpretation of this novel as an act of racial resistance. Kadohata, on the one hand, declares that she avoids ethnic issues in this novel. On the other hand, there are implications of her ethnic background in the text. The inconsistency between Kadohata's words and actions seems to imply an integrated notion of environmental and ethnic issues.

Kadohata, first of all, tried to avoid ethnic markers when she wrote this novel. Although she intentionally set this story in the middle of the twenty-first century when "nonwhites will outnumber whites," she says racial issues are not "what the book is about" (Pearlman 118). Moreover, in an interview, Kadohata asserts "people expected me to write about being Japanese, but I couldn't keep writing about the identity issue in every book" (Lee 179). She also responds to Hsiu-chuan Lee's questions related to Kadohata's ethnic notion as follows :

HL [Hsiu-chuan Lee] : Skin, especially skin color, is always something ethnic people are concerned about. Did you have the issue of race in mind when you wrote about the skin disease ?

CK [Cynthia Kadohata] : For me skin connects us to the world. It is something like a threshold that links up us and not-us. In a sense the world affects us by first affecting our skin since skin forms our bodily boundary. The skin disease is like the first warning to the world, and it symbolizes to us

that something is going wrong. (Lee 168)

Kadohata does not admit the relationship between her treatment of the skin disease and the ethnicity at all, and then refers to the topic of the environmental issue. Kadohata more obviously, evades the topic of the unavoidable memory of Japanese Americans when Lee asks her whether the image of the desert in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* connotes Japanese relocation during World War II :

CK : The image of the desert in my novel actually came from an article in the *Los Angeles Times* about crimes in the desert, which mentioned that the desert was so spread out that in some towns there was no police force. People thus could escape authority there. In a sense, anything could happen in the desert. People could be free in the desert because they could escape authority. (Lee 169)

Regarding the desert simply as a refuge from authority and positively depicting it in this novel, she does not mention Japanese internment here.

In contrast to Kadohata's rejection of the ethnic theme, however, some references to ethnicity in this novel suggest the sense of inevitability of ethnic influence. The ethnic resistance against mainstream whites is, for example, suggested by the graffiti of the Anti-Aryan Association. When Francie and her boyfriend Mark drive across the desert, they point out "some graffiti on the side of an outhouse near the powerplant : AAA" which stands for "Anti-Aryan Association, a fringe group with what authorities estimated was 'not more than a hundred members'" (Kadohata 198-9). While Francie has never met a member, the graffiti which "must have been fairly recent" indicates the group is certainly active (Kadohata 199). However, as Francie wonders "what the AAA [has] been doing

in an industrial no-town like this" (Kadohata 199), AAA's indistinct actions do not catch the public eye. This graffiti, therefore, implies their racial resistance functions unobtrusively as an underground organization. A glance at AAA symbolically indicates Kadohata's stance on ethnic materials. In other words, even though Kadohata evades ethnic issues in her work, as we observed in the above interview, undeclared racial resistance is inscribed in the text through the reference to an Anti-Aryan Association.

The description of the city and aerial technology also registers Asian ethnicity. It provides the image of wars related to Asian countries such as Vietnam and Japan. When Francie comes home, Mark is taping up the windows because "helicopters were planning to spray the entire city that night with Benfarzine, a new insecticide developed to stop a seemingly unstoppable fruit fly that had invaded the state" (Kadohata 214). Given that Francie regards downtown Los Angeles as "an outpost of some sort" which implies military affairs (Kadohata 120), Kadohata's description of the aerial spraying of insecticides by helicopters over the city may remind readers of the aerial spraying of Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. In addition, some expressions related to this aerial spraying, such as sealing up the windows, "I [Francie] felt as if the world was falling apart" and "the whole city had just been bugbombed" (Kadohata 215), connote nuclear fallout accompanying a bomb strike. Thus, although Kadohata does not foreground the image of wars—in contrast to See's *Golden Days* which deals with a nuclear bombing incident, for example—her literary imagination reaches out to the cultural memory of Asian air raid victims.⁴⁾

I want to argue that Kadohata's novel includes some references to ethnicity despite her words in the above interview because her discrepancy discloses a complex interaction between ethnicity and the environment. This novel may be regarded as a speculative fiction dealing with the topic of environmental injustice, but interpretation of Kadohata's comments on the environment in her interview and

actual implications of ethnic elements in this novel complicates the discourse. Although Kadohata asserts that her intention was to avoid tackling ethnic issues and emphasizes her environmental awareness, some expressions of the devastated cityscape reveal operations related to ethnic identity. In other words, the estrangement between her stance of avoiding writing about ethnicity and the actual implications of Asian Americanness within the novel indicate the value of an integrated consideration of environmental and ethnic issues.

3. Cutaneous Sensation

As Kadohata says, “the world affects us by first affecting our skin since skin forms our bodily boundary” in the above-mentioned interview, and it is true that cutaneous sensation is one of her important themes in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*. She juxtaposes skin disease with tattooing in this novel in order to evoke the relationship between humans and the environment. The skin disease, on the one hand, reminds the reader of Stacy Alaimo’s “trans-corporeality” which traces not only “how various substances travel across and within the human body but how they *do* things—often unwelcome or unexpected things” (146; emphasis in original).⁵⁾ On the other hand, the representation of tattooing, as a form of art could be distinguished from the trans-corporeal effect which triggers some environmental diseases. Tattooing in the novel, however, complements the trans-corporeal notion which often tends to be perceived through bodily symptoms arising from toxic chemicals. My own argument here highlights a trans-corporeal awareness which does not necessarily rely on the cognition of toxic substances in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*.

Although the skin disease called black pearl implies the characters’ bodies are immersed in the toxic environment, the disease seems to be a cue to remind readers of cutaneous sensation. As Francie regards the black pearl as ambivalently “so

pretty, so grotesque" (Kadohata 10), she does not consider it as a fatal symptom even though it disturbs her : she says "the disease was harmless, like acne, but I felt so tired I could scarcely move" (Kadohata 16-7). The black pearl being treated as trivial in this novel disturbs the boundary between the internal and the external, which suggests the trans-corporeal situation.

Besides the skin disease, Kadohata's treatment of tattooing indicates receptiveness to environmental forces. Although tattooing may at first sight be viewed as the assertion of one's will, Francie rather regards getting tattoos as an ultimately passive deed. Betsy Huang, indeed, observes that "Mark and Francie tattoo themselves not only to ascribe meaning to their bodies on their own terms, but also to highlight their difference against dominant cultural standards of beauty" (138). Through Francie the novel evokes an understanding of tattoo as a form of self-expression, since she says that those who have tattoos are "bringing themselves out for everyone to see more clearly" (Kadohata 110). These notions of tattooing certainly indicate one aspect of tattooing as self-expression or the declaration of free will. Significantly, however, Francie also alludes to the power relationship between the client and the tattooist in that the client is forced to accept the tattooist's agency : "I [Francie] trusted Carl. I guess you had to trust someone to let him draw on you with a needle. It seemed weird to think that all those people out there with tattoos had trusted someone, a lot, when they didn't even know him" (Kadohata 129). While she at first decides to have tattoos, she indicates tattooing is finally beyond her will : that is, from the point of view of Francie, the relationship between the client and the tattooist with respect to tattooing indicates acceptance of an external agency rather than resistance to authority or the wealthy-white-mainstream norm. She notices that she entrusts her skin to Carl's deed, and her word "trust" elaborates her notion of acceptance of influence of the outer world, which I will return to below.

Juxtaposing the word “trust” and the representation of the desert, Kadohata enlarges the cutaneous sensation to environmental awareness. The sense of acceptance of the harsh environment is expressed at the beginning of the novel. Francie remarks the desert’s severe conditions and recognizes the vulnerability of humans as she says “there was something thrilling about the desert, something violent. The desert’s rare but violent rainstorms, and especially the ferocious daytime heat, made me feel thrillingly vulnerable” (Kadohata 7). Yet she trusts the desert’s climate :

In the field, under the stars faded by pollution even this far from the city, I felt trust. I trusted the desert. It didn’t lie to you. The shapes of the cholla cacti and Joshua trees were clear and harsh against the sky. I sat on a rock. A lot of people over the years had sat on the rock out there. In the dirt lay cans so rusted you couldn’t tell what they’d once held, and shards of glistening glass with edges as smooth as Rohn’s voice when he was conning someone. I watched the endless trail of trucks, an enormous lighted power plant towering beyond them in the town across the highway and field. (Kadohata 8-9)

Using the word “trust” indicates that she believes in the purifying effect of the desert, little perturbed by pollution of the city, which is reminiscent of Oedipa Maas’s reliance on nature in opposition to urban pollution in one of the most conspicuous Los Angeles novels, *The Crying of Lot 49*.⁶⁾ Francie, in addition, pays attention to the elapse of time by mentioning those who have sat on the rock over many years, discarded cans and pieces of broken glass in order to compare the transiency of human creations with relative imperturbability of the desert. As the trails of trucks and the distant power plant in the desert indicate the contrast between civilization and raw nature, Francie’s notion of the desert climate is based on a

romantic reliance on nature largely unaffected by human activities. It is by contrast with this that the vulnerability of humans is revealed. Francie's trust in the desert suggests her reliance on natural forces which exist beyond her will or human capacity to affect the world. The novel's arrangement of the representation of both tattooing and the desert in connection with the word "trust" indicates that cutaneous sensation, which is not necessarily the reaction to toxic chemicals in this case, is intimately related to environmental awareness.

The trans-corporeal awareness of the skin suggests a sense of acceptance of external agency beyond human control in the novel. Although tattooing indelibly marks the influence of the external environment through an entirely different process to that by which disease affects the skin, it implies some degree of acceptance of the consequences of interaction between the internal and the external. Carl's saying that there are "no reference points" when he presses the needle into skin (Kadohata 204), suggests that even the tattooist does not know the consequences of tattooing. Kadohata's representation of tattooing thereby indicates the absence of predetermined results and this framework of acceptance is then applied to the relationship between the human body and the harsh environment.

4. The Awareness of "Waste-Time"

The acceptance by the protagonist of external agency has temporal implications. As mentioned above, Francie's trust in the desert derives from its contrast with the transiency of human creations : in other words, the inevitability of manmade objects falling into ruin. Francie pays attention not only to refuses such as cans and shards of glass but also to "outdated billboards" in the desert :

The farther you got from the city, the more blank white or outdated billboards you saw. So few people lived in the desert it didn't make much sense to

advertise out there. We passed a board for Everest cigarettes, but Everest cigarettes didn't even exist anymore. *That's what I loved about the desert. It was on a different schedule than we in the city were on.* (Kadohata 6; emphasis added)

The outdated billboards she loves suggest the flow of time and impermanence of human creations. Yet those billboards, though they have entered a state of disuse, still exist. These waste materials, as Francie clearly sees, now exist in a different temporality to that of the city. They disclose how the term “disuse” or “waste” is based on anthropocentric thought which is regulated by the concept of utility. As I will examine in detail in this section, Francie's attraction to waste materials suggests the possibility of coping with ruination by adopting a prolonged time scale exceeding the human conceptions based around the individual lifespan or human utility.

With respect to the relationship between wasted materials and time, William Viney proposes the concept of “waste-time” which is defined as “a state of material being that is marked by a temporal *disorientation*” or “a time without functional, and therefore a temporal, end” in contrast to “use-time” which is “*the finite time dictated by the use and cessation of use of a given object*” (8-10; emphasis in original). In other words, while use-time is estimated as a relatively short time which humans can perceive, waste-time indicates a time period which we cannot directly perceive. According to him, things which pass the expiration date based on the concept of use-time consequently belong to waste-time which is not regulated by utility. When we think of waste-time, as Viney points out, we notice that “waste is a medial condition, not just a thing of consequence but an original thing, a thing to end and a thing to begin with” (16). Viney here attempts to reconceptualize waste, asserting that it reflects not completion and stasis but process and change. Materials

being in disuse thus demonstrate not the end of effectiveness but the continuity of things, and urge us to reconsider the relationship between materials and time. Focusing on waste and ruins, Viney points out, "projecting ruins discloses the duration and shape of time and dramatizes a conflict between material permanence and material transience" (154). Applying the concept of waste-time to disused things exposes their liminal state between both permanence and transience. Francie's attraction to waste and disuse, her acceptance of desolation, reveals a fascination with the liminal state. Francie's attraction to discarded materials indicates that living in a devastated environment provides an opportunity to reconsider the variable state of materials in waste-time, and time in general.

Francie's attraction to disused things can be seen not only in the description of the desert but also in that of the city. When she stays in Mark's apartment, which she considers a "safe spot," she remembers the boathouse in Chicago where she had happily played with her friends in her younger days: "the boathouse was full of disintegrating woods, dried seaweed, and mold that grew in fabulous flowerlike shapes . . . I was really happy out there in that boathouse, eating bread in the middle of that sort of flowering desuetude" (Kadohata 119). Francie here once again reveals her attachment to discarded materials. At the same time, she confesses that she had not imagined how time would unfold through the life-path of her friends, such as "a girl who daydreamed ten hours a day and couldn't hold a job; a girl who had four abortions in high school; a nurse with a drug problem; a lawyer who chased ambulances, and later tried to kill himself" (Kadohata 120). The juxtaposition of discarded materials stuffed into the boathouse and her friends' miserable lives reminds the readers of Kadohata's description of wastes in the desert and the vulnerability of humans. Francie says "I was vulnerable and invincible at the same time" (Kadohata 120), because in the intensified present of the boathouse she feels beyond time, while the discarded materials she sees there make her aware

of the transiency of things.

Elaborating the discourse on time, Francie reveals she is attached to beads because they are to her “like fossils, something priceless and timeless” (Kadohata 140). The beads, which resemble in shape the black pearl, are also important for Francie to become aware of waste-time. Francie regards The Bead Shop as “a fossil, staying the same” in contrast to the country which moves “deeper into what newspapers and historians were already calling the Dark Century” (Kadohata 142-43), and says “The Bead Shop was one of those places, like Mark’s apartment or like that boathouse in Chicago, where I felt comfortable and serene. I fit in” (Kadohata 145). Francie obviously likes the unperturbed characteristic of the beads in the same way as she likes outdated billboards in the desert and discarded materials in the boathouse. Francie is attracted to things which, in one way or another, transcend the human temporal scale of “use-time.”

This explains not only her attachment to discarded things but also her sense of acceptance of desolation. Her notion of the transiency of things and her attraction to things in waste-time reveal her awareness that desolation is not a consequence but a condition of things in progress. In other words, discarded things are not the conclusion of materials but an outcome to which a temporal distinction between useful and useless based on the concept of utility applies. From that we can grasp the novel’s affirmative stance on the issue of desolation.

Francie’s attraction to things in disuse – which might be called “waste” from the perspective of use-time – finally leads her to a positive notion of two waste dumps. These waste dumps, which are usually shunned as an example of toxicity and impurity are interestingly granted positive connotations in this novel: one inspires awe in Francie’s mind and the other offers her a motivation for residing in devastated Los Angeles. These waste dumps are not simply derelict areas where things sink into oblivion.

When Francie and Mark drive to the desert area to search for clues regarding the whereabouts of Francie's missing uncle Rohn, a toxic waste dump fills Francie's mind with awe :

Since the snow had let up, we resumed our drive o the motel where Auntie and I used to stay with Rohn. We passed a toxic waste dump to the south and didn't talk much as we passed. Something about it always made me not feel like talking, as if it might hurt someone if not shown the proper respect. (Kadohata 196)

While the novel does not describe in detail what kind of toxic waste it is, the dump is in the same desert area as a power plant and warehouses which are "Uncle Sam's" (Kadohata 197). This implies that it contains some sort of nuclear waste which the government intends to conceal, recalling references to bombing and nuclear fallout in the description of the city. The implication of nuclear waste, concealed because of its uncontrollability, evokes in Francie a feeling of awe. The discarded materials, which are completely useless and even harmful, stirs Francie's mind.

Francie's fear and respect for the toxic waste dump is not simply a trait of the character but a central element in the novel. It is around a waste dump at Pasadena Arroyo that a pivotal and transformative event is narrated. Francie's friend, Jewel, finds her father's golden rings and confirms her family's bond and love. Su-lin Yu thus observes that "*In the Heart of the Valley of Love* celebrates human capacity to love and hope in a wasteland" (121). Jewel's confirmation of her family's bond and love, in other words, converts the desolated place, the Pasadena Arroyo, into a hopeful one, the valley of love, as the title suggests. Yet this place remains a waste dump. Francie and her friends take their guns and search the arroyo along with devastated houses :

The arroyo was miles long, a valley once filled with trees and walking paths and surrounded on both sides by pastoral Pasadena homes. *Now somebody – no one was sure who – was dumping garbage into the arroyo.* And it was unsafe to walk in after dusk. Nowhere was exactly safe anymore. (Kadohata 218; emphasis added)

Pasadena Arroyo, which had once presented a scenic view has become a garbage dump and unsafe because of mobs of rioters. This garbage dump is, however, the starting point of Jewel's new life: breaking away from her violent boyfriend and departing to for a new life in east where she has an old friend.

Francie likewise regards the garbage dump as a starting point. As Jewel's father places the rings in the arroyo as a token of family bonds and love, Francie puts her precious things, the rocks which are the mementos of her parents, on the garbage dump and decides to settle down in devastated Los Angeles even though an unpropitious incident occurs: Francie and Mark find their car stolen when they are about to leave the arroyo, and they are obliged to stay in the stinking ditch in order to let night gangs pass. In the incident, Francie recognizes the bond of love with Mark:

All night I heard the dog howling in agony. My heart broke with every howl. Mark did not let go of my hand, and I don't think he slept all night. Los Angeles was the only home either of us had ever known, and maybe this would be the only love we would ever know. For those reasons, I knew I would never leave Los Angeles. (Kadohata 225)

For Francie, the garbage dump is a positive starting point, which suggests her resilience in the wasteland. The devastated and chaotic landscape, therefore,

indicates not only ruination but also regeneration.

Kadohata thus depicts two waste dumps as domains of sublime experience, bestowing Francie with powers of resilience. The positive meanings of discarded materials and waste dumps indicate a sense of adapting to the incessantly changing environment. Kadohata writes about Francie's attraction to things in disuse and discarded materials and to the dysfunctional and chaotic urban landscape which "many people had plans to leave" (Kadohata 117). Although Kadohata depicts deteriorating situations in this novel, her representation of desolation suggests not rejection of waste but acceptance of things in waste-time. Francie's resilience indicates that the decay of the urban environment, the enemy of those who seek "good" conditions in which to live, could become a home. Kadohata's literary imagination, thus, suggests that devastated Los Angeles is not only a wasteland created by civilization but also a sphere of life.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, Kadohata's treatment of desolation has the potential to undermine the apocalyptic narrative of a contaminated city. Francie's resilience, for one thing, may be regarded as the anti-thesis of the racially biased discourse of Los Angeles disaster fiction: that is, Kadohata's representation of desolation is removed from the fictional disaster narratives that suggest a repressed desire to sweep away a racially contaminated city. Francie's resilience indicates a sense of acceptance of the devastated environment rather than resistance to pollution. The narrative thus inspires reconsideration of the concept of waste. Although anthropocentric ecological thought, such as discourse on toxicity and environmental injustice, express disgust at desolation as a threat to human habitation, Francie's acceptance of desolation deviates from that one-sided view of discarded materials and wastes.

Although Kadohata has explicitly declared that the central theme of this novel is

not ethnicity, her inescapable ethnic background is inscribed in the text. The novel's implications concerning non-white ethnicity suggest the opposite of what the author says in her interview. The discrepancy between her overt stance and the text indicates the inevitability of the appearance of one's ethnic background. The inevitable inscription of her ethnicity is, then, extended to environmental awareness. Francie's skin is the domain of inscription of not only ethnic connotation but also the influence of the environment. The cutaneous sensation which is perceived through skin disease and tattooing indicates Kadohata's trans-corporeal awareness and the sense of acceptance of the influence of the environment. It suggests that one can no more escape the influence of one's environment than can escape from ethnic identity.

The novel's mixing of ethnicity and the environmental issues finally produces an inclusive ecological awareness of coexistence with both other humans and wastes. Although anthropocentric environmentalism tends to express nothing but disgust at contamination, Francie's attraction to discarded materials suggests the possibility of overriding such dichotomous thinking in discourse around toxicity and environmental justice. The novel's treatment of things in disuse prompts reconsideration of the concept of waste. Applying the concept of waste-time to discarded materials reveals that wastes are not simply the termination of things but an outcome and continuation of processes ; in other words, waste-time suggests a perpetual motion of materials beyond human conception of use-time. Focusing on the concept of waste-time, I have argued that the portrayal of Francie's skin disease is connected to the trans-corporeal notion that some kind of transformed materials which are beyond human conception may affect her body and mind. In this sense, Kadohata's juxtaposition of cutaneous sensation and Francie's attraction to waste reveals unavoidable interactions of materials. Whether one wills it or not, materials exert influence on human bodies. Her positive interpretation of discarded materials,

therefore, reconceptualizes the interaction between humans and environmental exclusion.

In conclusion, reading desolation in *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* discloses an inclusive environmental awareness which deviates from the anthropocentric ideology of contamination. Although discourse that fosters human solidarity in order to resist toxicity has succeeded in adopting the views of non-white minorities in white-middle-centric environmentalism, such discourse still assumes environmental exclusion in its use of the terms pollution and contamination. Kadohata's narrative of desolation, which suggests coexistence with environmental exclusion, however, reveals that the discourse of the contaminated city contains an intricate intertwining of ethnicity with environmental exclusion. That is, Kadohata's second novel is an ambitious work which challenges the racial contamination theory of Los Angeles disaster fiction and anthropocentric environmentalism which assumes exclusion. She converts the ideology of contamination into a breeding ground for hopeful regeneration.

Notes

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- 1) Su-lin Yu summarizes some critical responses to *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*. According to Yu, besides Kakutani, Barbara Quick also rates this novel lowly. Although Yu mentions Susan Heeger's applause for the novel, she concludes that "Kadohata's second novel was not as well received as her first" (125).
- 2) The skin disease "black pearl" is one of the most conspicuous diseases in this novel: characters such as a vagrant called Max the Magician, Francie and her parents, contract black bumps under their skin which, according to Francie, indicate "some sort of skin disease" which

- is not “fatal or really even harmful” (Kadohata 11-2).
- 3) With respect to political racial resistance in this novel, see also Krista Comer. She regards *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* as an allegorical narrative of Civil Rights history and class warfare which falls out “along predictable racial lines” (409).
 - 4) In See’s *Golden Days*, the bombing incident is manifested in “vast craters and mountains” in the area “where before there had been none,” and the novel foregrounds nuclear fallout on Los Angeles: “we became experts on the wind. The prevailing westerlies were the ones to go out in; the Santa Anas coming down from the northeast – that in the old days used to scour the city’s air – were the ones now to make you take shelter” (157).
 - 5) When Alaimo deals with the human body as a site of material intra-actions, she especially focuses on multiple chemical sensitivity or environmental illness which discloses points of intersection of the body, the place and materials (113-15). Moreover, Simon C. Estok, referencing Alaimo’s notion of trans-corporeality, regards the human body as “a site of beleaguerment from a threatening ‘outside’” (130). In this regard, however, Timothy Clark critically observes that Alaimo’s concept of trans-corporeality is so devoted to the examination of the human body and toxic substances that she overlooks the significant effects of CO₂, so-called greenhouse gas, which is not in itself polluting the environment (58-9).
 - 6) In Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), Oedipa believes in “some principle of the sea as redemption for Southern California (not, of course, her own section of the state, which seemed to need none), some unvoiced idea that no matter what you did to its edges the true Pacific stayed inviolate and integrated or assumed the ugliness at any edge into some more general truth” (37). In this regard, Keita Hatooka demonstrates the homology of Oedipa’s romanticism toward the sea and Rachel Carson’s attraction to the sea as a realm beyond human control in her *The Sea around Us* (1951) and points out Oedipa’s environmental awareness is influenced by Carson’s earlier romantic familiarity with nature (23). *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* likewise follows this romantic framework when Kadohata writes of Francie’s trust in the desert.

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