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An, Jinsoo

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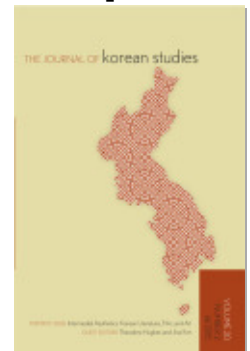
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Shifting Coordinates of Nativist (*Hyangt'o*) Aesthetics: The Colonial Rural in South Korea's Literary Film Adaptations

Jinsoo An

This article examines South Korea's cinematic adaptation of the colonial literature, more specifically the short fiction of nativist (郷土, hyangt'o) aesthetics. It begins with a brief survey of literary art film (文藝映畫, munye yŏnghwa), which emerged as a film cycle of the 1960s, and raises questions about interpretive issues in reading postcolonial films. In short, I claim that the literary film adaptations of the 1960s show a new, colonial, rural "imaginary" particular to South Korea's cultural production. On the surface, they appear to register a return to the colonial nativist sensibility. However, they mark a clear shift in focus toward the area of communal interaction and the social dynamics of information sharing. This article attempts to discern and articulate new thematic preoccupations and tendencies as well as their implications to a nationalist view toward the Colonial Period. In addition, it historicizes the cinematic version of nativist aesthetics by relating its development to the larger concern of the cinematic form and the history of colonial representation.

The phenomenal success of the 1993 film *Sŏp'yŏnje* signals a major turning point in Im Kwŏnt'aek's prolonged film career. Produced with a modest budget the film became a surprise hit, an almost era-defining film that inspired a new discourse on cultural tradition and marked the beginning of a burgeoning national cinema of artistic merit and popular appeal.¹ In the English anthology *Im Kwŏn-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema*, three out of nine articles paid close attention to this film. Furthermore, *Sŏp'yŏnje* is often treated as a nodal text in scholarly treatises, an exemplary work that connects to Im's other films with its lucid treatment of traditional arts and their values caught in the hostile forces of modern change.

On the visual level, the changing landscape of nature offers a crucial backdrop for the film's thematic treatment of traditional performance arts, its aesthetic

Jinsoo An is an assistant professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California at Berkeley. His current research focuses on colonial representation in South Korean cinema.

construction, and its cultural meanings. The film's nostalgia points toward the affirmation of the sense of preindustrial community of Korea, and the image of a pristine landscape often serves to anchor and naturalize such a "memorialized past."² The idealization of the mountainous vista also engenders a sense of relief and spiritual regeneration for Korean film viewers, whose experience of modernity has been conditioned by intense industrialization and urbanization.³ Concurrently, the film's self-conscious stylistic focus on the landscape view suggests dissonance with the exquisite image of mountains, fields, and forests. Chungmoo Choi reminds us how *Sŏp 'yŏnje*'s "riveting visual feast" accompanies the film's structural negligence of crucial historical events and technological innovations, both of which have shaped the Korean experience of modernity.⁴ Similarly, Kyung Hyun Kim points out two seemingly disparate appeals of the landscape: while its visualization produces the satisfying pleasure of affective nostalgia for film viewers, its changing scenery, combined with a folk song, gradually registers the sense of alienation that the father figure, Yu-bong, develops toward nature, as he finds no point of unison with nature but falls into melancholia.⁵ In other words, the film's changing gradation of landscape, from vibrant color and animating vigor to the greyish tone of winter austerity, accompanies and accentuates the fatalistic decline of the traditional arts, which in turn foregrounds the question of postcolonial Korean culture vis-à-vis Western culture.

I begin my article on the 1960s literary film adaptations by taking a long detour to the landscape imagery of *Sŏp 'yŏnje* for two reasons. First, although hailed primarily as Im's signature work, *Sŏp 'yŏnje* is also an intelligent and creative adaptation of Yi Ch'ŏngjun's short story. There are many areas of innovation that Im brought to the screen, but the film's visual forte of landscape is one of the most conspicuous distinctions from the literary original. Consistent with the film medium's "sovereign conviction" and capacity to present all external features of characters, Im self-consciously constructs and visualizes the landscape imagery in tandem with the reflective theme of Korea's cultural tradition.⁶ *Sŏp 'yŏnje*'s depiction of the landscape hence suggests the "hermeneutic point of divergence" from the literary original, and this shift has subsequently promoted a line of inquiries on representation of gender, tradition, and nation, all of which concern the cultural politics of adaptation.⁷ The discourse of femininity, for instance, is ingrained in the fabric of national allegory in the film as it is also interchangeably linked to the imagery of pristine landscape.⁸ As I will illustrate, the 1960s literary film adaptations gained popular appeal by taking recourse in nativist aesthetics that involved distinct configuration of the rural communal space. The thematic thread running across the aforementioned criticisms reminds us how central the spatial aesthetics is to the overall composition of Im's adaptation strategies. Similarly, the conversion of the colonial literary texts into the postcolonial cinema involves substantial reworking of the originals, in which the new spatial configuration of the rural community plays a key role.

Second, I invoke *Sŏp 'yŏnje* because its erasure of historical reference to the colonial era threw the colonial temporality in literary film adaptations of the

nativist aesthetics into sharp relief. As noted, *Sŏp'yŏnje* informs that a certain logic of absence or negligence is at work in its refracted historicization of the traditional arts. The film promotes and naturalizes a way of imagining the past by rendering the natural landscape and rural site largely devoid of references to concrete historical events or circumstances. Historical references to Korea's liberation and the Korean War are briefly mentioned in the characters' dialogues, but the film barely brings their impacts and repercussions into the narrative frame. Even though the film narrative begins in the late Colonial Period, such historical significance and controversies are completely off-framed from the film's vista, which instead showcases a thriving *p'ansori* performance culture within. In contrast, the adaptation films under consideration project a distinct view and attitude toward the colonial past. I therefore approach this group of film adaptations as an example of cinematic nativism with the contour of rural space and social dynamics that departs from Im's construction of the bygone world of tradition.⁹

The following article is composed of three main sections. The first section surveys the critical approach to South Korea's literary film adaptations, called *munye yŏnghwa*, and provides historical context for this distinct filmmaking practice. In particular, I cast a light on the institutional forces and industrial interests that intersect and circumscribe this film form. I then narrow my scope to a subset of adaptation films that convey nativist (*hyangt'o*) aesthetics. This group of films poses questions about the postcolonial configuration of colonial rural imagery as well as the vestiges of colonial visuality. The second section of the article points out the key sites and places that anchor the new and scandalous social dynamics that characterize the colonial rural community. Particular emphasis is given to the way in which community sites instigate and structure transactions of community scandals and gossip. These films inform the viewer of an impressive array of social interactions that constitute the proto-social dimension of communal life through exploration of voyeurism, breach of privacy, and rumor circulation. The exegesis then progresses to the last section, in which the reading of the film *Ppong* (Mulberry, directed by Yi Tuyong, 1985) is given the full treatment. As I will illustrate in detail, the film effectively encapsulates, expands, and deepens the thematic rigor of nativist aesthetics by rendering visible an unusual critique to the assumed normalcy of nationalist imagery against the colonial backdrop. My reading attempts to explain the film's reflexive appraisal of the trappings of both colonial and nationalist imaginary.

MUNYE YŎNGHWA, THE INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT, AND NATIVIST AESTHETICS

As in many film adaptation discussions, a question of fidelity recurs in the scholarship of Korean literary film adaptations. The assumed hierarchy between two narrative media (original literature and film) puts the filmic treatment of the narrative in an unfavorable position—that of derivative material—against the

superior authority of the literary original. Recent scholarship, however, amends this problem of disparity by enlarging the scope of inquiry to include the institutional history and connections between the two narrative media.¹⁰ For instance, Pak Yuhŭi has comprehensively traced the historical meanings of *munye* (literary art) from the time of the Colonial Period and has explicated its discursive changes in postcolonial film culture. Pak's work has brought attention to the interests of filmmakers, film production companies, and the state cultural apparatus—the three forces central to the growth and longevity of literary art film (文藝映畫, *munye yŏnghwa*): a particular type of literary film adaptation that gained prominence from the mid-1960s through to the late 1980s due to the institutional support of the South Korean government.¹¹ Implicit in her historical research is the way in which national cinema of South Korea benefited from the recycling or appropriation of esteemed literature, a practice that consequently solidified the higher cultural status of literature.

This cultural practice of canon-making in cinema, to be sure, had a history of institutional backing, as the state offered film production companies strong incentives to produce literary film adaptations throughout the 1960s and onward. In 1962, the South Korean government introduced an annual film award system called “quality film” (優秀映畫, *usu yŏnghwa*) to promote its ideological campaign to forge a “healthy” society and culture. The production companies that complied with state guidelines received handsome benefits, for winning the *usu yŏnghwa* label guaranteed their right to import and distribute a lucrative foreign film to the domestic market.

Literary film adaptation burgeoned and became one of the most successful types of filmmaking under this cultural policy. The primary motivation that fueled the making of literary film adaptation had to do with South Korea's desire to gain visibility and recognition in the international film scene. As Pak cogently points out, the potential of international film festival entry was a key factor in the planning and making of literary film adaptations. Specifically, the films that depicted the beauty and attraction of traditional culture received sustained support and interest both inside and outside the formal structure of the film industry.¹² The impetus for this tendency can be traced back to a sudden global recognition of the Japanese art film *Rashomon*, which cast “phantom” shadows on the subsequent production drive of South Korea's literary film adaptations.¹³

The year 1968 marked a particularly decisive period for the production of literary film adaptations. Three new subcategories were added to the then-existing quality film category. Along with enlightenment film (*kyemong yŏnghwa*) and anticommunist film (*pan'gong yŏnghwa*), literary art/adaptation film (*munye yŏnghwa*) became a separate category of the state-sanctioned merit filmmaking known as “quality film” (*usu yŏnghwa*).¹⁴ For a film production company this elevation of literary film adaptation meant an expanded business opportunity, for winning the quality film award could potentially translate into cultural prestige, lucrative subsidies, and auxiliary windfalls. The incentive policy was geared

toward promoting state programming and ideology; however, it also made room for filmmakers to experiment with new subjects, themes, and styles within the confines of state control and censorship. The prolific career of the director Kim Suyong, for instance, would be an exemplary case in point. Throughout his film career, Kim made over fifty literary film adaptations, which earned him a reputation of *the* director of *munye yŏnghwa*. Until the government rescinded the *munye yŏnghwa* label from the quality film category in the late 1980s, it offered a de facto space for filmmakers like Kim Suyong, Yu Hyŏnmok, and Yi Manhŭi to exercise their formal experiments in filmmaking.

South Korea's literary film adaptations encompass a diverse body of works, but the parameter of my inquiry, i.e., the colonial rural in film adaptations, restricts the works to the following key texts: *Pŏngŏri Samnyong* (Samnyong the mute, directed by Sin Sangok, 1964), *Kamja* (Potato, directed by Kim Sŭngok, 1968), *Mullebanga* (A water wheel, directed by Yi Manhŭi, 1966), *Memil kkot p'il muryŏp* (When buckwheat blooms, directed by Yi Sŏnggu, 1967), *Pompom* (Spring, Spring, directed by Kim Suyong, 1969), and *Ppong* (Mulberry, directed by Yi Tuyong, 1985). Sin Sangok's *Samnyong the Mute* is perhaps the most successful and influential adaptation case of the early 1960s, not only for the creative expansion of the literary source but as a model for emulation in subsequent adaptation practices. The film brought Sin tremendous institutional benefits and windfalls: he procured a whopping four foreign film import rights as the reward for showcasing the film at four different international film festivals.¹⁵ *Potato* is based on Kim Tongin's 1925 naturalist short story of the same title. This film garnered particularly strong interest in literary and film circles, for it was the directorial debut of Kim Sŭngok, one of the most renowned novelists of the 1960s.¹⁶ Both *A Water Wheel* and *Mulberry* are drawn from the 1925 short stories of Na Tohyang, whose works had particularly strong appeal to the Korean film directors of the 1960s. Along with the short stories of Yi Hyosŏk and Kim Yujŏng, Na's work is known for capturing the unbridled passion as well as the vigor of the peasant lifestyle set in the bucolic rural environment.

A valorization of these works indicates how short fiction, rather than novel form, gained traction with filmmakers. The preference for the short fiction form in part reflects and accentuates the growing popularity of nativist lyricist fiction.¹⁷ To be sure, colonial novel classics such as Yi Kwangsu's novels *Mujŏng* (The heartless), *Yujŏng* (The heart), and *Hŭk* (Soil), and Sim Hun's *Sangroksu* (Evergreen) were taken earnestly into film adaptations. However, these novel-based film adaptations did not inspire the kind of nativist aesthetics common to the works based on short fiction. Their treatment of the enlightenment discourse of self-cultivation and rural activism produced a thematic treatment and temporality distinct from the quotidian concerns and cyclical rhythm of rural life in the nativist short stories.¹⁸

For filmmakers, working with short fiction meant an affordance of leeway to expand, embellish, and otherwise complicate the condensed story of a singular

situation or event. Nearly all film adaptations owe their success to the superb adaptation skills of screenwriters.¹⁹ The photographic nature of film medium—that is, its indexical relation to the phenomenal world—worked particularly well to transcode the otherwise abstract adumbration of the rural environs into the realistic depiction of characters and their interactions set in a visually concrete bucolic world. Spatial features hence took precedence in filmic adaptation, thus expanding and reshaping the themes and issues that would be dormant or repressed in the literary original.

As mentioned, I separate the film adaptations based on colonial literary sources from the larger body of *munye yŏnghwa*, which encompasses literature from all periods. I justify this “fragmentation” by first underscoring how substantial and significant the colonial literature has been to the overall cinematic configuration of the colonial past in South Korean cinema. I also rationalize my examination by moving the coordinates of inquiry, which favors the continuity-prone transmedial argument to the cultural politics of adaptation to the postcolonial cinematic imaginary of the colonial rural. Implicit in this move is the conception that colonial literature had already been conditioned by the logic of colonial visibility and censorship practice, which positions Korea as an object of fascination for the colonizer as well as a surveillance target for the colonial authority. By stressing this seismic historical gap, I situate and read the pronounced thematic features of the literary film adaptations as signs and symptoms of postcolonial cinema in dialogue with the vestiges of colonial history and culture. The shift in focus also affords a closer analysis of the divergence and dissonance inherent in cinematic configuration: excoriating the signs of rupture otherwise unrecognizable in the discourse of canon formation or national culture that tend to bind the two media into a single entity. The film adaptations expanded, yet deviated from, the source materials by featuring different concerns and preoccupations. As such, I do not intend to reconcile the filmic and narrative features back to the literary “center.” Instead, I pursue the vestiges of filmic differences and deviation to explain the cultural logic of nativism unique to reflexive logic of postcolonial cinema and its visibility.

By making this distinction, I take up a line of argument that Rey Chow articulated in her critique of nativist film aesthetics. Chow points out how postcolonial intellectuals and artists have continuously practiced the “otherization” of one’s own culture (i.e., through “the subjective origins of ethnography” in which the “‘viewed object’ is now looking at [the] ‘viewing subject’ looking”), thereby formulating a new type of ethnographized aesthetics. In contrast, a new type of ethnography is possible, she contends, only when this type of practice is put into a bracket for critical examination. Chow turns to the concept of translation and transmission to counter the “optical unconscious” in the existing ethnographical imagery and discourse in popular cinema.²⁰

Chow’s approach helps us understand the subjective ethnographic dimension in South Korean films, again most notably those of Im Kwŏnt’aek. Im’s later

films in particular promulgated the wide public discussion on the meanings of cultural tradition and heritage in contemporary South Korea. This thematic preoccupation earned him the international reputation of film auteur, especially of South Korean national cinema. But Im's films also signify the sustained attempt to put on display precolonial Korea's cultural self-representation that draws from the supposed objectification of Korean culture in the first place, or what Rey Chow explicates as "a memory of past objecthood—the experience of being looked at." This question of outside gaze has been contextualized in relation to the 1990s globalization trend which, Cho Hae Joang argues, compelled Korean people in search of their cultural roots and Im's signature work of the era: *Söp 'yŏnje*.²¹ However, I submit that the seeds of Im's cultural nationalist aesthetics were sown much earlier.

Im's 1979 film *Chokpo* (The genealogy) an adaptation of Kajiyama Toshiyuki's novella *Zokufu* (The clan records) is a case in point. As Chungmoo Choi aptly critiques, the film's dramatization of the Korean elite's effort to protect one's familial lineage and Korea's traditions finds perfect unity with the colonialist view on Korean culture and identity that was conceivable only in terms of decline and demise.²² *The Genealogy* is hence the most rigorous and coherent treatise on Korea's cultural tradition, which also informs the film's convoluted logic: the way in which Korea's anticolonial cultural nationalism shares the profound affinity with the colonialist view on Korea as that which undergoes the fateful decline. The visuality, conceived here to encompass the dynamic pair, i.e., the colonialist gaze on the one hand and Korea as the object of fascination on the other, presupposes and naturalizes the power relations between the two. Furthermore, it makes possible the conversion of a particular social tradition, i.e., preservation of the Korean family name, into shared aesthetic understandings, principles, and judgments between the Koreans and Japanese.

I digressed with *The Genealogy* because this film is a real deviance from other representational norms of South Korean cinema with regard to the colonial gaze. I assert that most postcolonial South Korean films on the colonial experience have reflected and engaged with this thorny problem. I would go so far as to claim that masquerading the vestiges of colonial visuality has been a consistent undercurrent in South Korean cinema.²³ This means that South Korean films have cumulatively generated the visual discourse that renders visible and comprehensible the colonial experience for film viewers, while simultaneously hindering the features that invoke or relate to the "old" privileged colonial view toward Korea as the exposed object of curiosity. To be sure, visual tropes and patterns for decentering the colonial gaze differ significantly from one group of films to another. Furthermore, the degree to which this cinematic tradition entailed productive and critical reflection on the colonial past remains moot, as the colonial representation of the late 1960s and onward suffered the grievous crisis of representation.²⁴ Nevertheless, the recurring drab and austere ambience associated with the colonial past shows how this preoccupation with representation dominates South Korean cinema.

Set against this paradigm, *The Genealogy* marks the most sustained and comprehensive effort to reconstitute not only the terms of cultural nationalism but also the particular rural colonial imagery via recourse to the “sympathetic,” but essentially colonial, ethnographical view of Korea.²⁵ As I will illustrate below, the majority of literary film adaptations invest heavily in the mechanism of voyeurism and information-sharing, but form a trajectory distinct from the outright internalization of the colonial discourse in *The Genealogy*. These films underscore the significance of communal gaze and its social mechanism but reframe and expand it to register a different set of social concerns and preoccupations. These themes also mark a departure from the literary original and constitute the unique substance of cinematic nativist aesthetics. It takes, however, a kind of spatial turn to explicate the key features of the postcolonial elaboration of the nativist aesthetics.

SPATIAL TURN: SITES OF TRANSGRESSION AND RUMOR

The existing scholarship tends to pay attention to the special status of nature as the crucial backdrop that expresses human desire and its vanity. Pak Hönho points out how Korea’s nativist lyrical short fiction (*hyangt’o sōjōng sosōl*) offers an image of nature distinct from modern conception. “Nature symbolically refers to the premodern period and its worldview in nativist lyrical short fiction, and hence always and already resides within the realm of human activities as an indivisible foundation of life. Humans and nature form analogical relations, as nature emerges as an integral part of the human world and vice versa. Human frailty and weakness are not signs of defect; rather they reflect the innocent and redemptive essence of nature.”²⁶ It is not too difficult to see how this view of nature is part of the anti-modern thesis that became prevalent in 1930s’ intellectual circles in Korea.²⁷

Pak Hönho reasons that the nativist literary works provided a psychological “buffer zone” or reservoir of affective relief for Korean readers who were caught in the throes of colonial development without adequate room for reflection on the split condition of one’s subjugation.²⁸ Pak Yuhüi underscores the visual medium’s discursive difference; however, she also echoes Pak Hönho’s insight as to how the lyrical depiction of nature served as the crucial backdrop for the sentimental romance and fatalistic narrative in *munye yōnghwa*. Natural settings hence form “analogical” relationships with human affairs of desire and fate. For Pak, this is a popular conception of nature and environment distinct from the literary film adaptations of contemporary modernist works, in which the themes of alienation and solitude are ingrained into the rendition of natural settings.²⁹ Furthermore, Pak points out that the genre featured muffled references toward the colonial condition and instead aroused a sense of nostalgia for the already familiar but bygone rural world.³⁰

These two interpretations (both advanced by the literary scholars) help us understand how both lyrical short fiction and *munye yŏnghwa* gained enduring popularity through contemporary discursive construction of the native in the post-colonial culture. Against the backdrop of volatile changes, scholars reasoned that these works offered the contrarian desire for pastoral origins, cultural tradition, and communal belonging. Yet, explicating the popularity in terms of psychological retreat or nostalgia for the pastoral leaves the question of the historicity of the form, a type of question specific to cinema that I addressed earlier. It seems that these treatises valorized, perhaps inadvertently, the innate features of the nativist discourse via eternal images of nature set opposite to the external world and its sociopolitical dimensions. The outside world, according to this reasoning, signifies that of colonial rule and domination. In contrast, the hermit world of nature and village then form the center of affective authenticity. My viewpoint here is that this apparent feature—the nativist works' tendency for decontextualization, i.e., to do away with social concerns or the historical condition of colonialism itself—needs to be put in the context of the postcolonial reworking of colonial imagery.

My point of departure here is the way in which nature is depicted in most literary film adaptations. Though the cinema medium has shown its visual forte in depicting the majestic beauty of pastoral landscapes, harmonious lifestyles, and unbridled and primitive human passion, I submit that these elements of nature hardly rise above the backdrop of action in the narrative. This is not to downplay the importance of the physical setting, which indeed creates the parameter of a unique event and its consequences. Rather, the films tend to underscore the “social” dimension, dynamics, and conundrums even while featuring the grandeur appeal of the natural setting. As such, the nativist aesthetics of film adaptations should be understood as a kind of banal underside of the rustic surface, which disrupts the tenuous social mores and normalcy. For exploration of this communal volatility, I turn to the principal sites that set the narrative forward through *exposé* of a communal member's secret and scandal.

Among many sites and places, the water wheel and the wash place possess definitive meanings in the nativist film adaptations. Though owned collectively and open for all in the community, the water wheel often signals and serves a function contrary to its designated purpose. Instead of its utility in agricultural productivity, the water wheel is depicted primarily as a nocturnal rendezvous site for consenting adults. Located at the periphery of the community, it is beyond the general scopic reaches of the community, which makes it a perfect place for a discreet affair. However, as stories typically unfold, the water wheel turns out to be highly penetrable and vulnerable to the intruding or accidental gaze—turning an affair into an exposed scandal in the community.

The motif of the water wheel is so oft-used in film adaptations that it has become a generic cliché of South Korea's nativist imagery. Meanings of the site are over-determined, and film viewers are fully cognizant of what would follow in

the ensuing events and outcome. To be sure, the water wheel's location in a rural setting attributes its sense of proximity to nature. It also allows us to interpret the illicit affair being carried out within it in terms of unbridled desire—a part of human nature—as distinct from the world of social mores and repression. As in literary works such as *When Buckwheat Blooms*, poetic descriptions of nature that surround the water wheel are used to render the symbiotic relationship between the two, expressing the idyllic moment of carnal invigoration and harmony.

I would stress that the water wheel also garners unique communal dynamics, signaling a thematic departure from the fatalistic ambience of lyrical short fiction. The films do not dwell on the promotion of the theme of security and harmony with nature. Instead, an affair and its exposure set up the social dynamics that subsequently make up the substance of new nativist aesthetics. What is at stake here is the cinematically specific visualization of an affair, which introduces the following key thematics: mechanism of voyeurism, breach of privacy, transmission of rumors, and protracted communal repercussions. Once scandalized, the affair's gravity is not limited to the involved parties and those who happen to be peeping Toms on the site. Rather, the film focuses specifically on the affair's impact on communal dynamics as word of the affair spreads expediently across the whole village.

Cinematic structuring of scopophilia and identification serve particularly well to explain invasion of privacy, its public disclosure, and the spread of scandal.³¹ The literary film adaptations place a particular emphasis on the effects of sexual gaze and spectatorship. Here, the cinematic properties of editing, more specifically the use of point-of-view shot and reverse shot, are typically in place to generate the suture effect of cinema, which is prevalent in conventional commercial narrative films. The suture mechanism invites the film viewer through identification with the camera to the position of the onlooker in diegesis. This formal design places the woman's body as privileged focal point in the configuration of the water wheel sequence. The nativist films hence employ a mainstream film language that naturalizes the patriarchal view toward the woman as the object of masculine desire. However, what is unique is the way in which the nativist film adaptations treat the repercussions of the event. Often, a village voyeur turns his or her individual observation into shared communal information by spreading gossip about the affair. Voyeurism, in other words, is conflated with the transmission of rumors in literary film adaptations.

A community wash place (*ppallae t'ō*) appears as the most visible site of this information sharing. Village housewives congregate at this site to perform household chores while getting an earful of the spreading rumors of others' affairs. *Samnyong the Mute*, *A Water Wheel*, and *Mulberry* all feature the wash place as the principal site of gossip. This gendered labor site is also open to outsiders—as in the egg vendor in *Sarangbang sonnin kwa ōmōni* (The houseguest and my mother)—as well as to the village idiot, as Samnyong in the titular film illustrates. There seems to be an integrative impulse in the way rumors spread in the village,

as these “outsiders” are not excluded from the village’s circulating information. Even when a film does not show the water wheel or the wash place, rumors almost always disseminate quickly to the extent that nobody in the community is imagined outside the circle of the secret-sharing. For instance, an affair that takes place at a hidden spot in the field in *Potato* is instantly picked up by a neighbor woman who then rushes to report the matter to others.

The speed with which rumor spreads in the community demands further consideration. Rumor’s quick spread—and hence the near-synchronous availability—means that the community achieves a sense of social cohesion around secret-sharing. In the purely formal sense, people in the village become communal members as they enter the shared field of intelligibility through gossip-mongering. A new information space emerges through the voluntary enunciation loop whereby a recipient of information quickly performs the role of transmitter. Such a mechanism then helps us understand and define the nativist character in cinema in terms of the effects of horizontal communication and the idea of belonging. It produces a powerful but parochially limited “imagined community” in which everyone is implicitly imagined as equal through the co-participatory act of information sharing. For example, in *Mulberry*, when a young girl stumbles upon a chance to see Anhyöp’s affair with her client in the woods, she immediately retreats in embarrassment. But, despite the girl’s “proper” action toward discretion, the rumor detailing Anhyöp’s recent prostitution activities nevertheless spreads expediently among villagers, a story all of the village men are already well aware of.

This new communal feature may sound like a model that Benedict Anderson formulates to explicate the rise of nationalism through modern print capitalism.³² Though similar in appearance, literary film adaptations entail an important distinction from the communicative model of nation that Anderson theorizes. The scope of imagined community here is never beyond the physical parameter of the community itself. Actions and events that occur in the village do not have larger implications outside its supposed boundary. Furthermore, the communication pattern is intensely social without relying on modern technological media that would be central to the expanded notion of social belonging encompassing the imagined territorial boundary of nation.

What is salient is not what the community lacks in infrastructure, but what it fills in despite the void: how it achieves the similar yet limited effects of horizontal membership. Literary film adaptations’ preoccupation with social interactions for rumors, instantaneous transmission, and public knowledge of scandal therefore mark the genre’s inherent entrenchment in modern consciousness of time and space without making reference to the modern communication tool or network. In other words, rumor-mongering produces a sense of imagined communality similar to the discursive effect of print capitalism or other media operations, even though these images of modern media never enter the frame of the depicted world.

In this regard, literary film adaptations reflexively engage with the repercussions of colonial modernity without fully acknowledging its transformative presence and impact. This feature reminds us and engages with the 1930s “turn” toward the imagined past: the traditionalist intellectuals’ endeavor in the 1930s when the modernity thesis reached its apex. Ch’a Sŭnggi provocatively calls the former orientation “discourse of anticolonial imagination,” which reflects the era’s disillusionment and uncertainty with the universal notion of modernity. Similarly, I would submit that the literary film adaptations’ attempt to bypass the deadlock of colonial modernity. They appropriate the key features of modern social behavior to be fully ingrained in the world of transgressive desire, liberal entrepreneurship, and initiatives for action, as well as voyeuristic curiosity for others and expedient flow of information.

The truth claim present in rumor possesses a higher degree of credibility than mere factual veracity, although these two qualities are assumed to be in unison in nativist film adaptations. Depending on who listens to them and reacts, rumors can register forceful and dreadful consequences or no consequences at all. This theme is fully developed in *The Houseguest and My Mother*. The village in which the event takes place is not set in the countryside per se, but in a provincial town. Close to the reaches of colonial modernity—as the film illustrates the penetration of a train into the village—it shows fallacy of rumor and then debunks it, but this nevertheless underscores its staying power. A false rumor spreads about an affair between the village widow and her houseguest, a circumstance that brings torment to the female protagonist: a young widow who indeed has a passionate interest in the houseguest. When the rumor is proved groundless, she is delighted to report it to her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law nevertheless insists that the male boarder be removed from the house, for she believes his presence provided the ground for wrongful gossip in the first place. Here, rumor entails power and discipline not because of any verified content, but because of its supposed truth in appearance.

The instantaneity of gossip transmission indicates how the genre’s temporal plane is qualitatively different from the temporal gap that permeates films set in the premodern or traditional rural world: the so-called *sidaegŭk* or period films. In the case of the latter, the gap in information delivery engenders a delayed reaction, which in turn results in a tragic or unfortunate outcome. The secret is not exposed to all of its members; rather, it is kept among a few or it is bound to a certain locale according to various hierarchical lines and divisions. For instance, in *Ch’unhyangjŏn*, Mongnyong is able to keep his true identity secret, i.e., the king’s secret emissary—in order to audit local magistrates, and he later reveals his power to bring dramatic reversal. In order for this intense upheaval to occur—the information access gap is kept at bay throughout the narrative. In a similar fashion, the 1956 film *Sijip kanŭn nal* (*A wedding day*, directed by Yi Pyŏngil) also uses the crevasse between rumor and truth as the principal element of narrative: rumor has it that the prospective groom is a cripple, which leads the

family to hurriedly find a substitute. When they finally arrange for a maid to stand in for their daughter, the groom arrives at the wedding with a healthy normal composure. Similarly, the joyful news of a baby's birth turns into the stressful news of family loss in *Chonggak* (Bell tower, directed by Yang Chunam). The time gap that produces the personal misfortune reaches its clear expression in *When Buckwheat Blooms*, in which the protagonist in search of his lover always arrives at the site a little late due to an information delay. I could continue, but the point I am making should be clear: *sidaegŭk* films typically underscore the curtailed or delayed information across different places and people, narrating the tragic unfolding of events. This limit is in tandem with various types of segmentation, separation, hierarchy, and divide that make up the social life of people set in dynastic times.

In contrast, the nativist aesthetics in literary film adaptations reflectively assume the ubiquitous awareness of modern time and space. Myopic in its range, but simultaneously expansive and instantaneous, the new nativist space signifies a peculiar combination of the limited and parochial but "stretched" social terrain that gives the viewer the unique illusion of a modern time and place. The communal member's self-awareness of the indigenous network of information transmission marks the difference between the traditional village and the nativist *hyangt'o* village. Concurrently, however, the exposed scandal also exposes the rips and tears in the very fabric of the community, which relies on smooth operation of social pretense and performance among all communal members.

THE COLONIAL RURAL CONTRA THE COLONIAL NATIONAL: THE CASE OF *MULBERRY*

Yi Tuyong's 1985 film *Mulberry* is often labeled as *hyangt'o eromul*, a nativist erotic comedy that gained traction in the mid-1980s. Here, I approach the film as the culmination of the themes and issues that nativist film adaptations frequently feature and explore. In particular, I bring attention to the theme of social pretense and the disavowed gaze that characterize the very fabric of the communal life in the film. It recasts the question of idiocy with regard to the notion of social propriety, yet expands and furnishes this issue as the inherent and persistent dilemma of the community—its members happen to know too much about their neighbors' personal matters.

Furthermore, it challenges cinematic codes of colonial imagination from the previous decades, offering a critical divergence from the nationalist view toward the colonial era. The latter is done by engaging with the question of the colonial(ist) gaze, its scope and focus, as well as its lacunae. That said, the film brings a significant reformulation of the familiar terrain of *hyangt'o* aesthetics in cinema: the communal code of conduct for social pretension, efficiency of the non-technological channels of communication, relations between perception

and understanding/knowledge, and the location of the colonial authority and its limitations. Produced in 1985, the film also entails the reflexive reckoning on the trappings of the colonial as well as the nationalist imaginary, suggesting how the nativist aesthetics may hold a clue to thinking differently about the relationship between the colonial rural and the colonial national.

Mulberry is set in a remote farming village during the Colonial Period. Married to a jobless husband named Sambo, the female protagonist Anhyōp strives to earn a living by working menial jobs in the village. Sambo is largely absent from her life as he wanders off, squandering the family fortunes by gambling. Hardship leads Anhyōp to fall for an illicit “business”—the practice of prostitution—which simultaneously brings her material reward and a tarnished reputation. The latter vexation is compounded by Samdol, the indentured servant next door, who is constantly privy to her affairs and seeks her sexual service. Samdol’s harassment, however, only brings cold rejection, which then fuels his frustration. In the meantime, Anhyōp suffers a severe reprimand from a group of village women who learn about her secret business trade. When her act tarnishes the reputation of the village’s elder housewife, the village women carry out a full-blown collective assault on Anhyōp. This controversy compels the community men, most of whom are her clients, to reluctantly plan her expurgation from the village; however, the effort becomes thoroughly thwarted due to her manipulative sexual power. When the village resumes the appearance of normalcy, Anhyōp’s husband Sambo returns. Drunken and frustrated, Samdol tries to exploit the situation by speaking out about Anhyōp’s misbehavior in front of her husband Sambo, but he faces the husband’s violent suppression. Sambo then turns toward his wife and beats her for creating the commotion. However, the couple quickly resumes their relationship after this mishap. Sambo then departs the village again, leaving behind his tearful wife.

My synopsis does not do proper justice to the complex and engaging story of this sex comedy. The comedic nature of the film lies in the tension between Anhyōp’s feisty character and clever business practices, and the community’s social mores, which underscores the ineptitude and shortcomings of the community men. The tenuous ground of social facade makes clear its obscene underside, indicating the duplicitous nature of the community social life that Anhyōp traverses and exploits adroitly. Hence, despite the horrible beating and Samdol’s constant harassment, this woman of vigor, beauty, and intelligence exhibits remarkable resilience and determination, all the while upholding a life of autonomy and independence. Furthermore, the village undergoes a series of embarrassing incidents and restores its normalcy, implying the embracing of Anhyōp as a member of the community at the end.

The next door harasser, Samdol, is not as villainous a womanizer as in the literary original.³³ Rather, he is a miscreant who constantly miscalculates the effects of his futile blackmailing. His failure is a sign of his idiocy, which derives mainly from his inability to “get” the rules of negotiation necessary for securing

sexual service. In contrast, the village men who are clients of her sexual service consistently stick to the rules of discretion, i.e., respect for her privacy, protocols of offer-making, and commitment of payment, all of which are favorable to Anhyöp.³⁴ In other words, contrary to her marginal status, she takes an upper hand in the illicit business dealings, which is complemented by the docility of her clients. They remain loyal to the terms of the trade that she maintains. Samdol is largely deprived of this dimension of social knowledge. In a manner similar to the male protagonist's tragic failure in *Samnyong the Mute*, Samdol carries out his harassment toward Anhyöp without realizing the negative ramifications of his action. On the surface, his words strictly convey the factual truth about Anhyöp's secret. However, he misses another dimension of secret-keeping that is fundamental to the village dynamics: the mandate of social edifice that her male clients, Anhyöp, and her intermediary all adhere to.

The inherent disparity between what one knows and what one can express in public therefore produces the very substance of rumor and gossip. The latter are speech acts that should be hidden or repressed from the official domain of order; villagers are obligated "to speak elsewhere."³⁵ When Samdol learns about this gossip, he fails to keep it as gossip; i.e., as speech that should be kept hush-hush from the involved parties. Instead, he sets out deliberately to turn gossip into an embarrassing reality for the subjected party: he gathers and delivers village gossip back to Anhyöp with earnest intention. His harassment possesses the unexpected intensity of violence because it makes little room for her to *feign* pretension. The incongruity hence explains why Samdol's genuinely friendly gesture to protect her results in his embarrassing rejection. For instance, after Anhyöp suffers the beating, the community men convene to discuss her case and arrive at a consensus to bring in an outside moral authority to quell the problem. Samdol immediately rushes to inform Anhyöp about this development, but faces a urine-drenching from the chamber pot that Anhyöp throws. Samdol's good intentions completely misfire here as his action maintains the consistency of his foolish behavior: an embarrassing exposure which strips her of her sense of social worth and identity.

Her husband's violent attack on Samdol also shares similar concerns of social cohesion. The catch here is that the husband, Sambo, is already cognizant of his wife's prostitution practice. Nevertheless, he behaves as if he does not know about it or displays a willful dismissive view toward it. The married couple hence engages in the game of masquerade, in which Anhyöp presents herself as a struggling but virtuous wife to her husband at breakfast and Sambo is presumed to believe her performance. He maintains the semblance of the conjugal normalcy and order that is fundamental to the continuation of this tenuous marriage. Samdol's sudden visit and provocation hence shatters this dimension of edifice that Sambo and Anhyöp try to maintain. Samdol's exposé does not add any new information to what Sambo had perhaps known about his wife; rather, Samdol's open accusation permits no room for Sambo to cohere the conjugal edifice he

endeavors so hard to maintain. This deadlock, or disempowerment, then triggers Sambo's virulent attack on Samdol.

The village economy of rumors demands that its members develop a code of social pretense that manifests in the form of a disavowed or averted gaze. Whereas most everyone knows about Anhyöp's affairs, they all act as if they have not seen or do not know about her business. Samdol's social inefficacy reverberates in his gaze toward Anhyöp. After a mulberry field incident, Anhyöp returns home in the early morning hours. Villagers notice the smear mark on the back of her clothes, visual evidence of her nighttime affair. But unlike the others, Samdol keeps the most intense gaze of fascination upon this sign. This contrast is significant, for it illustrates how Samdol is marked consistently as the one who foolishly recognizes the signs that should be dismissed. In this regard, he is the most exceptional gazer in the film, something of the figure of individualistic surveillance whose enunciation of fascination should remain suppressed from open discussion for this community.³⁶

The film's tavern scene illustrates an underside of the social pretense that constitutes communal mores. Unlike the wash place, where village women congregate to share gossip, the tavern is a masculine locale where village men form a different social dynamic. When the issue of Anhyöp's clients comes up in discussion, an elderly man bluntly inquires who has *not* yet had the sexual services of Anhyöp. Several men raise their hands. To everyone's surprise, the old man vehemently criticizes these men for being dishonest to their village men. He contends that all men have already slept with Anhyöp with the exception of two men: a young adolescent and Samdol. (This revelation shocks Samdol and he subsequently rushes off in embarrassment). The men who had raised their hands reveal later embarrassment but also display signs of relief with smirks on their faces. I stress that the old man's reproach is *not* designed to arouse one's shame over dishonesty here; rather, his action is far more perverse in nature. His outright obscenity eventuates a confirmation of equalization (or horizontalization) among men that centers on their sexual access to Anhyöp. The tavern therefore functions as an alternate space that produces a perverse membership of community men. In this marginal site of obscenity, the sense of neighborly belonging is recalibrated in terms of rumor-sharing but also of woman-sharing.

I would like to complete my analysis of *Mulberry* by examining the overlapping feature that entails a parallax view toward the two media—film and literature. The inconsistency I am referring to is that of the husband Sambo and the way he appears in the eyes of the villagers. Much of his character disposition illustrates an overlap with the character in short fiction. His domestic violence toward Anhyöp, her quick recovery, and the resumption of conjugal normalcy are all rendered in tandem with Na Toyang's story. But, I would stress that this faithfulness to the literary original is precisely the most artificial "blot" on the otherwise realistic and creative adaptation. Furthermore, this element of fidelity informs the film's scandalous engagement with the sedimented history of the colonial imaginings of the past.

I claim that this scandal derives largely from the collision of two incompatible rationalities concerning colonial representation. Anticolonial politics has long gained

its currency through its self-effacing, yet subversive, intent and action for national independence. In contrast, the excessively open environs of the rural community permit little room for such political imagination to take hold in the film. The secrecy, espionage, and masquerading almost always form the terrain of the nationalist struggle against the colonial power. However, in order for this to work it requires the world of drab inertia and languor, what I would call the “negative space of austerity.” Hence, the image of nationalist struggle does not sit well with the world imagined largely in the proto-social mandate of information sharing and the communal pretension for propriety. Instead of the crisis-ridden world of nation, literary film adaptations such as *Mulberry* offer renditions of a remarkably stable society in which members still have much to learn about the implicit rules of normal social life.

Mulberry is unique because it features this remarkable divergence through the figure of Sambo. The film makes it deceptively convenient to read him as nationalist agent but this facile interpretation should be resisted. I am not sure if the film brings good attributes to such a scenario. For example, it would be a mistake to read Sambo’s broken home as the price paid for the continuation of the nationalist struggle. On the contrary, the film introduces and alludes to nationalist elements only to underscore its decline, corruption, and deadlock. In fact, Sambo is a failure on nearly all fronts: he is an inept husband, a lousy neighbor, and an “exposed” nationalist. The last is particularly germane because the enigma he entails is directly related to the colonialist gaze and its intention. Whereas this surveillance power appears with clear meaning and intent in other colonial representations, *Mulberry* brings confusion and disarray to this scenario. Villagers typically resort to the relayed gaze and perception in order to read the intent of the colonialist agent and his gaze upon Sambo. However, they fail to arrive at any satisfying assessment. Sambo’s otherness hence originates from the villagers’ perceptual limits and judgmental incongruity. He is not an insider to rural communication nor does he care about being a member of it. After all, his interactions with the villagers is reduced to that of phatic communication, but even he himself does not succeed in maintaining the facade of social cohesion and pretense. When Sambo leaves the village at the end of the film, he exchanges pleasantries with the villagers who are working together to thresh the harvested rice and grains. When asked where he is going, Sambo answers with an air of empty gesture that he is going out to get mulberries *and* win love. Sambo’s reference to mulberries and love is proverbial in nature, signifying one’s wish for auspicious luck and fortune. However, for the villagers who know Anhyöp’s scandal, the invocation of mulberry and love signals a particular meaning and reference that undermines the innocuous phatic aspect of communication and possibly exposes Sambo’s vulnerability.³⁷ They comment favorably on Sambo’s idle fortune, but also predict the inauspicious situation that Sambo may face in the future, as they direct their attention to the Japanese police who keep surveillance on Sambo’s movement in the distance. After a brief moment of silence, the villagers then reframe the reference of the mulberry; they start singing the mulberry song and return to work. The formal properties used in this brief moment underscore the chasm between

Sambo—whose movement is forever under the radar of the colonial power—and the villagers who return to the seasonal chores and routines of agricultural harvest. This sanguine air of folk singing soon changes to an amplified extra-diegetic soundtrack of the same song, now sung by professionals. The film then frames an image of Anhyöp, who looks at her parting husband with tears in her eyes. The amplification of the folk song envelops Anhyöp's sadness, as its lyrics accentuate the communal cohesion and inclusiveness of all of the members of the community into the joyous occasion of harvest, plenitude, and the regenerative vitality of the season. Though the film visually renders the image of a woman in abject hardship and sorrow, the thundering optimism of the last segment indeed dispels the sense of pessimism and despair. The film hence counterposes the communal value and attitude against the familiar image of the supposed nationalist man only to underscore the vitality and authenticity of the rural life.

No colonial literature gets reworked or remade into postcolonial cinema in a vacuum. The postcolonial logic of national culture, with an emphasis on unseating the visual trappings of colonial modernity, has seeped deeply into the grains of many South Korean film productions set in the colonial past, including literary film adaptations. The latter sets itself in dialogue with the colonial dilemma of representation but takes viewers into a different thematic orbit. *Mulberry* offers the colonial rural world anew by refashioning the world according to alternative principles of representation. Here, the problem of perception and expression, as well as enunciation and reality, are placed in different coordinates of historical imagining. Instead of the virtual national, which remains repressed in colonial literature, the proto-social or communal symbolic order operates as the principal field of the supposed anterior rural reality. Whereas the theme of sexuality in postcolonial nationalist imaginary is often used to highlight the greater noble cause, it marks an outward appearance that does not fit well with the implicit communitarian order or mores. What we are seeing here, through contextualization, are nationalist symbols and images that do not hold sincere meanings for film viewers. South Korean cinema has progressively deprived viewers of the sincere aura of nationalist struggle to the point where such imagining does not sit well with the nativist scenario of the colonial rural. Remarkably, though, the film compensates for this languid void with a greater sense of plenitude and pleasure—sexual transgression, convivial milieu, as well as challenges to the coordinates of social propriety, all of which add fascination and attraction to a new rural imagination.

NOTES

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1. Julian Stringer discusses the release of *Sopyonje* as the beginning of a new type of popular Korean cinema. See his "Introduction," in *New Korean Cinema*, 2.

2. Chungmoo Choi, "The Politics of Gender, Aestheticism, and Cultural Nationalism in *Sopyonje* and *The Genealogy*," 115.

3. David E. James, "Im Kwon-Taek: Korean National Cinema and Buddhism," 57; and Chungmoo Choi, "The Politics of Gender," 116.

4. Chungmoo Choi, "The Politics of Gender," 116.

5. Kyung Hyun Kim, *Virtual Hallyu: Korean Cinema of the Global Era*, 24–26.

6. Jakob Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction*, 86.

7. In her study of Chinese film adaptations, Hsiu-Chuang Deppman moves away from single theoretical solution for the commensurability problem of literary and cinematic works and instead focuses on the cultural politics of adaptation that bring under scrutiny "the richest and most revealing hermeneutic points of contact and divergence between source texts and films." Gender politics, Deppman then points out, is one of the most salient issues in this critical approach as it frequently relates to the other factors and issues at play in film adaptations. Hsiu-Chuang Deppman, *Adapted for the Screen*, 3–4.

8. David E. James points out how tropes of Korean landscape and Korean woman are in place to serve the patriarchal specular gaze in Im's films. Idealized images of these two tropes signify the "precolonial and so prelapsarian Korea." Both work in interchangeable fashion, as the natural landscape signifies the pure state of precolonial Korea, the violated woman's body, and the modern suffering of the nation. David E. James, "Im Kwon-Taek: Korean National Cinema and Buddhism," 56.

9. The contrast between the earlier literary film adaptations and Im Kwōnt'aek's films, in particular *The Genealogy*, will be examined in more depth at a later point in this article.

10. Scholarly books and articles on literary film adaptation include Kim Namsök, *Han'guk munye yŏnghwa iyagi* [A study on Korean literary film adaptations]; Hong Soin, "Munye yŏnghwaesöüi namsöngsöng yŏn'gu" [A study on masculinity in literary film adaptations]; Kwon Myönga, "Munye yŏnghwawa kongyugiök man'dülgi" [Literary film adaptation and the making of share memories]; Kim Chongsu, "1960nyöndae munye yŏnghwaüi wonjaksosöl yŏn'gu" [A study on the literary original of the 1960s literary film adaptations]; and Roh Chisüng, "1960nyöndae kündae sosöüi yŏnghwajök chasaengsan yangsan'gwa kü üimi" [Patterns and meanings of film adaptation of the 1960s modernist literature].

11. Pak Yuhüi, "Munye yŏnghwa-üi hamüi" [Implications of literary film adaptations].

12. By this, I am referring not only to film production companies but also to film critics and government cultural agencies, all of which commonly shared the significance of the recognition of Korean film exposure in the international film festival circuit.

13. Pak reads this preoccupation as an effort to overcome the cultural "inferiority complex" of the past colonial history. Pak Yuhüi, "Munye yŏnghwa-üi hamüi," 131. Akira Kurosawa's 1950 period film *Rashomon* is a flagship art film that introduced Japanese film to the Western film audience, as it won a major award, the Golden Lion, at the Venice Film Festival. South Korean film directors and producers were keenly aware of Kurosawa's and other Japanese directors' success in the West. They tried to emulate the Japanese directors' success by turning attention to literary works set in traditional Korea. One problem was that most Korean filmmakers had to conjecture the appeal of *Rashomon* to the Western film audience as they had no viewing access to this and other Japanese films at the time; this is because South Korea kept the strict closed-door cultural policy toward Japanese films. When they finally had a chance to see *Rashomon* at special screening venues at the Asian Film Festival hosted in Seoul in 1966, most Korean filmmakers were surprised and befuddled by the film's modern style and theme. The actual *Rashomon* did not fit the image of traditional drama that Korean filmmakers had long imagined.

14. It should be noted, however, that literary film adaptations had been recognized in the film industry as the sure-bet film type to win the *usu yŏnghwa* prize prior to this institutionalization. This change is based on Notification no. 34 of the Republic of Korea Ministry of Cultural and Publication Information titled “Rewards Standards for Quality Korean Film.”

15. Several major South Korean newspapers reported in February 1966 that the film *Samnyong the Mute* won a major award at the Venice International Film Festival. These news reports later turned out to be false, mistaking the film’s submission to award-winning at the festival. Such a mishap nevertheless reflects the pervasive anticipation of the film’s successful entry into, and recognition at, the international film circuit: an idea that was ultimately proven baseless. See Pak Yuhŭi, “Munye yŏnghwa-ŭi hamŭi,” 139.

16. Unfortunately, Kim Sŭngok’s film generated neither critical accolades nor commercial success. Instead, its failure eclipsed Kim’s career as a film director. He continued to work primarily as a screenwriter and script doctor for many major films of the late 1960s and 1970s. His signature short story, *Mujin kihaeng* (A journey to Mujin) was adapted to film twice: *An’gae* (The foggy town) directed by Kim Suyong in 1967, and *Hwanghol* (Ecstasy) directed by Cho Munjin in 1974.

17. Pak Hŏnho argues that this body of nativist lyrical short fiction (*hyangtojŏk sŏjŏng sosŏl*) emerged as the most popular literary genre because of its unique configuration of experiential dimension of modernity and reflection of worldview. Pak Hŏnho, *Han’gukin-ŭi aedokjakpum: Hyangtojŏk sŏjŏng sosŏl-ŭi mihak* [The most widely read literature of Koreans: On aesthetics of nativist lyricist fiction].

18. For elaboration of the enlightenment mode in Korean cinema, see chapter 1, “The Century’s Illuminations,” in *Split Screen Korea* by Steven Chung.

19. Often, the prominent film directors formed a close partnership with the authors during the adaptation of literary sources. For instance, screenwriter Im Hŭijae collaborated closely with Sin Sangok for the adaptation of Chu Yosŏb’s short story “Sarangbang sonnin kwa ōmŏni” (Houseguest and my mother). Throughout his career, Im wrote fifty original screenplays and forty-five adapted ones. His adapted screenplay of *Houseguest and My Mother* is considered as the one of the finest examples of film adaptations. Paek Kyŏl, on the other hand, wrote screenplays for Yi Manhŭi’s signature films of the mid-1960s, including not only the nativist short fiction *A Water Wheel* but also *Kwiro* (Homebound, 1967), *Hyuil* (Holidays, 1968) and *Oech’ul* (Outing, 1968). Yun Samyuk’s film career as that of a screenplay writer spans almost four decades starting in the late 1960s and ending in the late 1990s. The son of the legendary filmmaker Yun Pongch’un, Yun Samyuk is one of the most prolific writers in South Korean cinema, with over 100 original screenplays, twenty adapted screenplays, and four directed films. His successful adaptation of *Mulberry* led to the surge of the *hyangt’o eromul* (nativist sex comedy) film cycle in the mid-1980s. It also inspired five sequels in the subsequent years, though none enjoyed the critical and commercial success of the original.

20. Rey Chow, “Film as Ethnography; or, Translation between Cultures in the Postcolonial World,” 153.

21. Cho Hae Joang, “*Sopyonje*: Its Cultural and Historical Meaning,” 134–56.

22. Chungmoo Choi, “The Politics of Gender, Aestheticism, and Cultural Nationalism in *Sopyonje* and *The Genealogy*,” 107–32.

23. Theodore Hughes also cogently argues for the significance of several types of disavowals that structure South Korean culture under the Cold War situation. See his “Introduction,” in *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom’s Frontier*.

24. Suffice it to say that the films from the late 1960s onward gradually lost the dramatic plausibility and indexical fidelity toward the colonial past. This is most visible in various new genre films. The relationship between new genres, for example, westerns, gangster films, and horror—and the historical imagery of colonialism—demand a separate analysis.

25. I would also add *Ijo chanyŏng* (The remembered traces of Yi Dynasty, directed by Sin Sangok, 1967), another film adaptation of Kajiyama Toshiyuki's novella, to the list of recuperated colonial gaze in South Korean cinema.

26. Pak Hŏnho, *Han 'gukin-ŭi aedokjakpum*, 100.

27. Ch'a Sŭnggi, *Pan kŭndaejŏk sangsangryŏk-ŭi imgyedŭl*, [Critical points of anti-modern imagination].

28. Pak Hŏnho, *Han 'gukin-ŭi aedokjakpum*, 101–7.

29. For an examination of cinematic film adaptation of modernist literature, see Hyun Seon Park, "Korean Modernism at the Margin."

30. Pak Yuhŭi, "Munye yŏnghwa-ŭi hamŭi," 146.

31. Film theorists have articulated the film medium's perverse machinery of voyeuristic pleasure and suture effects, which has led to spectatorship of identification and subject formation. Through imaginary identification with the image on the screen, scholars argued, the film viewer is constantly called upon to develop a particular desire and hence subject-positioning. Much of the discussion on scopophilic pleasure in cinema invested in the analysis of the masculine gaze, which becomes privileged and naturalized through the mechanism of suture: i.e., integration of a point-of-view shot and a reverse shot around the female body. For a survey of this theoretical development, see Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 6–18; and Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship*.

32. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

33. In Na Toyang's 1925 short fiction, Samdol is portrayed as having malicious intent to exploit Anhyŏp's challenges. The narrator of the story is critical of his behavior. Samdol already knows about Anhyŏp's nocturnal whereabouts—sleeping in Kim Chambong's son's room—and explicitly speaks of it for the purpose of blackmailing her. He is sadistic in that he asks a question about something of which he had already possesses knowledge. He is the instigator of rumors about Anhyŏp in the village and does so in order to assert his power of surveillance over her. In the literary work, he also beats her husband at the end. In contrast, it is Samdol who gets beaten up by Anhyŏp's husband.

34. In the film, Anhyŏp resorts to the power of an intermediary, i.e., her neighbor (a woman) to arrange meetings with her clients. This effectively protects her privacy. On another occasion, when a man breaks into her room at night, the intruder immediately makes an offer to assuage Anhyŏp. Annoyed, she nevertheless forms a business relationship with an unexpected customer.

35. Etymological meanings of allegory include this notion of "speaking elsewhere." Whereas allegory signifies the operation of hidden symbolic meanings, the secret dimension of rumors seems to exist not in the textual or interpretive levels but in the external social field.

36. The film also makes clear how Samdol is alienated not only from the discrete male bonding over the past coitus with Anhyŏp, but also the frank discussion among these men.

37. Slavoj Žižek elaborates on the phatic nature of the symbolic empty gesture, "an offer—which is meant to be rejected," as the crucial substance of social order. The "disintegration of the semblance equals the disintegration of the social substance itself, the dissolution of the social link." See Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 35 and 37, respectively.

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- Hwanghol* [Ecstasy]. Directed by Cho Munjin. Usŏngsa. Film. South Korea, 1974.
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