UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

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Male Hysteria: Traumatic Masculinity in Contemporary Korean Cinema

By

Aramchan Lee

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ABSTRACT

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Employing textual and contextual analysis, this thesis analyses hysterical masculinity in popular Korean cinema. I argue that in a significant number of contemporary Korean films men are depicted as experiencing trauma due to the impact of the Korean economic crisis after 1997. My focus will be mainly on films made in the first five years after the onset of the financial crisis. In Chapter One, I discuss the ways in which Korean cinema prior to this period explored masculinity, providing contrast and comparison to subsequent forms of representations. In particular, I explore the trajectory of masculine identities in Korean cinema since the 1960s. I also address the textual and theoretical methodologies which inform my case studies. Chapter Two asks to what extent Confucianism and militarism had an influence on Korean masculinity. I suggest that the 1997 Korean financial crisis revealed not only economic complexities but also structural problems in Korean society. Furthermore, the chapter briefly maps a history of Korean cinema from 1980s to 1990s, in particular the emergence of the Korean New Wave and New Korean Cinema. In sum, I examine the historical contexts of Korean masculinity and cinema focusing firstly on patterns of male dominance, secondly on pre and post-1997 Korean cinema, and thirdly on the formal conventions of melodrama and the gangster genre as essential aspects in comprehending the background of how masculinity figures in contemporary Korean cinema.

In Chapter Three, I introduce the notion of 'hysterical excess' in the expression of masculinity, looking in particular at the case-study of Jung Jiwoo's *Happy End* (1999). Through textual analysis, I detail how a hysterical excess of masculinity eventually results in femicide and female victimisation. Chapter Four employs the concept of 'distorted pleasure' to examine Kim Kiduk's films, in particular *The Isle* (2000) and *Bad Guy* (2001). The chapter notes their tendency to represent a vision of 'twisted pleasure', which includes rape fantasies, sadism and masochism. Once again, a weakness of masculinity expresses itself through violence toward women. In Chapter Five, I discuss two films by Lee Changdong; *Peppermint Candy* (2000) and *Oasis* (2002), exploring themes of nostalgia, fantasy, and Christianity, as well as the meaning of particular aesthetic devices such as flashback and social realism.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Aramchan Lee declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Male Hysteria: Traumatic Masculinity in Contemporary Korean Cinema

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

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3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

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7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as:

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Chapter Three was published in an abridged version as "Traumatized Masculinity in Jung Jiwoo's *Happy End*," in *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol. 19 Number 1 (2016), pp. 165-190. Also Chapter Four will also appear as "Paralysed Men in *Bad Guy* and *The Isle*," in *Asian Women* (forthcoming).

Notes on Transliteration and Style

In this thesis, I have used the Revised Romanisation of Korean which is widely accepted and official system in South Korea proclaimed by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism since July, 2000. When all Korean names are romanised, I placed the surname before the given name except where the authors' names are published with the given name first. Consistently I have tried to follow his or her preference in the texts and references, when their names are romanised.

To

Sally Jung

Chapter One

Introduction

Examining a list of the top grossing Korean films per year in the domestic market since 1997 – *The Letter* (Lee Jungkook, 1997), *A Promise* (Kim Yujin, 1998), *Shiri* (Kang Jekyu, 1999), *Joint Security Area* (Park Chanwook, 2000), *Friend* (Kwak Kyungtaek, 2001), *Marrying the Mafia* (Jung Heungsoon, 2002), *Silmido* (Kang Wooseok, 2003), *Brotherhood* (Kang Jekyu, 2004), *King and the Clown* (Lee Joonik, 2005), *The Host* (Bong Joonho, 2006), and *D-War* (Shim Hyungrae, 2007)[1] – it is striking how many of them are concerned with issues of masculinity. Even though a few feature central female protagonists, most are masculinist in their ideology. For example, although *Marrying the Mafia* tells the story of a female Mafia boss, the film stresses her masculine appearance and her male character traits. Additionally, she is presented in relation to patriarchal conventions (such as the pressure for women to get married), and the film ultimately upholds these conventions. Other Korean blockbusters since the late 1990s, such as *Shiri*, *Silmido*, *Brotherhood*, *The Host*, and *D-war* equally conform to male-centred ideologies and hegemonic versions of masculinity. These latter films are dominated by notions of male heroism, while women are either marginalised or absent from the narrative.

My thesis aims to chart the representation of masculinity in Korean cinema after the 1997 Korean economic crisis, through an analysis of male protagonists who suffer from traumatic experiences. Working on the assumption that the promotion of male solidarity and hegemony is

[1] Korean Film Council [http://www.kobis.or.kr/kobis/business/main/main.do]. Also see [Table 7].

considered a central purpose within the mainstream of Korean cinema, my thesis examines the manifestation of traumatic masculinity at a textual level and how it is employed to rebuild male authority. South Korea (hereafter abbreviated as 'Korea') experienced a tragic and dynamic history in a short period since its independence in 1945, which includes milestones such as the Korean War, periods of poverty, rapid modernisation, two military dictatorships, industrialisation, extreme economic growth followed by economic crisis, and struggles for democratisation. Political authoritarianism played a strong part in Korean life, while freedom of expression and economic growth was controlled. The social role assigned to men in these troubled periods was to devote themselves to the broader goal of national development. This resulted in gradually making a traditionally patriarchal society stronger and stronger. Korea's patriarchy is based on Confucianism, which facilitated the embedding of a male-dominated army culture at the heart of Korean society, especially during the dictatorship period. For this reason, hegemonic masculinity has been the basis for organising patriarchal social norms. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a new male role model in the guise of the strong and robust industrialist was added as to the more traditional reliable and dependable patriarchal image of Korean men. Reflective questions about masculinity in Korea seem to have been raised in earnest under dramatically changed social conditions since the 1980s, such as political democratisation and the economic crisis, with the emergence of a new generation relatively free from traditional patriarchal culture. But while patriarchy and military culture had been instrumental in erecting male authority, it also became increasingly a psychological and social burden. In Korean films of late 1990s, the representation of women became minimal as the focus moved decisively towards men. But men that were shown in the films produced in this period are also marked by trauma, representing many of the problems they were facing in reality. As I explore below and in the next chapter, in Korean society, men's status has continued to decline, even though men are desperate to retain their authority and vested interests.

The economic crisis which disrupted the financial systems of Korea in 1997 caused many men to experience a loss of power both at home and in their family and within wider society. Until the

crisis, their masculinity had been tied to the belief that they had rebuilt the economy by themselves following the Korean War in 1950. Thus in the aftermath of the financial crisis the perceived loss of masculinity and the crisis of a strong patriarchal system had a considerable impact on society. Ironically, during the same period, the Korean film industry achieved its most dramatic successes, expanding both nationally and internationally. Korean cinema enlarged its domestic market share by 60% (for comparison, the previous figures were around 20-30%) and increased its sales in Japan, China, Taiwan, and South Asia.[2] My thesis thus aims to contribute to an understanding of how this period of economic growth and aesthetic achievement in Korean cinema coincided with a significant crisis of masculine hegemony an economic systems in the society at large.

The Aim of the Thesis

This thesis starts with the question of why men appear as central characters in contemporary Korean cinema much more than women, and what might be the reason for this focus. Another question is why men are mostly portrayed around notions of violent and strong masculinity. Given that in the period of study Korean society gradually abandoned patriarchal order and develop more positive attitudes towards gender equality, why is it that the strong male images that appear on the screen are so divorced from this reality? I also ask why it is that strong men in a number of films under discussion in this thesis suffer from some form of trauma, and how this might relate to the cultural context of Korea after 1997. In order to answer these questions, there is a need to understand how masculinity in Korean society was established and how in turn it became represented on Korean screens. This study examines to what extent Confucianism and military culture had an influence on masculinity. For Korea, the country was equipped early in its history with a framework of patriarchal society, based on Confucianism during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-

[2] Korean Film Council, *Year Book 2010* (Seoul: Korean Film Council, 2011) pp. 5-10.

1910). This tradition remains to some degree. Additionally, the militarisation of society enforced through two periods of military dictatorship after 1945 is an important criterion for understanding Korean men today. However, the central argument of my thesis is that the economic crisis of 1997 marked a fundamental rupture in this tradition, and that the films made after this event are essentially about making sense of this rupture.

Before I introduce the shifts in masculinity since the economic crisis in more detail, it will be useful to chart the representation of masculine identities in Korean cinema history, particularly since the 1960s when Korea began to be modernised rapidly. The expression that is commonly used to describe films from the 1960s is the 'Renaissance of Korean Cinema' or 'male films of patriarchal or feudal atmospheres.' Numerous factors led to the renaissance of Korean Cinema. The first reason was the incomparable enhancement in the amount and quality of films that were produced in contrast to the past. At the beginning of the 1960s, approximately 80 films per year were produced but the number exceeded 100 films in just three years. This eventually led to the production of 229 films in 1969. Second, this resulted in a drastic growth of spectators in theatres and films in general. Prior to this, the number of theatres did not reach 200 in numbers and less than 10 million audiences a year. However, by the latter half of the decade, there was growth to about 600 theatres and 170 million audiences.[3] Third, due to the changes in the distribution structure of production and distribution, it was operated in the same way as a Hollywood studio system.[4]

In the 1960s, Korean melodrama focused on the livelihood of the working class or families and depicted the reality of various lifestyles. Films portrayed the distance and ethical conflicts across the generations, patriarchal families centered on men, and families faced realistic difficulties. These films included *A Romantic Papa* (1960), *Mother and a Guest* (1961), and *Love Affair* (1963) with

[3] Korean Film Council [http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr]
[4] Kim Jongwon, Chung Joongheon, *Korean Cinema, 100 Years* (Seoul: Hyunamsa, 2001) p. 260.

Shin Sangok, *Aimless Bullet* (1961) and *Only for You* (1962) with Yoo Hyunmok, *Mr. Park* (1960) and *A Coachman* (1961) with Kang Daejin, *Family Meeting* (1962) with Park Sangcheon, *Dried Yellow Croaker Fish* (1963), *Kinship* (1963), *The Pay Envelope* (1964) and *The Seaside Village* (1965) with Kim Suyong, and *The Sea Knows* (1961) with Kim Kiyoung. In particular, *Love Me Once Again* (1968) with Chung Soyoung displays the typical pattern of a patriarchal melodrama of the time. A young single woman falls in love with a married man. Subsequently the man's wife appears and the two break up. Eventually, the female leading character finds out later that she is pregnant and so, she delivers the baby on her own and raises the child. Once the child grows up, the woman sends him to this father so that he may help him get on in life. Similar narratives to this one repetitively appear throughout the 1970s and reflects on authoritative masculinity in Korean society.

A representative example of normative Korean masculinity at the time includes the actor Kim Seungho, who played the role of a patriarchal father, in addition to others who carried strong male images such as Kim Jingyu, Park Noshik, and Shin Sungil. The type of masculinity the films represented emphasised a soldier-like image and a 'hard body'. Portraying a masculine archetype, Kim Seungho appeared in *A Coachman*, *A Romantic Papa, Stroller* (1967) and *Daddy, Daddy, My Daddy* (1968) as he conveyed the image of a traditional father who does not lose his dignity even in difficult situations. Even in recent years, Kim Seungho is remembered as a representative father in South Korea. During the 1950s, the Korean War broke out and this led to creating the image of a strong solder or a representative male figure.

Meanwhile, Hwang Hae in *Five Marines* (1961), *Polaris* (1962) and *Farewell Duman River* (1962), Kim Jingyu in *Until I Die* (1962), *Battlefield and a Female Teacher* (1965), and *Father and Mrs. Pyeongyang* (1966), and Chang Donghwi in *Marines Are Gone* (1963), *The Martyrs* (1965) and *A Glorious Operation* (1969) portrayed strong men who did not yield to fear. They performed soldiers armed in comradeship and patriotism and led to the symbol of soldiers that the military requires from Korean men during their service in the army. Meanwhile, Shin Sungil in *The Barefooted Young* (1964)

emphasized the image of a young man through action and melodrama. Shin Sungil was the figure that was identical as James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955) and *East Of Eden* (1955). Back then, the image of Shin Sungil constructed a rebellious image that resembled strong masculinity.

The 1970s are generally considered a 'dark age' in the history of cinema in Korea. Films which violated strict censorship regulations were cut ruthlessly, and pre-production script censorship was common. Audience figures had reached a peak with 17.3 million viewers in 1969 but decreased to less than 10 million by 1974. The number of theatres also decreased from 717 theatres in 1971 to 488 in 1978, while the number of films fell from 229 films in 1969 to 202 in 1971 and 122 by 1972.[5] Korean hostess films were introduced as one possible response to increase audience appeal. The flooding of hostess films[6] following *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* (1974) by Lee Jangho focused on raising the social trend of sarcasm in life such as the pursuit of physical freedom, and commercialisation of women, which are all elements that led to strong consumption. Other hostess films include *Yeong-Ja's Heydays* (1975), *Cuckoo's Dolls* (1976) and *Winter Woman* (1978) with Kim Hoseon, *The Woman I Betrayed* (1977) with Chung Soyoung, *Miss O's Apartment* (1978) with Byun Jangho, and *I Am Lady Number 77* (1978) with Park Hotae.

Besides strong governmental control and censorship being exercised in the area of film, the 1970s was also a time in which farming communities became isolated from the mainstream of society and when living conditions in urban areas deteriorated due to the processes of rampant urbanisation and industrialisation. Men faced immense pressures to contribute to the modernisation

[5] Jeong Jonghwa*, A History of Korean Cinema* (Seoul: Korean Film Archive, 2008) p. 162.

[6] Korean hostess films are a euphemism for prostitutes or bar girls in the Korean context of the 1970s. These films are not only characterised for the exploitive employment of female sexuality but also more importantly for the theme of women's extreme and perpetual sacrificial. Molly Hyo J. Kim, *Whoring The Mermaid: The Study Of South Korean Hostess Film (1974-1982)*, PhD Thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014, p. ii.

of the nation, while also providing for their families. In addition to being the motor of industrial development, a strong masculinity was understood to be the necessary prerequisite for South Korea to be able to compete with North Korea in terms of military power. Poverty, long hours of labour, military threats from North Korea, and pressure for the maintenance of livelihood for the sake of family caused men to face crises, which the hostess films articulated in interesting ways, a good example being *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars*, directed by Lee Jangho in 1974, and which, as stated above, preceded the hostess film boom. Based on a novel written by Choi Inho, popular amongst young people at the time, the film depicts the story of Kyungah, who loses her virginity out of misplaced faith in everlasting love. She becomes pregnant but is abandoned by the man. Although her bright personality enables her to overcome sadness and become the second wife of a middle aged man named Lee Manjoon, her past catches up with her, resulting in the end of her marriage and forcing her to become a hostess. The film shows men searching for other women or hostesses in order to fulfill an emotional emptiness, but eventually unable to break away from their legitimate family. This is arguably because family is considered to have a law-like significance that must not be broken in South Korea. What is interesting that while in real life in the 1970s, the emphasis was on maintaining a strong masculine image at all cost, films like this one depict precisely the same 'strong' and 'hard' men experiencing internal loneliness and lack of direction. In this respect the film opens an image on a generation of men becoming weary and lonely in a society in which they are forced to perform to prescribe masculine images.

The March of Fools (1975) is another film based on a novel by Choi Inho, and directed by Ha Giljong. Depicting life in a university town, the film centres on the behavior and conversations of male students Byungtae and Youngchul. The film conveys a sense of loss and sorrow among these young men facing a hopeless future. Byungtae is a student in the Department of Philosophy who comes across as a romantic who is somewhat distant from the concerns of the times. Facing compulsory conscription into the army, he passes his physical examination and agonizes over it. Meanwhile, Youngchul, who is in the same class as Byungtae, is declared medically unfit. Unlike

Byungtae, he is financially provided for by his wealthy family, yet feels equally alienated from contemporary life, dreaming instead of his desire to travel to the East Sea to catch whales. In the end, Youngchul's masculinity proves to be insufficient and he commits suicide. The film offers a gloomy portrait of university students during the 1960s and 1970s and represents an image of masculinity where men are depicted as 'fools', suffering as a result of inhumane social conditions and suffocating political suppression.

The 1980s was a period of sudden political and social changes. After the failure of the Revitalising Reforms system, the state of affairs was unstable due to the intensification of the Gwangju Democratisation Movement. This led to new film policies and once the new military government gained power, films were no longer free from expression due to pre-to-post censorship. During the 1980s, Korean films referred to itself as frontier films and used self-deprecating expressions to symbolise a shabby portrait of Korean cinema, which had been stagnating since the 1970s.[7] In contrast to the glory days of erotic films at the beginning of the 1980s, the Korean New Wave was introduced in the latter half of the 1980s and provided a chance for Korean films to witness a new Renaissance in the 1990s.

The Ae-ma Woman (1982) with Chung Inyeop attracted 310,000 spectators through long term screening across many months in 1982. Becoming a template for erotic films during the 1980s, the film displays a tendency towards male voyeurism through its story of Oh Soobi, a lonely housewife, who embarks on an affair with her ex-lover Kim Munoh, as a form of revenge for her husband, Shin Hyunwoo's own affair. Yet, Soobi longs for the innocent love of Dongyeop who suggests she accompanies him to France. When the day comes for Soobi to join Dongyeop in France, however, she decides to stay with her husband. The level of sexual explicitness increased in films like *Between the Knees* (1984) with Lee Jangho which portrayed the sexual adventures of a female college student, and *Prostitution* (1988) with Yoo Jinseon which deals with female prostitutes.

[7] Jeong Jonghwa, *A History of Korean Cinema* (Seoul: Korean Film Archive, 2008) p. 190.

In a journal article, 'Masculinity in Crisis and Remasculinisation in the Korean Erotic Films of the 1980s,' Roh Jiseung has argued that even though Korean films in the 1980s deal with prostitutes and the commercialisation of women's bodies, these erotic films also reveal a masculinity of crisis. Frequently, erotic films divulge male subjects overwhelmed by sexual desire. Meanwhile, remasculinisation in the 1980s makes the illusion that the masculinity is firmly maintained. The disordered male protagonists are frequently portrayed through the aspects of the male gaze, reversed gender relations and women's activeness. The eroticism in the 1980s is developed through the eyes of a man excluded or marginalised from sex and mainstream life rather than men with power. Erotic films like *The Ae-ma Woman* (1982) and *Between the Knees* (1984) display men suffering from delusions and acting with violence. Nevertheless, erotic films conclude to integrate disruptive masculinities into the sound and reasonable masculinity admitted by patriarchy.[8] These male protagonists could be read in Kim Kiduk's male subjects in the late 1990s such as *Bad Guy* (2003) and *The Isle* (2001). However, most erotic films in the 1980s emphasise the role of female protagonists rather than male.

As I have demonstrated, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, films in Korea took part in creating images of modern masculinity and usually portrayed paternalistic and authoritative men. The definition of modern men here refers to them as 'sons of the nation' as well as the representative citizens. It referred to a social network based on male solidarity. In this network, the base of life and values was to aim for the enhancement of power and status to achieve success through competition. Within families, men are the leads the family who take care of the livelihood and the happiness of their families as they play the role as the provider. Also, when it comes to family relationship, they emphasise taking a unilateral lead for the functional aspect instead of playing the

[8] Roh Jiseung, "Masculinity of crisis and Remasculinization in the Korean Eroticism Films of the 1980s," *Feminism and Korean Literature*, 30, 2013, pp. 73-116.

role of bringing out a sense of intimacy or communication.[9] With regard to their relationship with women, these men are depicted as reliant and emotional. In contrast to passive femininity, they symbolise strong and superior traits of protecting and managing wives and daughters as women.

Since the economic crisis in 1997, Korean society began to question the previously dominant role of men, particularly as women's rights increased. Discourses about gender equality were actively conducted in the society and consideration about women in families and society was discussed. From then on, the Ministry of Women was established in 2001 and it has been modified to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Unlike the social phenomenon, Korean cinema began to further strengthen male-centred narratives. Thus, an opportunity of finding a male lead in Korean films increased. However, as I have noted before there is a contradiction that while men's power decreased socially, their area in films was expanded. In other words, there is an inverted relationship to the kind of images of men on, and off, screen. This reality and cinematic contradiction is rooted in what I will call male nostalgia. It is natural that when being faced with practical difficulties, men tend to miss the perceived better days of the past. Modern Korean men feel nostalgic towards their strong masculinity of the past through films. Such male nostalgia films are represented by socially powerful historical drama or other films which took the 1970s as the background as in *Friend* (2001) and *Spirit Of Jeet Keun Do* (2004).

Male Representation as a Topic in Scholarship on Korean Cinema

In spite of the frequency with which male-centric narratives feature in Korean cinema, there are few studies that touch on this topic in a sustained way. By contrast, the representation of women in

[9] Lee Hyunjung, *Representation of masculinity in crisis in Korean cinema since late 1990s*, MA Thesis, Yonsei University, 2003, p. 28.

Korean cinema has been a well-established field for a while, supported by a solid theoretical framework. Among the most representative feminist film scholars in Korea are Yu Gina, Seo Insook, and Kim Soyoung, who have published various books and journal essays on the topic.[10]

A notable exception to the scarcity of research in the area of masculinity n Korean cinema, is Kyung Hyun Kim's *Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* which adopts a socio-historical perspective and explores Korean masculinity as it manifests itself in films by directors of the New Korean Cinema,[11] including Im Kwontaek, Jang Sunwoo, Park Kwangsu, and Hong Sangsu. Kim argues that the representation of masculinity in Korean cinema has been influenced by distinctive social changes since the Korean War, as well as by political and economic factors. Kim presents Korean masculinity mirroring the historical and social shifts of the 1980s and 1990s in the book and defines 'New Korean Cinema' as the period of the mid-1980s to the late-1990s. *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* is divided into three sections. In the first section, Kim argues genres in relation to historical trauma and post-trauma. The second part of this book deals with auteur theory. Kim analyses the work of Park Kwangsu, Jang Sunwoo, and Hong Sangsoo. In the final section, Kim analyses *Happy End* (1999), *Shiri* (1999), and *Joint Security Area* (2000). According to Kim, these films reaffirm strong masculinity in Korean cinema, but female protagonists are identified as femme fatale. In particular, Kim argues male trauma with the historical events which were the assassination of President Park Junghee in 1979 and the government's massacre during the Gwangju Uprising in 1980. Therefore, he analyses the films released in the 1980s in relation to trauma. Kim's book has been a major influence on my own approach in this thesis, although I diverge in some aspects from his conclusions and definitions. For example, Kim refers to the Korean films during the 1980s and 1990s as 'Korean New Cinema', while domestic film scholars use the term 'Korean New Wave'.

[10] Yu Gina, "Using the Gangster Genre as Comedy Their Own League: A Study of Male Fantasy", *Film Studies*, Vol. 18, 2002, pp. 29-48; Seo Insook, "Quest for Films of Chang-dong Lee: Focused On Green Fish, Peppermint Candy, and Oasis", *Journal Of Contents*, Vol. 13, Issue 9, 2013, pp. 58-71; Kim Soyoung, "Modernity In Suspense: The Logic of Fetishism in Korean Cinema", *Traces* 1, 2001, pp. 301-317.
[11] Kim refers to Korean films made during the 1980s and 1990s as the New Korean Cinema. See Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*, Duke University Press, 2004.

Accordingly, some differences in opinion emerge. In a similar vein, Moon Jaecheol's *Cinematic Memory and Cultural Identity* suggests that late 1990s Korean cinema illustrates the shock of the economic crisis and its attendant dislocation of masculinity. Moon also discusses nostalgia and traumatic memory as some of the cinematic strategies of depicting social turmoil in films such as *Joint Security Area*, *Peppermint Candy* (Lee Changdong, 1999), *Friend*, and *Ditto* (Kim Jungkwon, 2000).[12] Again, I will be drawing on this research in my following chapters, although in contrast with my own approach Moon places greater emphasis on nostalgia in Korean films instead of focusing on trauma. In my thesis, the notions of trauma and nostalgia will be read primarily through the lens of the historical rupture of the 1997 economic crisis

Other books that prove useful contexts to my own area of research include Sun Jung's *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop Idols*, which examines Korean masculinities and transcultural consumption by focusing on the overseas reception of three iconic figures, including actor Bae Yongjoon in Japan, *Oldboy* in Europe and the United States, and Korean pop singer Rain in Singapore.[13] According to Sun Jung, Korean masculinity has three major stereotypical images which are taken from Moon Seungsook's description of hegemonic masculinity: patriarchal authoritarian, scholar or elite masculinity, and violent masculinity. However, while her book is useful in its understanding Korean pop culture in broader terms, it does not include much in terms of detailed textual analysis. Moreover, her approach focuses on the consumption of Korean male figures internationally, using materials including online sources, questionnaires, and interviews rather than ethnographic approaches to Korean masculinities. My thesis will be based more closely on the internal Korean context.

[12] Moon Jaecheol, *Cinematic Memory and Cultural Identity: Focusing on Post-Korean New Wave Cinema*, PhD thesis, Chung Ang University, 2002, p. 148.
[13] Sun Jung, *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop Idols* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011).

In terms of more general studies on Korean masculinity, my thesis is especially indebted to Seungsook Moon, for whom Korean modernity can be divided into stages of 'militarized modernity and gendered mass mobilization, 1963-1987' and of a subsequent 'decline of militarized modernity and the trajectories of gendered citizenship, 1988-2002'. Adopting a feminist and post-colonial approach,, Moon identifies modernity as key to describe a desirable direction of contemporary social change that is used by different social groups.[14] In the first half of the book, she examines gendered roles in military regimes in Korea, especially the regimes of Park Junghee and Chun Doohwan between the periods of 1963 to 1987. In the process of establishing a modern nation-state, men were 'mobilized to be martial and productive' as family providers and women were 'marginalized in production and mobilized to be domestic'. In the second half of the book, Moon investigates newly gendered roles following the decline of militarised modernity and the rise of democratisation through the labour movement, civil rights movement, and women's movement, but there is little discussion of the post-1997 impact of the economic crisis. However, her book has made a big contribution to Korean masculinity studies, and following its publication many papers and books have started to mention militarism in relation to masculinity in Korea. Indeed, militarised masculinity is a very important theme to understand Korean men who are required to enter military service mandatorily. The book written by Moon holds significance by the fact that the problems about the Korean society and masculinity were discovered in the military. I also argue that military culture, which is deeply rooted in the Korean society, can surpass masculinity and cause great influence on the Korean society.

A further influence for me has been Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann's edited collection *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama*, which investigates melodrama as a genre in the history of Korean cinema, especially in the 1960s, the so-called Golden Age of Korean cinema.[15] The book

[14] Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) p. 1.
[15] Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann, *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

discusses gender and melodrama, Christianity in Korean melodrama, and makes comparisons to Hollywood. In particular, Eunsun Cho's chapter, "*The Stray Bullet* and the Crisis of Korean Masculinity" analyses a male protagonist, Cheolho as a breadwinner supporting his desperate and hopeless family. His family includes his younger brother, a veteran who does not work, and his unmarried younger sister, a prostitute for the United States soldiers. To complicate matters, his wife is unhealthy and pregnant, and his mother is insane. Cho describes Cheolho in troubled masculinity following the Korean War. This volume contributes substantially to understanding melodrama in Korean cinema in the 1960s, and attests to melodrama being the most popular genre in a history of Korean cinema so far, examining genre theory, and historical contexts of Korean cinema in the 1960s. This book holds significance to my own research by the fact that it describes various topics involving melodrama in Korea during the 1960s through the sociopolitical situations of the country at the time. In particular, I can relate to melodrama by the fact that it portrays the emotions of the Korean culture or Koreans more than any other genres. Additionally, melodrama shows how the images of men and women are being re-enacted.

In her article, "Tears and Violence: The Male Identity and Body in Male-Centered Melodramas and Action Films" Joo Youshin has noted that a lot of Korean films reveal important social symptoms in terms of constructing gender identity since the 1990s, mostly emphasising on remasculinisation confronted with social and mental crisis. Especially, Korean Blockbuster films remasculinise men as national agents or subjects through the rewriting of national history and family melodramas concerning the power of paternity. According to Joo, two Korean films being represented in intriguing and visceral manners: *Crying Fist* (2005), combining sports films with family melodramas mainly maintaining a patriarchal point of view, and *A Bittersweet Life* (2005) in the film noir style.[16] According to Joo*, Crying Fist* reconstructs the fantasy heavily charged with the son's identification with his father and his acknowledgement of the patriarchal authority, while

[16] Joo You Shin, "Tears and Violence: The Male Identity and Body in Male-Centered Melodramas and Action Films," *Image and Film Studies*, 8, 2006, pp. 61-89.

symbolically and legitimately re-establishing the anti-social, defeated masculinity through the myth of sports. On the other hand, *A Bittersweet Life* illustrates a rite of masochistic passage for a male subject to defend against all of his revenge and fear with his own narcissistic fantasy. In this sense, it conforms to the film noir style with its focus of male masochism.[17]

Lee Heeseung's paper "Male Writing and Female: Overrepresentation and Underrepresentation in Current Family Melodramas", discusses Korean films since the 2000s to examine the masculinity crisis in Korean society which is confronted with political turmoil. Lee analyses two films, *Marathon* (2005) and *Crying Fist*. His analysis reveals that each film sets up masculinity in crisis, and an excluded or marginalised male protagonists who serves a narrative role as a token of symbolic punishment due to his lack of masculinity. *Marathon* and *Crying Fist* set up other male protagonists who could replace the patriarchal system. This means the narrative desire to reproduce male-centred society and to reconstruct masculine national identity through another form of male representation. In this process, female characters are not shown as an alternative to the identity of Korean society, but marginalised from the narrative.[18] Like film noir in Hollywood, in depicting others who threaten patriarchal order and values, women are representative of all differences. In other words, horror films and film noir films in 1940s Hollywood reveal the fear of women who could disturb the social order and threaten traditional values.

These two papers mentioned above explore Korean masculinity in the melodramas in relation to genre theory. By contrast, Chung Youngkwon's paper, "A Question on the Masculinity in the South Korean War Films: Focusing on *71-into the Fire* and *The Front Line*" deals with war films. Chung points out three key issues concerning masculinity in the Korean War films. Firstly, war films represent the process of children growing up. A brave and bold behaviour means strong and

[17] Joo You Shin, "Tears and Violence: The Male Identity and Body in Male-Centered Melodramas and Action Films," *Image and Film Studies*, 8, 2006, pp. 61-89.
[18] Lee Heeseung, "Male Writing and Female: Overrepresentation and Underrepresentation in Current Family Melodramas," *Journalism and Science*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2006, pp. 332-363.

powerful masculinity in the battleground. In other words, war is a rite of passage. Although a conflict between two boys in *71-into the Fire* (2010) is a hard-fought battle which competes for their masculinity, it is a key issue that soldiers are free from collective trauma in *The Front Line* (2011). Secondly, loss of femininity. Generally, we cannot regard masculinity and femininity as separate. Fundamentally, the war film is the genre in which women are generally absent. In *71-into the Fire* and *The Front Line*, women are mainly characters without a sense of reality. Thirdly, there is the theme of sacrifice and figure of the victim. Most war films necessarily deal with death and destruction. While patriotic war films glorify a sacrifice for the nation, the anti-war film focuses on the victims which war, an irrational and absurd event, brings about. *71-into the Fire* and *The Front Line* demonstrate this two contrary attitudes on war very well.[19]

According to Cho Seoyeon, the main trend of the Korean gangster film that appeared during the 1997 Korean financial crisis concerns the untimely deaths of heroes. These films usually begin with a scene where a young man joins a gang and the world he is entering is operated by the principle of masculinity. The female role as a safety device for the suppression in the gangster films is remarkably reduced. The world to which the young men who entered a world of organised violence belong is visualised as a cold-hearted urban space in film noir style. They do not realise that they came to belong to a nourish world where fellowship based on naive 'family-centredness' had no longer been possible and show an excessive emotional melodramatic attitude connected to the feeling of nostalgia. Thus, the young men's deaths are a fall and punishment due to their anachronistic recognition. Nevertheless, these deaths create ambivalence characterised by premature deaths by which they insist on authenticity and purity refusing to go into the polluted world. In other words, the young men's deaths in the films in the second half of the 1990s are cases

[19] Chung Youngkwon, "A Question on the Masculinity in the South Korean War Films: Focusing on *71-into the Fire* and *The Front Line,*" *Film Studies,* 60, 2014, pp. 151-177.

of the cinematisation of the structure of feeling they came across the beginning of the neoliberal era through their melodramatic understanding of nourish world.[20]

Apart from the previously discussed texts, other scholars have pointed to the affinity of Korean cinema to film noir. Two notable books have been very valuable to my research: *Neo-noir* and *East Asian Film Noir*. In *Neo-noir*, Mark Bould, Kathrina Glitre and Greg Tuck demarcate the distinctions between traditional film noir and neo-noir and between American or transnational variants. Also, they remind us of the fact that 'classic' film noir directors and their audiences did not know that the films which they made and we are watching belong to a category called film noir, not least since a wider critical awareness of the term noir emerged in the 1970s in particular. Neo-noir directors and their audiences possess an awareness of the characteristics of this style, which is a fundamental difference.[21] Hyangjin Lee's chapter "The Shadow of Outlaws in Asian Noir: Hiroshima, Hong Kong and Seoul" argues for Asian film noir to be seen as part of a vigorous transnational movement that includes Japan, Hong Kong, and Korea.[22] Meanwhile, *East Asian Film Noir* mentions Korean noir in details and the first article explains the Korean noir of the 1960s after the Korean War. The second article analyses Ryu Seungwan's noir style, and the last article explores Lee Myeongse's films. In particular, Ryu Seungwan and Lee Myeongse have made a huge contribution to development of the Korean noir, as noir directors representing Korea.[23]

According to Cho Seoyeon, Korean gangster films in 1990s followed cinematic narrative conventions and at the same time referred to the visual style of film noir, for example, *Green Fish* and *Friend*. The meeting of gangster genre and film noir style is of itself a universal phenomenon, but the application of the film noir style in Korean gangster films produced its own unique effect.

[20] Cho Seoyeon, "Frustration between Noir and Melodrama: Masculinity of Korean Gangster Movie in the 1990s," *Feminism and Korean Literature*, 30, 2013, pp. 117-151.
[21] Mark Bould, Kathrina Glitre and Greg Tuck, *Neo-noir* (London; New York: Wallflower Press, 2009), p. 5.
[22] Hyangjin Lee, "The shadow of outlaws in Asian noir: Hiroshima, Hong Kong and Seoul," Edited by Mark Bould, Kathrina Glitre and Greg Tuck, *Neo-noir* (London; New York: Wallflower Press, 2009), pp. 118-135.
[23] Chi-Yun Shin and Mark Gallagher, *East Asian Film Noir: Transnational Encounters and Intercultural Dialogue* (London; I.B.Tauris, 2015), pp. 91-144.

The visual representation of the urban space adopting the film noir style; the individual helpless overwhelmed due to the darkness; and the melodramatic attitude found in male leads, the direction, and so on, created the nature of gangster films in the 1990s. Gangster films in the 1960s exhibit the melodramatic imagination of the contemporary people who emotionally responds to the harsh, confusing economic condition. This suggests that gangster films form a sort of variation with regard to the nature of the gangster genre. In other words, gangster films in the 1990s are understood as an arena where two properties conflict: one property as an objective report presented by the gangster genre dealing with the backside of capitalism and the other as a melodrama, which is represented by the emotional reaction to the world given to one.[24]

For a while gangster films, melodrama, and comedies were popular in the Korean domestic film market after 1997. Regardless of the genres, numerous films document hegemonic relation of masculinity, excessive masculinity (like machoism), male solidarity, and male supremacy to play a key role in the society. Furthermore, as a way of promoting male solidarity, many newspapers and TV programmes reported on fathers who were suffering from the loss of their job, and losing their status and respect in the family. For instance, a newspaper *Segye Ilbo* reported like below in 2000:

> These days, fathers are worried over endless concerns. They are exhausted trying to adjust to the transformed workplace cultures the whole day. But once they return home, they have to help their wives with house chores. This is something they are willing to do, but what worries them more is taking care of their children who grew up too fast. Furthermore, as the society went through the long tunnel of the IMF maintenance system, it is an urgent manner to recover the authority and influence of fathers and regain their position. It is because the only way to handle family crisis in our society is by having husbands regain their positions in the society.[25]

Substantially media emphasised men's unemployment and difficulties. As John Demos argues "The depression attacked, and sometimes shattered, fathers in their central roles as providers; but the role

[24] Cho Seoyeon, "Frustration between Noir and Melodrama: Masculinity of Korean Gangster Films in the 1990s," *Feminism and Korean Literature*, Vol. 30, 2013, p. 121.
[25] Kwon Ohmoon, "Fathers in danger," *Segye Ilbo*, 27 July 2000.

itself survived until the return of better times, and flourished thereafter."[26] For a while, it has been considered that men's fundamental role is as father and provider in Korean patriarchal society. After the financial crisis what lies beyond the crisis of representation is a requirement for male solidarity for the patriarchal society.

Joo Youshin has argued that Korean cinema retrogressed in the late 1990s in its representation of female protagonists, and that misogynistic image and narratives are the response of a patriarchal unconscious in Korean society, which represses femininity in an attempt to retain sovereignty over masculine subjectivity, identity, and self-determination.[27] According to Hwang Hyejin, a number of films eliminate or marginalise female characters, for example, *Shiri*, *Peppermint Candy, The Foul Kings* (Kim Jiwoon, 2000), *Friend*, *Silmido*, and *Brotherhood*.[28] Despite their different approaches, Joo, Moon, and Hwang agree on a dominance of male-centred narratives in Korean cinema since the late 1990s. However, while Kim and Moon deal with trauma as a collective and cultural phenomenon, they tend to ignore individual forms of trauma.

The texts presented relate to my own research in light of masculinity in Korea. My study departs in several respects from the other studies I have introduced above. I will explore Korean masculinity in terms of a different timeframe, a different approach, and different case-studies.

So far the research which has been addressed in the chapter, explores masculinity in Korean films by linking this to the history of Korean politics. However, my thesis not only examines the political situation, but also tries to understand the change of masculinity from an economic point of

[26] John Demos, *Entertaining Satan - Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. 444. Demos looked into the documents of witchcraft cases in New England and used psychoanalysis to understand witch-hunting there. Frequently he mentioned roles of masculinity in the book.
[27] Joo Youshin, *A Study on Sexual Representation of Korean Cinema: Focusing on Films of Fin-de-Siecle*, PhD thesis, Chung Ang University, 2003, p. 156.
[28] Hwang Hyejin, "Rewriting Male-identity Narratives, Possibilities and Limitations: Focusing on Radio Star and The Happy Life," *The Korea Contents Society*, 2008, Vol 8 No 12, p. 132.

view. Eonomic power is important in the process of constructing masculinity. Especially, economic capabilities of men are extremely important in Korean family system or society. This means economic strength corresponds to the intensity of masculinity. This Korean masculinity faces a trauma due to the economic crisis in 1997. As stated above, there has been an absence of studies on the traumas of men connected to the economic perspective. Therefore, this thesis psychoanalytically approached the change of masculinity in Korean films after 1997 by linking this to the traumas, and verified why male characters have been dominant in Korean films, based on this approach. In the rest of this thesis, each chapter will also draw from previous research, and methodological approaches, in different ways.

Methodology

In the first instance, my thesis draws from authorship theory with regard to its basic research method. It makes an intensive analysis of three directors (Jung Jiwoo, Kim Kiduk, and Lee Changdong) and the stylistic and thematic traits of their works, and examines their contextual significance. The second research method used in this study is textual analysis. A total of five films (*Happy End, Bad Guy, The Isle, Peppermint Candy*, and *Oasis*) will be analysed in detail. For character analysis including context analysis, a psychoanalytic method will be presented. Especially, these films strongly reflect the social reality. In other words, men, a social animal, live their lives forming a complex human relationship. Moreover, they exist in various professions and classes in modern society so the aspect is quite complex. While watching a film, we usually sympathise with leads' situations described in works or add our compliments or criticism to their actions. Sometimes we wonder why the director portrays the lead in such a sympathetic way or criticises that lead in that harsh way. As such, the contextual approach is a way of reading a film considering the involvement

with contemporary society in mind during the analysis of a film. The contextual approach is an analysis of the director's creative mentality, psychology of characters in the work.

The third approach to the texts will be psychoanalytical theory, especially trauma theory. Sigmund Freud divided a psychological world of humans into an unconscious world and a self-world. In other words, man's unconscious world, their potential consciousness, will experience a trauma in the process of conflicts with self. He understands that the psychoanalytic approach connects a work and the director's experience as well as that the processing of symbols and images is also such an expression of the psychological world. In this regard, especially his trauma theory will be of great help in understanding the current psychological state and remembrance of characters. In order to illustrate what I mean by 'traumatic masculinity' and 'hysterical masculinity', my study deploys theories of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and their application to film studies, to interrogate the phenomenon of masculinity in crisis in Korean society since 1997.

Trauma theory has become an important force in Film Studies as evidenced by debates in the journal *Screen* in 2001 and 2003.[29] In addition, there are book-length studies.[30] All these critical texts analyse the memory of people suffering from external trauma such as a historical catastrophe. In this respect, trauma theory aids in interpreting memory. Nevertheless, their focus on trauma and cinema is limited to the Holocaust and wartime contexts only. I would claim that trauma theory can

[29] Examples include Susannah Radstone's "Trauma and Screen Studies: Opening the debate," Thomas Elsaesser's "Postmodernism as mourning work," E. Ann Kaplan's "Melodrama, cinema and trauma," Maureen Turim's "The trauma of history: flashbacks upon flashbacks," and Janet Walker's "Trauma cinema: false memories and true experience," *Screen*, Volume 42 Issue 2 Summer 2001, pp. 188-216. Also see Peter Thomas's "Victimage and violence: *Memento* and trauma theory," Daniel Humphrey's "Authorship, history and the dialectic of trauma: Derek Jarman's *The last of England*," Karen Randell's "Masking the horror of trauma: the hysterical body of Lon Chaney," and Michael Hammond's "Laughter during wartime: comedy and the language of trauma in British cinema regulation 1917," *Screen*, Volume 44 Issue 2 Summer, 2003, pp. 200-228.

[30] Joshua Hirsch's *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* (2004), Janet Walker's *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (2005), E. Ann Kaplan's *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-cultural Explorations* (2004) and *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005).

also be deployed to analyse cinematic texts in relating to other forms of trauma and personal memories: unbearable personal events that lead to traumatic memories without any social upheavals. For instance, we can suffer traumatic memories as a result of family violence, rape, a car accident, etc. While such kinds of personal memories are not related to social events they cause trauma. Although the social upheaval is crucial, it is said that the crisis becomes personalised for the characters.

In general, trauma is a psychological experience that responds to a specific injury in the past and carries on into the present, and that causes a violent rupture. In the film *Oldboy* (Park Chanwook, 2003), the protagonist, Oh Daesu, is kidnapped and imprisoned in a room for fifteen years. Eventually, he is set free from the imprisonment, desiring to find out the reason why he was kidnapped and imprisoned and overwhelmed by his drive is to seek revenge. Daesu's life since his release looks like he is being imprisoned continuously, because it seems that his present life has no meaning. Instead, his life's aim is to take revenge on the person who kidnapped and imprisoned him.

Psychic trauma is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as "an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others."[31] In other words, trauma brings an unstable mind and a violent fracture. When trauma is evoked as a term, one needs to begin with the theories of Sigmund Freud. He described trauma as follows:

> An experience which we call traumatic is one which within a very short space of time subjects the mind to such a very high increase of stimulation that assimilation or elaboration of it can no longer be effected by normal means, so that lasting disturbances must result in the distribution of the available energy in the mind.[32]

[31] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, 4th Ed (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1995), p. 424.
[32] Sigmund Freud. *A General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis*, Trans. John Riviere (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964), p. 286.

As James Berger has discussed, Freud elaborated on the three assumptions for trauma across his whole work. First, in *Studies in Hysteria*, Freud explored trauma relating to an overwhelming event that was unacceptable to the consciousness, producing symptoms that could be expressed as compulsive and repetitive behaviour. Secondly, Freud suggested his treatment for veterans suffering from nightmares and their experiences during the First World War in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Finally, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud tried to formulate a trauma theory in order to explain the concept of "latency". This traumatic memory could be lost for a long time. However, it can be reclaimed when activated by some parallel experience.[33]

> Almost all the symptoms had arisen in this way as residues—'precipitates' they might be called—of emotional experiences. To these experiences, therefore, we later gave the name of 'psychical traumas,' while the particular nature of the symptoms was explained by their relation to the traumatic scenes which were their cause.[34]

The concept of trauma is a useful tool to analyse human behaviour which suffers from external forces and is aggressive towards other people. According to Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, trauma can be defined as "[a]n event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization."[35] In other words, trauma occurs when an impulsive intense emotional experience attacks the person from outside. Such an external assault moves into the mind only gradually. One of most prominent scholars in trauma theory, Cathy Caruth, analysed *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) by Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais in relation to trauma theory. She considers trauma as an unhealable wound. As Caruth explains:

> [T]he Greek trauma, or "wound," originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body. In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. But what seems to be suggested by Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle is that the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the

[33] James Berger, "Trauma and Literary Theory," *Contemporary Literature*, Volume. 38, No. 3, Autumn, 1997, p. 570.
[34] Sigmund Freud, *The complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. XI), Trans. James Starchy (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), p. 14.
[35] Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973). p. 465.

> world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that, like Tancred's first infliction of a mortal wound on the disguised Clorinda in the duel, is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.[36]

When someone experiences a traumatic event, posttraumatic stress disorder is thus an essential process for him or her. The American Psychiatric Association defined PTSD as follows:

> The essential feature of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.[37]

In relation to PTSD, trauma is a wounded moment or a crucial clue in solving the problem of why a protagonist is suffering from a particular memory. PTSD sufferers should have a kind of traumatic experience: serious injury, and threatened experience. Judith Greenberg differentiates between the terms trauma and PTSD "by conceiving of trauma as the actual event and PTSD as the psychological condition/affliction (although defining an event falls into problems since trauma evades such categorization)."[38] In the context of cinematic representations of trauma and PTSD, a man suffering from trauma and PTSD might express his traumatic stress through disturbances such as violent behaviour and distorted pleasure. For instance, in *Save the Green Planet* (Jang Joonhwan, 2003), the protagonist, Byunggu, kidnaps the boss of a chemical company. Byunggu actually tortures Kang Man-sik in order to save the earth from alien assault, for he regards the boss, Mansik, as an Andromedan prince. The traumatised male subject, Byunggu, looks like an insane person. We can see his repetition of the traumatic moments through flashbacks: his father's death due to a mining accident, his mother's unknown illness, and his girlfriend's death at the hands of police officers. In order to represent these traumatic moments, the director constructs a pseudo-

[36] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: MD, 1996), pp. 3-4.
[37] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, 4th Ed (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1995), p. 435.
[38] Judith Greenberg, "The Echo of Trauma and the Trauma of Echo," *American Imago* 55.3, 1998, pp. 319-349.

documentary sequence with flashbacks depicting his mother and father, and his girl-friend, allowing us to see that he has experienced three different traumatic moments through their deaths. These traumata make him distressed and inevitably he undergoes PTSD. In this case, Byunggu's trauma causes his current problems to form as PTSD, for instance he requires medication and seeks revenge.

Where there are a multitude of similar personal memories they can be transformed into public memory, or a social memory. These traumatic experiences comprise some of the essential elements that need to be examined in order to understand a specific national identity. In this way, personal memory can be connected to public memory. However, personal memory does not always relate to public memory. To give an example, in the film *Brotherhood* (2004), the character Jintae's (Jang Dongkun) memory encompasses both public memory and personal memory. Jintae tries to rescue his brother, Jinseok (Won Bin) in the battlefield. The Korean War in which he participates forms the basis of a public memory related to historical trauma as most Koreans value its significance for understanding modern Korean society. Intersecting with his public memory, however, is his personal traumatic memory of his younger brother, Jinseok, who he believed to have been killed by a South Korean officer. Posttraumatic men thus tend to live in the past, the origin of a serious trauma, and a history that endlessly influences their present life. As an illustration, Kang Jekyu's *Brotherhood*, depicts two brothers who have a close relationship in the Korean War, and focuses on posttraumatic stress disorder. Jintae looks after his young brother, Jinseok, in the battlefield. He tries to make his brother discharge himself from the military. However, he fails, and thinks, incorrectly, that his brother has been killed. At that moment he changes his mind to become a North Korean soldier and starts to experience posttraumatic stress. When he meets Jinseok again as an enemy, Jintae does not recognise who his brother is.

I argue that a number of Korean films explicitly involve men suffering from trauma and PTSD, and that existing approaches to trauma need to be extended, or reconsidered. Trauma theory will be

a very useful tool for interpreting diverse forms of individual behaviour in films, where characters are suffering from mental problems, especially in Kim Kiduk's work like *Bad Guy* and *The Isle,* to be dealt with in Chapter Four. Therefore, trauma theory is designed to provide and to establish the personal unstable psychic status and the dominant personal memory. Although this study investigates primarily trauma at an individual level, one cannot deny that all individuals are linked socially. Thus, my study will attempt to contextualise individual experiences, particularly in *Happy End,* to be discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Structure

In the next chapter, I will explore the historical contexts of Korean masculinity and cinema. The chapter will focus on a) male dominance, b) the pre and post -1997 Korean cinema, and c) the melodrama and gangster genres as aspects essential to comprehend the background of masculinity in contemporary Korean cinema. In particular, the two genres are key to my study in being linked to notions of both softened masculinity and hegemonic masculinity, as they show the shift of Korean masculinity since the 1997 crisis.

As I have noted previously, there is a contradiction between Korean cinema and society; even though masculinity is becoming weaker in reality, it is becoming stronger through the representation of powerful images of men in films. This disjunction between real life and cinematic representation conceals the actual crisis of masculinity from view. Cleary demarcated gender roles have become less distinguishable in today's Korea. Nevertheless, cinematic images and narratives attest to a demand for stereotypes in relation to manhood. Although patriarchy is no longer as meaningful as it was before, men want to deny this fact. Comparing contemporary masculinity with male models of the past has brought on a sense of loss, with practices of reverie and nostalgia

acting as compensating mechanisms. Indeed, these males' desire noticeably started after the Korean economic crisis.

Many popular films in Korea are set in male-only environments, such as the military and the criminal underworld. Feminist film critics point out that there are few female protagonists that provide a meaningful subject in the cinematic texts. In addition, a number of Korean films try to show powerful masculine images rather than feminine images. It could be imagined that masculinity reconstructs its territory through film, depicting problems found in real life. Indeed, even though it can be said that masculinity is always in crisis, I would argue that in post-1997 Korea, this crisis was so particular that a social and cultural move to rebuild masculinity became pronounced.

Since that period, a number of men in Korea have had some economic problems, particularly dismissal from employment, which affected men in particular, in being the traditional breadwinner. According to one newspaper, there was a movement for wives to encourage their jobless husbands to be respected.[39] Men's economic troubles made their status weaker inside the family and have led them to dream of their former powerful masculinity as a retrospective nostalgia, a form of daydream which I suggest might be considered a 'hysterical' defence against females, because the threat is their wider economic disempowerment. Here, the trauma can be seen to be embodied in popular films I discuss in this study in Korea today, as males consume the daydream through watching films, I would argue, that hysterical men apparently remind themselves of the past when they had a much stronger patriarchal system.

According to Seung-kyung Kim and John Finch in their sociological study, the economic crisis in Korea caused changes to gender roles in Korean families. As they noted, the Korean financial crisis

[39] Choi Yonji, "Encourage Your Husband," *Maeil Business Newspaper*, 27 May, 1998.

made workers face broad redundancy and economic uncertainty.[40] Since 1997, the Korean economic crisis has transformed male and female roles in the family, particularly as Korean society had a strong Confucian patriarchy for a long time. I will describe the background to what Confucian patriarchy means in Chapter Two. However, this strong patriarchal order collapsed during the unexpected economic crisis. Though the crisis did not directly destroy masculine authority, it was at least a trigger to accelerate the speed of social change. At that moment, as Kim and Finch describe: "economically secure middle class families suddenly found themselves facing pay cuts and unprecedented fears about losing their jobs…. As unemployment spread to banking and other managerial and professional jobs that had been considered secure, middle-class families no longer felt safe."[41] Therefore, the financial crisis finally caused a change in the identity of masculinity in Korean society.

In Chapter Three, this study will discuss what I term a 'hysterical excess' of masculinity focusing in a case-study of *Happy End* (1999). Traumatic masculinity is the representation of an excess of masculinity in Korean cinema with a surfeit of 'masculinism' or 'machoism'. Indeed, there is a tendency to express an extreme masculinity. Ironically, the influence of masculinity on Korean society is sharply decreasing due to two reasons: the economic crisis and the feminist movement campaigning for equal rights. A key concern here was the *Hoju,* a family register system in Korea that bestowed the title of *Hoju* (like the Koseki in the Japanese system) only to the male (father or son) as head of the family. *Hoju* is thus a symbol of a patriarchal structure that gives priority to men over women, and thus asserting that women belong to men.[42] However, many males are reminded and confirmed of their previous gender status through films. Therefore, I argue that the feminine films featuring strong and independent women are decreasing while the masculine films are

[40] Seung-kyung Kim and John Finch, "Confucian Patriarchy Reexamined: Korean Families and the IMF Economics Crisis," *The Good Society*, Volume 11, No. 3, 2002, p. 43.
[41] Seung-kyung Kim and John Finch, "Confucian Patriarchy Reexamined: Korean Families and the IMF Economics Crisis," *The Good Society*, Volume 11, No. 3, 2002, p. 43.
[42] Sarah Maddison and Kyungja Jung, "Autonomy and engagement: women's movements in Australia and South Korea," eds. Sandra Grey and Marian Sawer, *Women's Movements: Florishing or in Abeyance?* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 42.

increasing enormously. That is to say, it is impossible for modern day Korean men to operate in real life in the same way they had in the past, because males are losing their influential position in the family. In other words, males are feeling nostalgic for the past when they had a powerful masculinity through films.

Masculism or masculinism is a primeval power to male sexuality with the experience of men. Some men want to perform masculinism in order to distinguish themselves from female sexuality in Korean society because it seems that they feel the loss of masculinity. Indeed, this desire drives men to the level of an excessive masculinity against women. According to Arthur Brittan, the impulse to "[m]asculinise in general tends to give a special status to male sexuality…. It is sharply distinguished from feminine sexuality which, until very recently, was seen as being passive and male dependent. Male sexuality is construed as autonomous, adventurous and exploratory."[43] So the impulse to masculinise seems like leading men to an excessive masculinity.

In many societies, men are required to display strong masculine characteristics. They needed to fight in battle fields, for instance, during the Second World War and the Korean War, and had to be winners in the competition surrounding them. Moreover, Korean men are required to serve in the military, and military service is widely understood as a chance for men to discover and express their masculinity. However, this service can become traumatic, as if a nightmare, because some men undergo physical and mental violence from senior soldiers, and a few of these, not knowing how to control their traumatic experience, resort to suicide.[44] Their desire to avoid this horror shows the hysterical defence apparatus against others surrounding them. An example can be found in Kiduk Kim's *Coast Guard* (2002) which displays hegemonic masculinity. The very setting of the film on the border presents a frame around the film's representation of masculinity. In *Coast Guard*, the director explores the schism between North Korea and South Korea. Private Kang (Jang Dongkun)'s duty

[43] Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 48.
[44] According to the *Joongang Dialy*, since 1996 *circa* 100 soldiers try to suicide every year. [http://article.joins.com/article/article.asp?ctg=12&Total_ID=1001724]

is to stop North Korean spies invading the country. He appears like a very strong soldier, but has an obsession, showing his excessive and hideous violence to achieve his goal to kill a spy. However, he mistakes a man for a spy at night on the coast, inadvertently killing the man. The reason he kills the man is that he wants to show his strong masculinity by means of capturing a North Korean spy.

Sometimes traumatic men can be very aggressive and violent but, ironically, want to hide their real weakness in front of women. Therefore, this kind of masculinity shows an excessive masculine power with negative methods such as machoism and patriarchy. In Korean society, males are taught the norms of traditional masculinity through processes of socialisation such as school and military service in order to become a father who is respected by their wives and children, a figure they consider to be the paragon of masculinity.

In *Happy End,* which is the main text in this chapter, we find Bora (Jeon Doyon), who is a successful career woman who becomes involved with her ex-lover (and indeed first love), Ilbum (Joo Jinmo). Bora rejects her present status as a mother and wife, wanting to return to her former love who has more powerful masculinity than her husband in the respect of job and physical figure. Meanwhile, her husband Minki (Choi Minsik) looks after an infant child after having lost his job, and who has very weak confidence because his wife supports his family on her earnings. Minki feels that he should look after his baby and go shopping to buy food instead of his wife, because he does not have any job. One day he finds out that his wife has been cheating. He devises a plan to punish his wife's extramarital affair by killing her. Therefore, Minki shows his latent and excessive masculinity in order to chastise his wife. In *Happy End*, there is no happy end.

In Chapter Four, entitled 'Distorted Pleasure in *Bad Guy* (2001) and *The Isle* (2000)', I will analyse Kim Kiduk's films. There is a tendency towards distorted pleasure in Korean cinema that represents traumatic masculinity through the particular aspects of rape fantasy, sadism and masochism. That is to say, the weakness of masculinity leads to violence toward females because

masculinity has little influence on reality. This can be seen in, for instance, Bong Joonho's *Memories of Murder* (2003) which illustrates serial murder against women, Jung Jiwoo's *Happy End* (1999) which depicts husband's severe violence, Kwak Kyungtaek's *Friend* (2001) which shows rape and violence, Kim Kiduk's *Bad Guy* (rape and violence). In *Happy End*, a husband tries to punish his cheating wife by killing her. In *Friend*, a teenage girl is raped by her boyfriend. In a sense, we argue for the need to seek out the psychoanalytic analysis of trauma.

Andrew Spicer, in his study of masculinity in popular British cinema, has pointed out that traumatic masculinity is explained by Freudian psychoanalysis.[45] Spicer discusses the presentation of sexual and psychological masculinity in British cinema exploring the dominant male styles, but his assertions can be adapted to Korean cinema because the meaning and the role of masculinity are very similar to each other generally. In *Happy End*, the husband lost his mastery seeking revenge. He is struggling between the Id and the Ego, for example, he does not know how to deal with his cheating wife. His Ego desires that he forgives his wife, but his Id wants him to kill her. Continuously, he faces his desire to kill her as the 'return of the repressed'. His repressed desire is finally released to kill her. It seems that traumatic man covers his weakness through such a brutal violence but he is occupied by trauma in the form of a sexual and psychological disorder. Indeed, he should be both offender and victim. In *Bad Guy*, one day Hanki (Cho Jaehyun) finds a beautiful college student, Seonhwa (Seo Won) sitting on a park bench. He is attracted to her immediately. However, she disgusts him when he glances at her and sits down beside her due to his appearance. He is still attracted to her. So, he decides to make her a prostitute. In the process of becoming a prostitute, her attitude can be linked to masochism. Even though a man tries to rape a girl, he could not go through with it himself, and the audiences have to decide whether the man is really a bad guy, or not. In this film the male protagonist has an Oedipal complex. This Oedipal complex is his trauma which he could not remember, but experiences. For instance, Hanki has lost his masculinity

[45] Andrew Spicer. *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: IB Tauris Publishers, 2001), p. 161.

for a long time because he could not access the Name-of-the-Father as an Oedipal complex during his childhood. As a result, the absence of the Name-of-the-Father develops his trauma. Indeed, Hanki may have never seen such a beautiful lady, as he has lived with his mother and a few prostitutes surrounding him. When he saw her, he bursts his latent trauma out. His trauma leads himself to both masochist and sadist regarding Seonhwa.

My fifth chapter on 'Representation of Memory through Flashbacks in *Peppermint Candy* (1999) and *Oasis* (2002)' will analyse Lee Changdong's two films in relation to flashback and memory. In many films, hysterical males are reminded of the past through flashbacks. Occasionally flashbacks suggest important information to recognise someone who is suffering from a specific dilemma. As Maureen Turim has noted, "flashbacks in film often merge the two levels of remembering the past, giving large-scale social and political history the subjective mode of a single, and fictional individual's remembered experience."[46] In *Green Fish* (1997), a gangster, Makdong, phones his brother after he kills the enemy of his boss. He wants to escape his vulnerable present life. At that moment, he dreams of his memory with his brother. In a public telephone booth, he talks with his brother to distance himself from his murder. He is reminded of his experience with his brother. They have already gone to the period when they experienced the happiest moment. To forget his brutal present is the only way to avoid the severe situation.

Flashbacks are significant both for trauma theory and for considering trauma in cinema, as Joshua Hirsch points out: "Flashbacks allowed filmmakers to differentiate their products using a form of narration that was economical …, and conductive to the development of more elaborate, novel-like stories."[47] In the meantime, *Peppermint Candy* (2000) shows a time journey from the present to the past, and audiences follow Youngho (Seol Kyungkoo)'s steps and changes through these flashbacks. In the film, Youngho lost everything after bankruptcy and is full of despair.

[46] Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 2.
[47] Joshua Hirsch, *After Image: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p. 92.

Flashbacks make audiences understand the reason why he wants to go back to the past. However, Youngho's memories are not always good enough. Most of his memories are filled with traumatic events. Audiences follow his memories where he experienced serving in the military, and losing money in a failed business. At last, he stops at his favourite moment in whole his lifetime he has ever dreamed. Then he shouts he wants to go back to this moment. When a high-speed train approaches a man, the man turns and cries, "I'm going back". Throughout the text, the traumatised male subject tries to escape his miserable life by daydreaming.

As mentioned before, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is known as a psychiatric disorder that happens in dreadful situations or frightening experiences such as war, natural disasters, violent accidents, and terrorist incidents. In this respect, Andrew Spicer notes that:

> [D]amaged men can be analysed as two inter-related types. The first, which dominated the immediate post-period, was the maladjusted veteran whose war service had caused psychological damage and/or social dysfunction. The second, the schizophrenic, was more obviously generic.[48]

Spicer defines damaged men as two types in relation to traumatised men who experienced the Second World War. These traumatised men can become maladjusted and develop a schizophrenic personality.

There were two main upheavals in Korea: the Korean War in 1959-53 and the Gwangju Democratisation Movement (Gwangju Uprising) on May 18-27 in 1980. Following these events, traumatised men suffered from maladjusted or schizophrenic personalities. In the texts of cinematic representations of traumatised masculinity, there are many films involving these traumatic problems since 1950s, for example, in *Peppermint Candy* (1999), a male soldier makes a mistake by killing a female student by accidental firing during the Gwangju Democratisation Movement. After this

[48] Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: IB Tauris Publishers, 2001), p. 161.

traumatic event, the male protagonist starts to hobble. His limp becomes as a metaphor of his trauma.

Finally, in my Conclusion, I shall draw to a close by summarising the arguments that I explore by discussing this study about male hysteria in popular Korean cinema. I shall conclude that the dynamics of this traumatic masculinity throughout this thesis begins with an understanding of the definition of trauma, and the unique situation of social contexts that has surrounded films since the late 1990s. For the purposes of this study, I have limited the discussion to films since that period. I suggest that contemporary Korean cinema focuses on masculinity, especially traumatic masculinity. This thesis also examines traumatic masculinity in popular Korean cinema. The traumatic male subject reproduces male status in Korean society today; however, it has been suggested that the problem of this masculinity is caused by excess of masculinity, distorted pleasure such as sadism and masochism, and representation of memory. In the following Chapter Two, I will look at the historical context of Korean masculinity and cinema.

Chapter Two

The Historical Contexts of Korean Masculinity and Cinema

The preceding Introduction explored the relationship between trauma theory and masculinity, and observed that male protagonists in contemporary Korean cinema are often suffering from traumatic experiences. As I have argued, a form of hysterical masculinity evidences this crisis of masculinity. The purpose of this chapter is to provide social and historical contexts for the specific examples I analyse in the subsequent three chapters. I will also discuss the dominant features of masculine society, focusing on Confucianism and militarism. Arguing that Korea is essentially an androcentric society, I identify two dominant strands of masculinity: patriarchal masculinity and fascist masculinity.

In the Chapter Two, my main focus is on the way the traditionally male-dominated society has become fragmented due to a dramatically reduced influence of Confucianism and militarism. Confucianism and militarism are the most useful terms in defining masculinity in modern Korean society. Confucianism is a Korean norm inherited traditionally from the Joseon Dynasty. It is a basic concept that describes interrelations in Korean society such as the man-woman relationship, marital relationship, parental relation, adult-child relationship, etc. Confucianism is still influencing Korean society greatly although it has become weak since the industrialisation of the 1960s and economic crisis in 1997. Meanwhile, militarism is also deeply rooted in Korean society by artificial means after going through military dictatorships twice after the 1960s. The culture of militarism cultures can still be seen to influence many places such as in the family, workplace, and school.

The second section of this chapter traces the trajectory of Korean cinema theatrically from the perspectives of release, distribution, and exhibition from 1996 to 2007. As I will highlight, consideration of the 'Korean New Wave'[49] is fundamental to any overview of the pre-1997 period, and I will explore the critical definitions under which the Korean New Wave and/or 'Korean New Cinema' of the late 1980s and mid-1990s have been apprehended. Indeed, the foundation for the development of modern Korean films can be located in the Korean New Wave of the 1980s. The New Wave directors daringly deserted the old film-manufacturing environments that had been practiced for a long time and began to make a new type of film. Under this flow, Korean films could grow in the 1990s and challenge the world film market beyond Korean market later in the 2000s. This is why it is essential to understand the Korean New Wave films in the late 1980s to know the flow of Korean films since the 1997 economic crisis.

In the final part of this chapter, I will explore the contextual factors that I argue relate to the representation of Korean masculinities in two popular genres, the male melodrama and the *Jopok* film (gangster film). Among film genres, gender issues are particularly well-represented in the melodrama, and here the ratio of male and female characters in films is to some extent well-balanced compared to other film genres. But, in the other genres except melodrama, the man's role is represented as being more important than the woman's, particularly so in gangster and film noir films, where men lead the entire film. In such genres, the woman's role is to create difficulties for the man, or explore sexual aspects. Despite such a difference in gender, both melodrama and gangster played a pivotal role in making Korean films successful since the economic crisis, and attracted many audiences in the late 1990s and 2000s. Indeed, these two genres are showing

[49] The Korean New Wave and the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*) are not similar concepts each other. We will see the former soon in this chapter. The latter refers to the flow of popularity of Korean culture including soap opera, music and film in Asia since the late 1990s. With the increasing market share, the Korean film industry has grown with both transnational and national aspects. The Korean Wave involves the discourse surrounding the Korean culture in China, Japan, Taiwan and other Asian countries. The Korean wave's impact has continued to in Asia for the recent ten years.

different types of masculinity. Melodrama has generally represented a strong masculinity in Korean films, but the melodrama that appeared after the economic crisis showed a transformation of this male into a gentler figure. Gangster films are still showing strong masculinity, but contain many comedy elements without taking on an aspect of traditional original gangster film. Therefore, it can be concluded that gangster comedy represents strong masculinity, but the real image of man after the economic crisis is a contradiction. It is as if Korean films at the time were asking of Korean men persistent questions about which type of man they might choose to identify with, either a nice guy or a strong but contradictory guy.

My thesis argues that the representation of masculinity in Korean cinema changed significantly as a result of the 1997 economic crisis. Until 1997 Korean society had a very firm belief that their economy would grow ceaselessly. Sang-Kun Bae and Dongsoon Lim postulated that "the prospects for the Korean economy were bright and Korea was expected to soon reach a level of economic development ..."[50] What happened in 1997 has often been referred to within Korea as the 'IMF crisis', a somewhat imprecise terminology that suggests a passing of the burden of responsibility on the IMF rather than on Korea itself. As Heike Hermanns recalls, "in late November 1997 ... This was perceived as a national disgrace and the crisis is referred to as the 'IMF-crisis' in Korea."[51] Indeed, many Koreans felt that their country had been economically colonised by the IMF with its demand for tough economic reforms, as Kim Yoon-bai describes:

> Unprepared to deal with the sudden outflow and suffering an enormous loss of foreign reserves, the government had to resort to the International Monetary Fund for its rescue. In return for a record amount of conditional loans from the IMF, Korea had to initiate a number of fundamental reforms in the financial industry, government finance, and the exchange rate regime. In the meantime, the economy went through the worst recession in 60 years. The equities and the domestic currency lost more than half of their values when the crisis hit bottom. In 1998, the Korean economy registered a contraction of nearly 7 percent — 14 percent below the average growth rate of the previous 5 years.[52]

[50] Sang-Kun Bae and Dongsoon Lim, "Korea," ed. Akira Kohsaka, *Fiscal Deficits in the Pacific Region* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 210.
[51] Heike Hermanns, "South Korea: Kim Dae-Jung's Government of the People," ed. Christian Schafferer, *Understanding modern East Asian politics* (New York: Nova Publishers, 2005), p. 10.
[52] Kim Yoon-bai, "Korea overcomes crises with national solidarity," *The Korean Times*, 28 May 2010.

Korea considered itself as a victim of a foreign invader, a situation evoked by *The China Post*: "The country moved swiftly to reform its economy and ended up using only US$30.2 billion, eventually paying it back in less than four years."[53] Despite the inaccuracy of the term, many journalists and scholars frequently refer to the Korean financial crisis of 1997 as the IMF crisis, and the term continues to be extensively used also in accounts of Korean cinema. Hye Seung Chung and David Scott, for example, refer to the IMF crisis repeatedly, as the 'IMF Crisis' that shocked the nation in late 1997."[54] David Martin-Jones also refers to the 'IMF crisis' in his journal article 'Decompressing modernity: South Korean Time Travel Narratives and the IMF Crisis.'[55] Kyung Hyun Kim notes that "the so-called "IMF crisis" ironically helped the Korean film industry in its battle to protect the local market."[56] Jeeyoung Shin says, "Though it was short lived, soon replaced by venture-capital companies after the IMF (International Monetary Fund) crisis in 1997-98."[57] Chi-Yun Shin states, "The present in the case of Friend is, indeed, a troubling one, especially after the 1997 IMF crisis when the International Monetary Fund had to bail out a South Korean economy facing bankruptcy."[58]

The continued use of the term 'IMF crisis' is misleading because the crisis was not caused by the intervention of the IMF, but by a pre-existing unstable economic model where industrial and financial conglomerates were inextricably linked to political parties and groups. The monetary crisis spread across all sectors of society, including family, schools, and government. In this respect, the financial crisis not only revealed economic problems but also drew attention to underlying social

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[53] Foster Klug, "S. Korea, IMF work on emergency program," *The China Post*, 25 July 2010.
[54] Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient, "Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: The Politics of Memory and Modernity in the Fractured Films of Lee Chang-dong and Hong Sang-soo," ed. Frances Gateward, *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), p. 124.
[55] David Martin-Jones, "Decompressing modernity: South Korean Time Travel Narratives and the IMF Crisis," *Cinema Journal* 46:4 (2007): pp. 45-67.
[56] Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 271.
[57] Jeeyoung Shin, "Globalisation and New Korean Cinema," ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 54.
[58] Chi-yun Shin, "Two of a Kind: Gender and Friendship," ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 123

difficulties associated with a long history of gender discrimination, the influence of Confucianism, the militarisation of Korean society, as well as the legacy of past dictatorial governments.

Gregory W. Noble and John Ravenhill have argued that "[t]he military gave big business access to economic rents in exchange for political donations."[59] In fact one significant influence on the Korean economic crisis of 1997 can be traced back as far as the early stages of the economic development in the 1960s designed by Park Chunghee.

Korea's economic development strategy since 1960 accomplished extraordinary growth rates. With rapid growth from the 1960s to the 1980s, Korea developed its industry through a modernisation process that was fuelled by capitalism and industrialisation. However, this rapid economic development revealed problems which were dormant for over three decades. As Hagen Koo has pointed out, the growth caused class division between the workers and the capitalists. The latter formed alliances with politicians, while the former struggled to obtain their rights. However, the government controlled labour rights for the capitalist class by means of restraining labour movements and retaining low wages. According to Hagen Koo:

> One of the most significant consequences of rapid economic growth can be observed in the transformation of the class structure. Industrialization in the two countries [South Korea and Taiwan] has brought about the rise of two principal classes of a capitalist society, the capitalist class and the industrial working class.[60]

Many business conglomerates received advantages from the military dictatorships. A lot of Korean firms are defined as *chaebol* which refers to a business conglomerate or group in Korea that is controlled by its founder's family, i.e., Samsung, Hyungdai, and LG. The chaebols have enjoyed direct access to politicians including many presidents, i.e. Park Chunghee and Chun Doohwan, to

[59] Gregory W. Noble, John Ravenhill, "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly? Korea, Taiwan and the Asian Financial Crisis," ed. Gregory W. Noble, John Ravenhill, *The Asian Financial Crisis and the Architecture of Global Finance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 99.
[60] Hagen Koo, "The interplay of state, social class, and world system in East Asian development: the cases of South Korea and Taiwan," ed. Frederic C. Deyo, *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 176.

their benefit. Conversely, the government by military dictatorship maintained associations with the chaebols for economic development. As Seungsook Moon has argued:

> While the imagining of modernity as social condition characterized by an industrial economy and a strong military in the framework of the nation-state has been shared by many ruling elites in postcolonial societies, the pursuit of modernity as such by the developmental state in South Korea since the early 1960s took a peculiar turn into the emergence of what I call militarized modernity.[61]

For about forty years, the chaebols played an important role in developing the Korean economy. In the meantime, the dominant chaebols had drawn a large number of bank loans in order to expand their businesses with the connivance of the government. The Korean financial crisis of 1997 resulted from the structural problems of the chaebols.

> … one notable feature of the chaebol is that ownership is heavily concentrated, inasmuch as one individual has almost complete control over all firms within the group. Such a structure gives the owner-managers involved strong incentives to diversify their wealth and human capital …. Despite the significant contribution chaebols have made to the rapid growth of the Korean economy during the last 40 years, critics claim that much of their business expansion has resulted from excessive borrowing and that owner-managers have expropriated other investors by investing the firm's resources to maximize their own or the group's welfare.[62]

The crisis was more detrimental for the chaebols due to their deprived finance. Half of the thirty largest chaebols were required to file for bankruptcy during the economic crisis, a situation which increased unemployment. As Doowon Lee states:

> The most serious problem caused by the restructuring effort in the financial, corporate, and public sectors of Korea is unemployment. Unemployment is not only an economic problem but also a social and political problem. It is especially painful to an economy like Korea, in which virtually full employment—with an unemployment rate of 2-3 percent—was maintained before the crisis.[63]

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[61] Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 23-24.

[62] Jae-Seung Baeka, Jun-Koo Kangb, Kyung Suh Park, "Corporate governance and firm value: evidence from the Korean financial crisis," *Journal of Financial Economics*, Vol 71, 2004, p. 267.

[63] Doowon Lee, "South Korea's Financial Crisis and Economic Restructuring," ed. Kongdan Oh, *Korea Briefing: 1997-1999: Challenges and Change at the Turn of the Century* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), p. 24.

The unemployment rate was on a rising trend after the crisis of 1997. Brian Bridges has noted that the unemployment rate went up suddenly from 2.1 per cent in October 1997 to 5.9 per cent at the end of February in 1998.[64]

In the wake of the crisis, Korean men were forced to reconsider their status within the realms of the family, the workplace, and society at large, as a social study by Yongsok Choi and Chae-Schick Chung illustrates: For a while, the traditional family in Korea has a structure with a father as the breadwinner and a mother who looks after children. Because of the economic crisis, 23.9 per cent of jobless family experienced some serious marital crisis.[65] The recession created a profound crisis of confidence among the majority of men, and with it a challenge to the hegemonic masculinity that had preceded the crisis. Roger Horrocks argues in his work on wider issues of masculinity that:

> It has often been assumed that men, in their positions of dominance, have the most exciting and rewarding careers, feel more powerful in their public and private lives, and are generally favoured over women. While there is clearly some cogency to these arguments, I have found in my work that in fact many men are haunted by feelings of emptiness, impotence and rage. They feel abused, unrecognized by modern society. While manhood offers compensations and prizes, it can also bring with it emotional autism, emptiness and despair.[66]

Following Horrocks's argument, one can indeed understand how men in contemporary Korean cinema suffer from their marginality and indeed struggle with 'autism, emptiness and despair'. While Korean films since 1997 have focused on the plight of their male protagonists, in society men have been losing their hegemonic power. Cinematically, this loss has been compensated through hyperreality and nostalgia. In a time of transition, the desire for strong masculinities has resulted in male hysteria and trauma. In the following section I shall investigate where the desire for hegemonic masculinities in Korean society and cinema originate from.

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[64] Brian Bridges, *Korea After the Crash: The Politics of Economic Recovery* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 82.
[65] Yongsok Choi and Chae-Schick Chung, "Social Impact of the Korean Economic Crisis," 2002. [http://www.eadn.org/Social%20Impact%20of%20the%20Korean%20Economic%20Crisis.pdf]
[66] Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies and Realities* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. 1. Horrocks is not referring to the Korean context specifically; however, his argument is meaningful to understand the men in crisis in Korea.

Korean Society and Men

In understanding the changes Korean men experienced in the aftermath of the crisis, it is essential to first explore the context of social developments leading up to 1997. Korean masculinities have enjoyed a very protected masculine habitus[67] for a long time, and have been primarily expressed through two dominant ideologies: patriarchy and fascism.

Korea's patriarchal system is based on the traditions of Confucianism, and Confucian values inform people's thoughts, their way of life, morality, and social relationships. Indeed, the legacy of Confucianism remains profoundly rooted in Korean society in the domestic sphere, work relations, and education, regardless of religious affiliations such as Buddhism and Christianity. As Seung-kyung Kim and John Finch have noted,

> Contemporary Korean Confucianism persists in family rituals practiced by many Koreans, but even more importantly in values and ethics that emphasize social stability and hierarchy, and which continue to structure important aspects of gender relations, work and family life. Confucianism begins with family relationships and ascribes different roles and responsibilities to various family members. Taking family as a microcosm of society, it organizes political and economic life along a model of harmonious family relationships.[68]

Similarly, Chang Pilwha has defined Korean traditional culture as a patriarchal society that encompasses institutions, organisations of production and ideology.[69]

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[67] Here, the term habitus refers to Pierre Bourdieu's concept from Marcel Mauss which means one's psychological beliefs and dispositions.
[68] Seung-kyung Kim and John Finch, "Confucian Patriarchy Reexamined: Korean Families and the IMF Economic Crisis," *The Good Society* 11.3, 2002, p. 43.
[69] Lee Sangwha, "Patriarchy and Confucianism: Feminist Critique and Reconstruction of Confucianism in Korea," ed. Chang Pil-wha and Kim Eun-Shil, *Women's Experiences and Feminist Practices in South Korea* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2005), p. 70. See Chang Pilhwa, *Yeoseonghak Note* (Seoul: Asian Center for Women's Studies, Ehwa Womans University, 1997).

Under Confucianism, the ideology of loyalty towards the higher ranks is based on age and gender. Sylvia Walby argues that patriarchal society gives men priority over women.[70] Her argument distinguishes between private and public patriarchy:

> Private patriarchy is based upon household production, with a patriarch controlling women individually and directly in the relatively private sphere of the home. Public patriarchy is based on structures other than the household, although this may still be a significant patriarchal site. Rather, institutions conventionally regarded as part of the public domain are central in the maintenance of patriarchy.[71]

According to Kaja Silverman, classic masculinity has the aim of perpetuating a dominant male reality founded on a collective belief in phallocentrism. She argues that

> If ideology is central to the maintenance of classic masculinity, the affirmation of classic masculinity is equally central to the maintenance of our governing "reality." Because of the pivotal status of the phallus, more than sexual difference is sustained through the alignment of that signifier with the male sexual organ. Within every society, hegemony is keyed to certain privileged terms, around which there is a kind of doubling up of belief. Since everything that successfully passes for "reality" within a given social formation is articulated in relation to these terms, they represent ideological stress points.[72]

Besides, Silverman has pointed out that if the phallus/penis equation dominates complete authority, our society will suffer from "ideological fatigue."[73] This phallic power has governed for a long time in Korean society.

Responding to a feminist critique of the distorted and unfair gender roles within Confucianism, which produce a series of dichotomies such as "superiority and inferiority, dominance and submission, and competence and incompetence,"[74] Edward Y. J. Chung argues that such a critique is rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between men and women, noting that "Confucianism also emphasizes reciprocal obligations between husband and wife and

[70] Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 160.
[71] Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 178.
[72] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 16.
[73] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 16.
[74] Edward Y. J. Chung, "Confucianism and Women in Modern Korea: Continuity, Change and Conflict," ed. Arvind Sharma, Katherine K. Young, *The Annual Review of Women in World Religions* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 148.

complementary roles."[75] By the same token, Chan Sin Yee has argued that "[m]ost studies of the early Confucian concept of gender concur that it is *complementarity*, rather than subordination, that is emphasized in women's gender role."[76] Chung also documents how Confucian gender roles began to modify the distinction between men and women and emphasise a stricter gender hierarchy from the mid of the Joseon Dynasty (the 16th century).[77]

Apart from determining gender relations and hierarchies within the domestic sphere, Confucianism has a profound effect on the work ethos, and thus on the economy of Korea. As Sheldon Lu observes, Confucian capitalism in Asia is considered as an energetic driving power behind rapid social and economic development.[78] But the Confucian values sometimes encourage workers to display authoritarian behaviour. As Richard R. Ellsworth has noted:

> The Korean workforce is steeped in the traditional Confucian values of mutual responsibility and self-development in the service of a common cause. Consequently, workers are disciplined and dedicated to hard work, driven by two principal motivations. First, they believe that their sacrifices will lead to a better life for their children. Second, this is their way of contributing to social harmony and the betterment of Korean society in general. However, at the management level, the Confucian deference to authority often results in Korean companies being managed in a highly authoritarian manner, with the chairmen being the greatest offenders. This authoritarianism stifles ideas and innovation.[79]

The second major strand of masculinity in Korean society is related to notions of fascism and militarism. Even though definitions of the former term are complex and problematic, fascism is used widely in order to indicate the government's compulsive, violent, and political demeanour in Korea, expressed during Park Chunghee (1963-1979) and Chun Doohwan (1980-1988)'s tyrannies,

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[75] Edward Y. J. Chung, "Confucianism and Women in Modern Korea: Continuity, Change and Conflict," ed. Arvind Sharma, Katherine K. Young, *The Annual Review of Women in World Religions* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 165.
[76] Chan Sin Yee, "The Confucian Conception of Gender in the Twenty-first Century," ed. Daniel A. Bell, Chae-bong Ham, *Confucianism for the Modern World*, Vol. 3, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 312.
[77] Edward Y. J. Chung, "Confucianism and Women in Modern Korea: Continuity, Change and Conflict," ed. Arvind Sharma, Katherine K. Young, *The Annual Review of Women in World Religions* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 148.
[78] Sheldon H. Lu, *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 200 1), p. 72.
[79] Richard R. Ellsworth, *Leading with Purpose: The New Corporate Realities* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 200 1), p. 300.

and recently, during the period of Lee Myungbak (2008-2013)'s government, which confined a set of demonstrations for democratic freedom. My definition of fascism follows Robert Paxton:

> Fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.[80]

In exploring Korean masculinity in relation to fascism, it is worth briefly seeking a comparative example in fascism and masculinity in Germany. Sociologist Klaus Theweleit's two-volume book *Male Fantasies* explores masculinity in a particular group of men called the Freikorps which were volunteer armies in Germany after the First World War.[81] His focus is on the fascist male imaginary in relation to sexism and misogyny, an imaginary that is revealing of a fear of women and particularly the fascist soldier male's dislike of working-class women. As Theweleit argues, "It is clear that the Freikorps soldiers' projected image of proletarian women is a distortion."[82] In contrast, he suggests three good mother figures with three cases as the concept of the good women who provide their sons protection.[83] In the Foreword to the first volume, Barbara Ehrenreich has noted that for Theweleit, "the point of understanding fascism is … because it is already implicit in the daily relationships of men and women."[84] Through a number of novels, autobiographies, letters, advertisements, and posters, Theweleit illustrates male fantasies by means of rebuilding their

[80] Robert O. Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 218.
[81] See Klaus Theweleit, translated by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner, *Male Fantasies: Women, floods, bodies, history* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Klaus Theweleit, translated by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner, *Male Fantasies: Psychoanalyzing the white terror* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
[82] Klaus Theweleit, translated by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner, *Male Fantasies: Women, floods, bodies, history* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 138.
[83] Klaus Theweleit, translated by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner, *Male Fantasies: Women, floods, bodies, history* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 95.
[84] Klaus Theweleit, translated by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner, *Male Fantasies: Women, floods, bodies, history* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. xv.

gendered imagery toward women. By the same token, as Alice Kaplan has suggested that Fascist topics are very manly and phallic.[85]

Between World War I and II, fascism was prevalent in Germany, Italy, and Japan. While Korea does not have a comparable experience, there were military dictatorships in Korea for over thirty years that can be seen as analogous to fascism, in particular the governments led by Park Chunghee and Chun Doohwan between the 1960s and the 1980s. A military coup called the 5.16 Revolution placed Major General Park Chunghee in power in 1961. Park led the bloodless military coup and repressed the people's freedom and rights during his tenure of 18 years. Economic reform for industrial development focusing on heavy and chemical industries began with his government. In 1972, Park reinforced his power through martial law. However, no power is eternal, and the end of his rule arrived suddenly in 1979 as Park was assassinated by Kim Jaekyu, the director of the KCIA (Korean Central Intelligence Agency). Kim stated Park was a main obstruction of Korean democracy.

At that moment, everybody expected a transition to democracy, but this expectation did not come about due to another military coup led by Major General Chun Doohwan in 1979. Chun assumed power in a violence-torn state. In 1980 he declared martial law against a number of demonstrations led by students and labourers, leading to the killing of 606 people by his army during the Gwangju Democratisation Movement (Gwangju Uprising, May 18-27 in 1980), as protesters resisted Chun's military coup.[86] It is very meaningful that the Movement shows the people's response to state violence. After this Movement, Chun plunged the nation into crisis. He was indirectly voted President for seven years in 1981. Even though Chun was the only presidential candidate, the National Conference for Unification elected Chun as the President of the Republic of Korea. His government continued to suppress the people until 1987. Although the military

[85] Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of banality: fascism, literature, and French intellectual life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 10.
[86] [http://sisa-issue.inews24.com/php/news_view.php?g_serial=262539&g_menu=050200]

seized power in 1961 and 1979, there were three major movements in Korea that sought to obtain the people's democracy: the 4.19 Student Movement in 1960, the Gwangju Democratisation Movement in 1980, and the 6.10 Movement in 1987.

Yun-gi Hong uses the term 'quasi-fascism' to describe the dictatorships of the decades between the 1960s and the 1980s:

> At the time of his imposition of the Yushin Constitution in 1972, it is clear that President Park Chung-hee sought to mobilize the people of South Korea and build a state grounded on quasi-fascist ideology, with which he had been acquainted in his youth in the Japanese Military Academy. His National Charter of Education is a prime example of fascist proclivities. Park wanted to create a nation of citizens who would voluntarily respond to a call for national mobilization at any time and voiced on any pretext.[87]

The two dictatorships in Korea were not supported by the people, and in several respects the regimes may be compared with the kind of semi-fascism which gained power in Latin America during the same period, for instance in the military dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile. The term semi-fascism, however, should not necessarily imply a lesser evil. In this sense, Colin Sparks and Anna Reading have argued that a number of military dictators influenced by Mussolini massacred their people.[88]

The Korean War was an important factor in the development of North and South Korea and impacted on all Korean citizens at the time and into the present day. As in other quasi-fascist dictatorships elsewhere, Korea witnessed a strong influence of militarism across many aspects of public life. Since the Korean War (1950-1953), the South Korean government reinforced and improved its military for defence against communist countries including North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union. Since this time Korea has been one of the most militarised countries in the world. There are many reasons. First of all, the Korean War which resulted in the national division—

[87] Hong Yun-gi, "Park Chung-hee in the Age if Democratization: A Critical Analysis of Deification Discourse on Park chung-hee," ed., Lee Byeong-Cheon, *Developmental Dictatorship and the Park Chung Hee Era: The Shaping of Modernity in the Republic of Korea* (Paramus, NJ: Homa & Sekey Books, 2005), pp. 337-338.
[88] Colin Sparks, Anna Reading, *Communism, Capitalism, and the Mass Media* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), p. 25.

North and South Korea—did not technically end, and thus political tensions continue. Secondly, the military dictatorships influenced the society to become an internalised and militarised community under their governance. Moon argues the two military regimes in Korea spread widely militarism at schools and workplaces.

> Militarism, which values male soldiery, has underlain such ruling ideologies as national security and anti-Communism. These ideologies in turn enabled the military regimes to manage to stay in power until the late 1980s.[89]

To this day masculinity and militarism are deeply interconnected in Korea. All Korean men over the age of 18 who are fit and healthy enough to perform the draft are called up and sent to carry out military service in the Army, the Navy or the Air Force for 24 months. In spite of public questioning of the compulsory nature of military service, the Korean government still wants to retain conscription. This is in marked contrast to the UK, where national service was discontinued in 1960, as well as to the USA, which abandoned it in 1973.

Military service in Korea is considered by many as a socialization process into becoming a 'real man' who has assumed hegemonic masculinity by merit of being discharged from national service. Seungsook Moon has noted that military has become more important to get hegemonic masculinity in South Korea since the Korean War.[90] In a similar vein, Julia I. Suryakusuma has argued that militarism constructs a strong patriarchy society with male superiority after war.[91] For this reason, it is not easy for someone exempted from compulsory military service to assume a dominant male role in society. Thus while the system is a very sensitive topic among Korean people, on the whole military service is seen a proof of being to a real man with full competency, as Insook Kwon argues:

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[89] Seungsook Moon, "Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea," in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, eds. Elaine Kim and Chungmoo Choi (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 45.
[90] Seungsook Moon, "The Production and Subversion of Hegemonic Masculinity: Reconsidering Gender Hierarchy in Contemporary South Korea," ed. Laurel Kendall, *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p. 89.
[91] Julia I. Suryakusuma, "The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia," ed. Laurie Jo Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 114.

> Many South Korean people believe that the required couple of years of conscription are a real turning point in the acquisition of a trained muscular body and male maturity. Military service is viewed as a time that can serve to change young conscripted soldiers into responsible men who can support their families and co-operate (obey) in organized civil society. An honorable discharge means the end of adolescent wandering and resisting social order.[92]

At the same time, there are the negative aspects of a heavily militarised society. In discussing American militarism, Carl Boggs has noted that "[w]ith few exceptions the military has been a domain of patriarchal, masculinist traditions—social hierarchy, violence, conquest, sexism, homophobia, gun worship."[93] While the military dictatorships ended in the late 1980s, militarism is still widespread in Korea. Military cultures have been gradually internalised by the citizens and are evident in institutions such as schools, universities, workplaces and the family. In the process of becoming a militarised society, certain values such as authority, obedience, order, power, and hierarchy became dominant. Moon Seungsook's previously cited term "militarized modernity" illuminates "three related processes of socio-political and economic formation: the construction of the modern nation as an anti-communist polity, the making of its members as duty-bound 'nationals,' and the integration of male conscription into the organization of the industrializing economy."[94]

Generally speaking, a militarised society is considered a masculine society. Jill Steans has argued that:

> Historically, the rights and duties of citizenship have been closely linked with the ability to take up arms in defence of the polity. Indeed, historically, this linkage has provided one of the main justifications for the exclusion of women from the public realm and citizenship, and has provided a powerful justification for the subordination of women.[95]

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[92] Insook Kwon, "A Feminist Exploration of Military Conscription: The Gendering of the Connections Between Nationalism, Militarism and Citizenship in South Korea," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Volume 3, Number 1, 1 April 2001, p. 35.
[93] Carl Boggs, *Imperial Delusions: American Militarism and Endless War* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), p. 143.
[94] Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 2.
[95] Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 81.

However, both the prevalence of military masculinity and female subordination are gradually being challenged in Korea, especially since 1997. There are of course other reasons for weakened masculinities than just the economic crisis: the feminist movement, changes of family and jobs in post-modern society which are less physical than modern society. As Kwang-Yeong Shin notes:

> The economic crisis transformed gender relations by reinforcing and undermining the patriarchal system at the same time. On the other hand, social patriarchy, male dominance over female at the social level through the exclusion of women from occupations with high status and high wage, was reinforced by the economic crisis.[96]

In summary, what I have tried to demonstrate over the past pages is how various factors, including authoritarian governance, militarism and fascism, deeply seated Confucian values, specific economic organisations and structures have all contributed not only to the specific events of the 1997 crisis, but more generally to the particular manifestations of Korean masculinity in the new millennium. Before I analyse in more detail how these manifestations are represented in films, it is first necessary to map the industrial context of Korean cinema before and after the crisis.

Korean Cinema Pre-and Post-1997

According to the *Statistical Yearbook 1993* published by the Korean Film Council, in the late 1980s the Korean film industry was in a critical state due to the success of the Hollywood majors in the domestic market. US imports occupied almost 80% share of the Korean film market.[97] Nevertheless, by the mid-1990s the market share of Korean films crept up by 20%. In 1996 the launch of the Busan International Film Festival as the first international film festival in Korea, brought a new diversity of products to film-goers. Prior to this, there had been few places to

[96] Kwang-Yeong Shin, "Asian economic crisis, class, and patriarchy in Korean society," *The International Scope*, Vol. 3, Issue 5, 2001, p. 1.
[97] Hollywood radically dominated the Korean film market to 80% in 1993, but 25% in 1985 and 22.5% in 1986.

watch foreign films in Korea other than those that had already proved a commercial success in Hollywood, and thus the festival was perceived as a window which showcased another world cinema. In 1997, the Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival was launched as Korea's second international film festival, enabling even greater Korean audiences to see a number of diverse films. Meanwhile, the Korean government abandoned its film censorship policies following a verdict by the Korean Supreme Court.[98] A number of new directors debuted in 1996 including Kang Jekyu (*The Gingko Bed*), Hong Sangsoo (*The Day a Pig Fell into the Well*), Kim Kiduk (*Crocodile*), and Yim Soon-rye (*Three Friends*) who are leading Korean directors in the early twenty-first century.

The involvement of the largest conglomerates like Samsung, LG, and Daewoo in film production came to an end after 1997 due to the crisis. Kim Euiseok's *Marriage Story* (1992) had been the first Korean film funded by a conglomerate, and Samsung's investment in the film was the beginning of large firms' film merchandising. This investment from conglomerates caused a boom in the Korean film industry with the emergence of new filmmakers in the 1990s. But already at that time the film companies were incurring losses. After 1997, melodrama became a popular genre, exemplified by the success of Jang Yoonhyun's *The Letter* and Lee Jungkuk's *The Contact*. These films were seemingly unaffected by the financial crisis. However, the year 1997 saw a burgeoning genre trend in the increasing popularity of melodrama, especially male melodrama, which continued throughout the late 1990s.

Although the number of films released in 1998 dramatically decreased from 59 in the previous year to 43 due to the conglomerates withdrawing from the industry, melodrama continued to attract

[98] The Court judged that the powerful interfering system of censorship infringed the Constitution. The case had originally been brought by the producer Kang Heon, who was prosecuted because he showed his film *Opening the Closed Door* (1992) without censorship approval, i.e. in an uncut version which included material that he had been required to remove. He appealed on the grounds that this censorship was fundamentally inconsistent with the Constitution, and eventually the Court accepted his position. According to the judgment, the Public Performance Ethics Committee was replaced by the Public Performance Promotion Association in 1997. Since 1999 the Public Performance Promotion Association changed into the Korea Media Rating Board. [http://www.kmrb.or.kr]

audiences, and there were six films of that genre among the top 10 Korean films of that year: *A Promise*, *Christmas in August*, *Art Museum by the Zoo*, *An Affair, Scent of a Man*, and *Girls' Night Out*. The same year also saw other major developments in the industry. The emergence of multiplex cinemas played an important role in boosting the industry. The first multiplex cinema chain, the CGV Kangbyun 11 opened in Seoul in 1998. Since then the number of cinema screens increased and caused film audiences to grow. Another eventful moment came in May 1998, when *Hana-bi* (1997) directed by Takeshi Kitano, became the first Japanese film to be screened officially in Korea. Until that point the Korean government had strictly banned the import of Japanese films. Subsequently the Korean film market gradually opened to Japanese products, because the government of Korea considered that its market has a enough confidence to compete with them.

In 1999, the first Hollywood style action film *Shiri* beat the previous box-office record, the 1,971,780 admissions of James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), and was the first Korean film to break the two million admissions mark in Seoul. The total admissions of the film reached 2,448,399 (Seoul admissions) and 6,209,898 (nationwide admissions).[99] Through a few great successes in the domestic film market, the Korean film industry increased in confidence despite the US majors' aggressive market strategy and power over local cinemas since 1988, such as United International Pictures and 20th Century Fox Korea. Moreover, Korea came under pressure from the Motion Picture Association of America, who continued to demand the abolition of the screen quota system for a bilateral investment treaty between Korea and the US. A number of directors, actors and actresses, film students, and film academics participated in the demonstration for maintaining the quota system against Hollywood. The screen quota system was introduced to Korea in 1967, and at this time, all cinemas presented Korean films for at least 106 days a year. But the quota reduced to 76 days in 2006. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

[99] See [Table 4] which is Top 20 Korean Films Released in Korea, 1998-2007.

In 2000 the box-office success of Korean film continued. Park Chanwook's *Joint Security Area* accumulated over two million admissions in Seoul. In addition, the Korean films' share of box office gross was 39.7% in 1999 and 35.1% in 2000, meaning that for two years the market share continued at over 30%, which had never happened before. At the same time, a controversial issue arose in relation to an accusation of obscenity in Jang Sunwoo's *Lies*. Although Jang's *Lies* was rejected and delayed by the Korea Media Rating Board,[100] it finally received an 18+ rating and was shown at cinemas after cutting a few shots by the director. As a result, this case raised the issue of seeing a non-rated film in theatres. In spite of Jang's efforts, there was no cinema for the non-rated film in Korea.

It is astonishing to examine the box-office record of Korean films in 2001. There were six Korean films with over three million admissions nationally: *Friend*, *My Sassy Girl*, *Kick the Moon*, *My Wife is a Gangster*, *Hi, Dharma*, and *My Boss, My Hero*. The market shares of Korean films went up to 50.1% for the first time since the 1960s. However, relating to censorship, the production company of *Yellow Flower* (2002) directed by Lee Jisang had submitted a petition to the Constitutional Court of Korea. The Constitutional Court noted in August 2001 that the rating board had illegitimately refused and delayed the film rating for three or six months. As seen in Jang's *Lies* and Lee's *Yellow Flower*, these kinds of cases repeatedly happened because there were not cinemas for unrated films until 2004.

In 2002 some Korean filmmakers and films won influential awards at international film festivals. Lee Changdong was the Best Director Winner with *Oasis* at the 2003 Venice Film Festival which I will analyse in the fourth chapter. In May 2002, Im Kwontaek won the prestigious Best Director award with *Chihwaseon* at the Cannes Film Festival. An animation film *My Beautiful Girl, Mari* was Grand Prix winner at the 2002 Annecy International Animated Film Festival. Female

[100] Regarding ratings system, my case study films fit into the system in Korea. Sometimes the system is very controversial, however, the films I chose were not contentious.

directors appeared frequently such as Lee Junghyang (*The Way ome*), Byun Younjoo (*Ardor*), Lee Miyun (*L'Abri*), and Mo Jieun (*A Perfect Match*).

The move towards vertical integration in the film industry has been remarkable since 2003, CJ Entertainment, Cinema Service, Lotte Entertainment and Show Box holding their own multiplex cinemas like the CGV, Primus Cinema, Lotte Cinema, and Mega Box started to contribute to film production, distribution, and screening, and releasing high budget films.[101] Since the 1997 crisis a few medium size conglomerates have reappeared in the film industry. At the box-office, *Silmido* released on 24th December 2003 made a very successful mark. Furthermore, a number of well-made films were released and had a great success in the market in 2003 such as Bong Joonho's *Memories of Murder*, Lee Jeyong's *Untold Scandal*, Im Sangsoo's *A Good Lawyer's Wife*, Kim Jihoon's *A Tale of Two Sisters*, Kim Kiduk's *Spring Summer Fall Winter and Spring*, and Park Chanwook's *Old Boy*. Nowadays, these directors lead and contribute current Korean cinema to an international level.

The year 2004 reconfirmed the boom in the Korean film industry. At the box-office, *Silmido* (11,081,000 admissions) and *Taegukgi* (11,746,135 admissions) achieved commercially unprecedented records which had never happened in Korea.[102] In February, the two films were screened at cinemas at the same time. As a result, due to the two local films, Korean cinema was enhanced to occupy an 83% market share in February 2004. According to the Korean Film Council, the number of cinema screens increased noticeably, multiplying nearly three times between 1998 (507 screens) and 2004 (1,451 screens). Nevertheless, it was problematic that the concentration of a few blockbusters could confine the audiences' choice of diverse films. In other words, there was not enough room for low budget films so they had difficulty in finding cinema screens for release.

[101] See [Table 2].
[102] See [Table 4].

The increasing percentage of admissions continued with over 20% every year for the last five years. The total admission in 2000 was 64 million, but reached 145 million viewers in 2005. Throughout the great success of the 2005 box-office, there were seven Korean films in the top 10 best-selling films: *King and the Clown* (ranked 1st), *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (ranked 2nd), *Marrying the Mafia 2* (ranked 3rd), *Marathon* (ranked 4th), *Typhoon* (ranked 6th), *Another Public Enemy* (ranked 7th), and *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* (ranked 8th).

The most significant news for the Korean film industry in 2006 was a 60.3% market share in Seoul and a 63.8% nationwide. Bong Joonho's *The Host* (13,019,740 admissions) replaced the previous record of 12,302,831 viewers held by *King and the Clown*.[103] In addition, *Tazza: The High Rollers*, *200 Pound Beauty*, *My Boss, My Teacher*, *Hanbando*, and *Marrying the Mafia 3* had an enormous achievement in the domestic film market. As I noted before, the screen quota system that required Korean films to be presented at all commercial cinemas for a minimum period was introduced to Korea in 1967. Under the Promotion of the Motion Picture Industry Act in 1995, in theory the minimum period was 146 days a year, but 40 days were flexible. So in reality, cinema operators could reduce the number by up to 40 days. The screen quota system echoes that introduced into the United Kingdom in 1927 in order to preserve the local film industry against foreign films, mainly Hollywood. As Manjunath Pendakur has noted, "The British government intervened to preserve British film production by passing the Film Act of 1927 which imposed a distributor's quota and a screen quota, thereby making the production of British films inevitable."[104] Under Hollywood's pressure, Korea halved the screen quota from 146 days (in reality 106 days) per year to the current 73 days per year, even though many people were opposed.[105] Still the screen quota is considered as one of main factors in the boom of the Korean film industry in the 1990s and 2000s.

[103] See [Table 4].
[104] Manjunath Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), p. 133.
[105] "U.S. makes proposal on FTA screen quota issue: sources," *The Hankyoreh*, 24 October 2006.

In 2007, *May 18*, depicting a terrible tragedy of the Gwangju Democratisation Movement (the Gwangju Uprising) on 18th May 1980, ranked 3rd in the box-office. A few films in relation to the Uprising have been already made, but they had not been successful. Meanwhile, in spite of its meagre narrative, a SF film *D-War* challenged the possibility of Korean computer graphics and visualisation because they performed almost all processes of post-production with its own technology. The Korean film industry has seemed to boom since the late 1990s, however, the return on investment in Korean film industry marked -40.5% in 2007 and -24.5% in 2006.[106]

So far I have explored Korean cinema from 1996 to 2007 from the aspect of industrial growth. It is clear from this trajectory that filmmakers who started their careers between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s played a momentous and fundamental role in revitalising Korean cinema. Thus, in the following section I will look at discourses relating to the Korean New Wave as the pre-1997 Korean cinema.

Korean New Wave and Economic Crisis of 1997

The emergence of various new film movements at particular points in time across the world has been widely discussed: The Nouvelle Vague in France in the 1950s and the 1960s, the British New Wave, the Japanese New Wave and Cinema Novo in Brazil in the 1960s, the New German Cinema and the American New Wave in the 1970s, and most recently the Hong Kong New Wave and the Taiwan New Wave of the 1980s. In Korea one can also identify a New Wave that lasted from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. Before exploring the Korean New Wave in more detail, it is once again necessary to address the specific social and political context of the 1980s.

[106] See [Table 3].

The Korean new military government led by Chun Doohwan on 25 February 1981 had just been inaugurated after the Gwangju massacres which is called the Gwangju Democratisation Movement in May 1980 and which refers to a lot of casualties from a popular rebellion in Gwangju. The government restricted freedom of expression and human rights due to its unauthenticated power. As a result of the 6.10 Democratisation Movement in 1987, the then ruling party leader and the presidential candidate, Roh Taewoo promised reforms, the so-called '6.29 Declaration' in June of 1987 which included the direct election of the Korean President, freedom of expression, and setting free the politician Kim Daejung who was a leader of the opposition party. As I mentioned before, there were two military regimes from 1961 to 1988 in Korea, and they were far from advocating freedom of speech and expression during the period. Two revisions of the Motion Picture Law (the fifth revision in 1984 and sixth revision in 1986) and the 6.29 Declaration made government censorship become less prevalent in the Korean film industry.

Korean New Wave is a term that refers to many Korean films that had been released from the late 1980s to the mid and late 1990s. The Korean New Wave is probably the first term to be called as a trend rather than a genre when it was grouped by Korean film companies. The New Wave tries to be disconnected from traditional values of the older generation and orients toward a new innovation in both content and form in films. In this sense, this is the first New Wave in Korean film history. The Korean New Wave which appeared in the late 1980s also starts with the purpose of making a new wave by breaking from the Hostess film in the 1970s and Eroticism film in the early, middle, and late 1980s. At the same time, it is applying the characteristics of New Wave; *auteurisme* and leftist-leaning into such films as they are. In this process, such films are defined as completely different art films from the existing ones in terms of both content and form.

It is important to note that Korean film scholars have hardly ever used the term New Korean Cinema before issuing a volume titled *Korean New Wave: Retrospective from 1980 to 1995* in 1996. Despite a few appearances in journals like Jung Joonghun's article 'Way to go for the New Korean

Cinema' in *Movie* in September 1993, the terminology was not widely employed and clear. Instead, it was primarily to identify certain trends between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. However more recent critical accounts, as we shall see below, use it to describe the period after 1997. This leads to some conflicting historical accounts.

In Korea, it was at the 1st Busan International Film Festival (1996) that Korean New Wave first appeared in internal and external academic world as a term. The Festival used the term Korean New Wave to refer to Korean films manufactured in the 1980s and 1990s in grouping by publishing a book titled *Korean New Wave: Retrospective from 1980 to 1995*. This book contains explanatory information on specific Korean films manufactured in the 1980s to the mid-1990s by period referring to Korean New Wave. The discourse on Korean New Wave films first started simply with the form of new generation theory, but increasingly began to focus on new directors' political and social propensity.

Meanwhile, Isolde Standish initially started to use the term Korean New Wave in 1992. Standish clarified very clearly what is the Korean New Wave. In her article, she states that the some films depicted Korean social and political context in the 1980s could be called as the new wave.[107] In this way, she mentions the Korean New Wave for the first time and explains the new term with the Minjung Movement in Korea. In her same article in a journal in 1993 and a book chapter in 1994, Standish keeps repeatedly indicating the term.

> The Korean new wave has come about as a "revolt" against traditional conventions imposed by a stringent system of political censorship. The Korean new wave is characterized by new content: new characters (the working classes, radical students), new settings (the factory, slum houses), and new problems (the north/south division, urbanization, industrial unrest, and family breakdown). Thereby, these films have appropriated the established conventions of realism. Williams has demonstrated that realism is dependent on conventions just as much as any other artistic expression. In the case of realism, however, these conventions have achieved the status of being accepted as realistic.[108]

[107] Isolde Standish, "United in Han: Korean Cinema and the "New Wave," *Korea Journal*, Vol.32 No.4 Winter 1992, p. 109.
[108] Isolde Standish, 'Korean Cinema and the New Realism: Text and Context.' *East-West Film Journal*, 7 (2). 1993, pp. 67-68 and Isolde Standish, "Korean Cinema and the New Realism: Text and Context," ed. Wimal

Standish defines the Korean New Wave largely in relation to cinematic realism, and this is the focus of her textual analysis of Park Jongwon's *Kuro Arirang* (1989) and Park Kwangsu's *Chilsu and Mansu* (1988). Standish maintains that the realism of the Korean New Wave is rooted in the *Minjung* (people) movement from the 1960s-1990s.[109] Like Standish, Jaecheol Moon regards authorship and realism as the prominent characteristics of the Korean New Wave. As he has argued:

> The strategy of New Wave for implementing change was to combine auteurism with realism, thus creating a new approach to film they called auteur-realism. While the Western concept of auteurism emphasized film as art, auteur-realism in Korea operated as a practical strategy for challenging every facet of the Korean film institution. Film critics began to criticize the production of cheap films for mass opportunism and emphasized the director's creative consciousness and film's social responsibilities.[110]

Seunghyun Park establishes the Korean New Wave during the period between 1988 and 1997,[111] and states that the Korean new wave has become active between 1988 and the mid-1990s.[112] Park here refers to the 10 year period of Korean New Wave cinema and, although not stating this directly, considers that the concepts of the new wave and the new cinema are identical or indistinguishable.

Anthony Leong illustrates the Korean New Wave with Lee Myungse's *Nowhere to Hide* (1999) and adopts a contrasting position in defining exactly when the New Wave occurred. He points out that the film is 'a defining work of the latest Korean New Wave.'[113] He continues; "The New Wave arguably began sometime around 1997, when the industry began to reap benefits from significant

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Dissanayake, *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 77.

[109] As Seo Namdong has defined, "the *minjung* are those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated sociologically, and kept under-educated in culture and intellectual matters" in *Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Kondonche, 1983), p. xvii.

[110] Moon Jae-cheol, "The Meaning of Newness in Korean Cinema: Korean New Wave and After," *Korea Journal*, Vol.46 No.1 Spring, 2006, p. 39.

[111] Seung Hyun Park, "A Cultural Interpretation of Korean Cinema, 1988-1997," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2000.

[112] Seung Hyun Park, "A Cultural Interpretation of Korean Cinema, 1988-1997," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2000, pp. 106-107.

[113] Anthony Leong, "Nowhere to Hide," ed. Justin Bowyer, *The cinema of Japan and Korea* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), p. 182.

investments in its infrastructures, accompanied by a new entrepreneurial spirit."[114] While he suggests that the Korean New Wave started in 1997 in the same book, Steve Yates argues that "the mid-1990s Korean cinema 'new wave' emerged from a threat to banish it altogether."[115] Their arguments are inaccurate. Meanwhile, Frances Gateward suggests that the emergence of Korean New Wave started in the mid-1980s and accounts for the New Wave with films in the 1980s and 1990s such as Park Kwangsu's *Chilsu and Mansu*, and Lee Min Young's *Hot Roof* (1996).[116] But Gateward uses the term Korean New Wave which is similar to Korean New Cinema without any further explanations. As she notes:

> The overarching characteristic of the Korean New Wave, significant in each of the trends described, is the influence of youth. In this respect, the cinematic movement of the 1980s shares some commonalities with other New Wave cinemas. The sensibilities of New Korean Cinema filmmakers differ from their predecessors', as do their concerns and cinematic styles, ... they are the first generation to come of age without direct knowledge and experience of Korea's civil war [the Korean War in 1950-53]; .... they belonged to the student movements that inflamed the nation in the 1980s.[117]

Shohini Chaudhuri notes that the Korean New Wave began in 1983 and has continued under the rubric of New Korean Cinema. She states that the Korean New Wave directors' heyday was from 1983 to 1994 by Im Kwon-Taek, Jang Sun-Woo, Hong Sang-Soo and Lee Myung-Se and the New Wave can be referred to New Korean Cinema as well.[118]

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[114] Anthony Leong, "Nowhere to Hide," ed. Justin Bowyer, *The cinema of Japan and Korea* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), p. 182.
[115] Steve Yates, "Teenage Hooker Became Killing Machine in Daehakno," ed. Justin Bowyer, *The cinema of Japan and Korea* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), p. 217.
[116] Frances Gateward, "Youth in Crisis: National and Cultural Identity in New South Korean Cinema," ed. Jenny Kwok Wah Lau, *Multiple Modernities: cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), p. 121.
[117] Frances Gateward, "Youth in Crisis: National and Cultural Identity in New South Korean Cinema,' ed. Jenny Kwok Wah Lau, *Multiple Modernities: cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), p.121.
[118] Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary world cinema: Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and South Asia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 110.

David Desser has discussed Pae Changho's *Whale Hunting* (1984) as one of "foundational films of the New Korean cinema."[119] According to him, other foundational films include Lee Changho's *A Fine, Windy Day* (1980), Park Kwangsu's *Chilsu and Mansu* (1988), Jung Jiyoung's *The Life and Death of the Hollywood Kid* (1994), Hong Sangsoo's *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well* (1996), and Kang Woosuk's *Two Cops* (1993).[120] He tries to account for New Korean cinema in terms of youth films in relation to the representation of class differences, youth cultures, gangs, prostitution, and crime sprees. Even though he does not clearly state when New Korean Cinema began, Desser includes the early 1980s film, *A Fine, Windy Day*.

Even though the Korean New Wave is not directly stated, Kyung Hyun Kim uses the term 'new wave' a few times to explain Park Kwangsu's *Childsu and Mansu*, for example, "the new wave of Korean films, such as *Childsu and Mansu* (1988) and *A Single Spark* (1996)"[121] and "*Chilsu and Mansu* signalled a new wave in the mainstream film culture".[122] In his argument, "the cinema that was touted in the Western film festival circuits during the late 1980s and the 1990s as the New Korean Cinema attained its status"[123], Kim assumes the period of New Korean Cinema as the late 1980s-1990s. Kim also prefers to use New Korean Cinema rather than the Korean New Wave in relation to the films in the 1980s and 1990s. As Kim notes,

> The Korean film industry since 1999 has scrupulously followed the path of Hollywood and has shown more interest in making deals and formulaic genres than in innovating and devoting itself to the creation of art.[124]

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[119] David Desser, "Timeless, Bottomless Bad Movies: Or, Consuming Youth in the New Korean Cinema," ed. Frances K. Gateward, *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), p. 77.
[120] David Desser, "Timeless, Bottomless Bad Movies: Or, Consuming Youth in the New Korean Cinema,' ed. Frances K. Gateward, *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), p. 77.
[121] Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 43.
[122] Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 140.
[123] Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 19.
[124] Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. X.

It means that the post-1999 films are different from the films of the 1980s and 1990s. By the same token, New Korean Cinema ended in 1999.

Although Julian Stringer rejects the notion that New Korean cinema can be understood as a 'distinct movement' that can be pinpointed to a precise beginning,[125] he nonetheless argues that "this volume takes the transition away from military rule *circa* 1992 as the 'break' around which perceptions of contemporary Korean cinema's vitality and newness are structured."[126] Stringer suggests detailed characteristics differentiate New Korean cinema from the Korean New Wave: successful box office results, the emergence of young film directors educated in film properly not through the apprentice system, the dominance of young consumers among film audiences, the growth and increased diversity of domestic film culture through film festivals and magazines, and the achievement of freedom of expression.[127] While I generally agree with his arguments to differentiate New Korean Cinema from the New Wave, I think it is arbitrary to indicate the year 1992 as the turning point between them. In fact, the transition away from military rule that Stringer refers to occurred only when the new government led by the former President Kim Youngsam took office on 25 February, 1993.

Hyangjin Lee also differentiates New Korean Cinema from the Korean New Wave, seeking to define the difference more accurately. Lee makes the significant observation that:

> This de-politicised approach to history and society lends a different quality to New Korean Cinema from that of the Korean 'New Wave' which appeared between the 1980s and early 1990s. If the New Wave was a part of the South Korean democratisation movements, New Korean cinema since the mid-1990s can be understood as the outcome of past political struggles.[128]

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[125] Julian Stringer, "Introduction," ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 6.
[126] Julian Stringer, "Introduction," ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 6.
[127] Julian Stringer, "Introduction," ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 6.
[128] Hyangjin Lee, "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition," ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 66.

Jaecheol Moon has coined the terminology 'the Post-Korean New Wave Cinema',[129] which I find useful in differentiating the period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s from the period from the mid-1990s to the present. In a different cultural context, Ying Zhu has likewise examined the Chinese Fifth Generation filmmakers' cinematic transition from the New Wave to the post-New Wave.[130]

From Melodrama to Gangster Film

Scholars of Korean film have suggested that the most significant change in the depiction of masculinity in Korean cinema since the 1997 can be observed, in the melodrama and the gangster film, which became particularly popular during this period.[131] Generally speaking, one can distinguish here between two different types of masculinity. In melodramas, there is a noticeable softening of male characters, aimed at challenging or deconstructing patriarchal authority. In the gangster film, on the other hand, we find a more stereotypical, tough form of masculinity, which aims to reassert masculine legitimacy and authority. In spite of their difference, both genres explore a crisis of masculinity and opt for a similar focus on traumatic men.

Melodrama has been conventionally perceived as a female genre or a woman's film. As Rick Altman points out: "…. during the eighties, critics regularly conflated the two categories, eventually

[129] Jaecheol Moon, "Cinematic Memory and Cultural Identity," Ph.D. diss., Chungang University, 2002, pp. 8-9. I assume Moon does not use the prefix 'post' properly. So the post should be placed in front of the word 'New'.
[130] Ying Zhu, *Chinese Cinema during the Era of Reform: the Ingenuity of the System* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), p. 111.
[131] Regarding masculinity in Korean cinema since 1997, see Kim Kyungwook, *The fantasy of blockbuster and narcissism in Korean cinema* (Seoul: Chaesesang, 2002) and Yu Gina, *Korean cinema meets sexuality* (Seoul: Saenggakuinamu, 2004).

styling the woman's film and family melodrama as the very core of melodrama as a genre."[132] This has been the widespread perception in Korean cinema until Lee Jungkook's *The Letter* was released in 1997, which is particularly relevant in terms of its focus on a male protagonist. The film can be seen to mark the beginning of a whole series of male melodramas. Referring primarily to classic Hollywood examples, Laura Mulvey distinguished between the female melodrama and the family melodrama. According to her, the former focuses on a protagonist's dominating point of view. On the other hand, the latter does on the tensions in the family, and between sex and generations.[133] Mulvey's account can also be applied to the history of Korean cinema, where throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the genre divided into female or family variants.

> [T]here is a dizzy satisfaction in witnessing the way that sexual difference under patriarchy is fraught, explosive and erupts dramatically into violence within its own private stamping ground, the family. While the Western and the gangster film celebrate the ups and downs endured by men of action, the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, like the tragedies of Euripides, probing pent-up emotion, bitterness and disillusion well known to women, act as a corrective.[134]

The narrative of these melodramas focuses on the female character in the female dominated melodrama. As Christine Geraghty has pointed out, "In the male melodrama, it is the male hero who is confronted with the dilemma of how he is to accommodate to the emotional and domestic values of family life."[135] In this context of this study, the male melodrama describes masculinity in crisis in order to show the contradiction of patriarchal system in Korea since 1997. After *The Letter*, a number of male dominant melodramas were released such as Kim Yujin's *A Promise* (1998), Huh Jinho's *Christmas in August* (1998), Jung Jinwoo's *Happy End* (1999), Lee Changdong's *Peppermint Candy* (2000), and Song Haesung's *Failan* (2001). These films emphasise the role of male characters and the crisis of masculinity.

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[132] Rick Altman, "Reusable Packing: Generic Products and the Recycling Process," in Nick Browne (ed) *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 32.
[133] Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," in C. Gledhill (ed) *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and Woman's Film* (London: BFI, 1987), p. 76.
[134] Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," in C. Gledhill (ed) *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and Woman's Film* (London: BFI, 1987), pp. 75-76.
[135] Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), p. 62.

Apart from scholarly debates about classic Hollywood melodrama, another interesting point of comparison with the depiction of Korean masculinity is provided by discussions concerning Hollywood's representation of masculinity in the Reagan era, not least because the social contexts are very similar to each other in relation to expressions of what can be termed 'hypermasculinity'. As Susan Jeffords has pointed out, in the Reagan era male bodies were deployed in two major categories: soft body and hard body. "[T]hose hard bodies heralded by Ronald Reagan were not just self-images; they were national identities."[136] The masculine habitus is collective images to be considered as a coherent masculine identity:

> [T]he errant body containing sexually transmitted disease, immorality, illegal chemicals, "laziness," and endangered fetuses, which we can call the "soft body"; and the normative body that enveloped strength, labor, determination, loyalty, and courage—the "hard body"—the body that was to come to stand as the emblem of the Reagan philosophies, politics, and economies. In this system of thought marked by race and gender, the soft body invariably belonged to a female and/or a person of color, whereas the hard body was, like Reagan's own, male and white.[137]

In the Reagan era, the most popular and powerful male protagonist is Rambo, played by Sylvester Stallone in *Rambo* series,[138] and Arnold Schwarzenegger: as Conan in *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) and *Conan the Destroyer* (1984), as the Terminator in *The Terminator* (1984), as John Matrix in *Commando* (1985), as Dutch in *Predator* (1987). According to Jeffords, these male protagonists represent Reagan's militarism as an apparatus showing hard bodies.

A similar version of hypermasculinity surfaces in Korean cinema between the late 1990s and the 2000s, in the *Jopok* film (gangster film). The term *Jopok* itself refers to a criminal syndicate similar to the Mafia or the Yakuza. According to British film critic Grady Hendrix's account in *Sight*

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[136] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), p. 26.
[137] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), pp. 24-25.
[138] *First Blood* (1982), *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), and *Rambo III* (1988).

& Sound, this genre had its origins in the early 1990s with Im Kwon-taek's *Son of a General* (1990) and then developed its own characteristics:

> Over the next decade or so cop films like *Two Cops*, *Nowhere to Hide* and *Public Enemy* gave their police heroes gangster makeovers, turning them into law-breaking mavericks who spent as much time fighting the power as they did policing the streets. Gangsters became the objects of swoony sexual longing and post-millennium audiences ate up a series of comedies …that glamorised hard-hitting, straight-talking thugs.[139]

According to Anthony Leong, in 2001, *Jopok* films were more popular than any other genres, particularly where the genre merged with comedy formats in hybrid combinations:

> One of the most noticeable innovations among Korean comedy films has been the emergence of the gangster comedy. During 2001, Korean moviegoers saw gangsters in a completely different light as they were dropped into various 'fish out of water' situations, such as a tomboyish female gangster dealing with love and marriage in *My Wife is a Gangster*, a big boss being knocked back down to high school in *My Boss, My Hero*, or gangsters and Buddhist monks at each other's throats in *Hi, Dharma.* ….[140]

I would argue that the popularity of *Jopok* films reflects a change in gender discourse towards masculinity that was simply absent from films before this period.[141] According to Yu Gina, the reconstruction of strong masculinities and male-based fantasies through *Jopok* films is a reaction to two significant shifts in gender politics: increased gender equality and marginalised masculinity since the economic crisis.[142] A collective male desire for hegemonic masculinity transforms the gangsters, previously the outsiders of modern society, into heroic protagonists. As in the military, the core of male identity in *Jopok* films consists of men's solidarity with each other, while women are expelled from this unity. However, to maintain to the old patriarchal and militarised masculinity is impossible, and the gangsters cannot adapt to new forms of masculinity. To this they respond with violence and misogyny. The *Jopok* becomes the gangster's only chance of finding solidarity.

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[139] Grady Hendrix, "Vengeance Is Theirs," *Sight & Sound*, February 2006.
[140] Anthony C. Y. Leong, *Korean Cinema: The New Hong Kong: a Guidebook for the Latest Korean New Wave* (Bloomington, Indiana: Trafford Publishing, 2003), p. 203.
[141] Examples include *No. 3* (1997), *Green Fish* (1997), *Attack the Gas Station* (1999), *Friend* (2001), *Guns and Talks* (2001), *Kick the Moon* (2001), *My Boss, My Hero* (2001), *Hi, Dharma* (2001), *Jungle Juice* (2002), *Marrying the Mafia* (2002), *My Wife is a Gangster* (2002), *My Wife is a Gangster 2* (2003), *Dharma 2: Showdown in Seoul* (2004), *My Boss, My Teacher* (2005), *Marrying the Mafia 2* (2005), *My Wife is a Gangster 3* (2006), *The Mafia, The Salesman* (2007).
[142] Yu Gina, "Using the Gangster genre as Comedy, Their Own League: A Study of Male Fantasy," *The Journal of Korean Film Studies*, Vol. 18, 2002, p. 38.

In the same way, gangster comedies express mockery and a sense of frustration about the older generation, who established the economy in South Korea, as if it reflects on the particular time period. Before the economic crisis, the older generation was a pillar of growth for the Korean economy and also a heroic existence for the following generations. However, people started to realise that the economic growth that they reached was not perfect and that it carried the risk of collapsing easily. It is the same with gangster comedies. Unlike how the gangster comedies in the past focused on heroic stories, the gangster comedies ridiculed their lives and caused them to stumble into laughingstock. According to Yu Gina, becoming men in the Korean society means to grow up from early age projecting despise against gangsters, who are strong men, and the male fantasy that contradicts respect. Gangsters are bad men who suppress the opposite party with violence but in a sense, they are reflected as manly and powerful figures because they possess power.[143]

I have previously referred to Connell's categorisations of masculinities under the rubrics of hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginality. The *Jopok* film articulates the dynamic between such categories. The boss of a certain *Jopok* represents a form of hegemonic masculinity; the middle level of the group is related to notions of complicity; the lower class of the *Jopok* is subordinated; finally, the rival *Jopok* is marginalised. The gangsters' behavior thus echoes Arthur Brittan's comment that:

> The real crisis of masculinity is that men have come to believe that the distinction between reason and desire, the intellect and the body, the masculine and the feminine, is not only real, but necessary as well. The tragedy is that we have not really understood the connection between the personal and the political, between sexuality and power.[144]

As it was previously mentioned, male melodrama and gangster comedy gained great popularity from the late 1990s to the 2000s. Unlike the previous times, melodrama brought out a soft male image and gangster comedy played the role of presenting strong masculinity. These two genres are

[143] Yu Gina, "Using the Gangster genre as Comedy, Their Own League: A Study of Male Fantasy," *The Journal of Korean Film Studies*, Vol. 18, 2002, p. 38.
[144] Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 204.

confirming the changes of masculinity ever since the economic crisis in 1997. In particular, men are viewed as heroes in gangster comedies and heroes are portrayed very differently from before.

I have delineated the background of Korean society and cinema in relation to male patterns of power for the purpose of gaining greater understanding of the social and historical contexts for this thesis. The chapter has also outlined a history of Korean cinema since 1980s in terms of the Korean New Wave and New Korean Cinema. Finally, I have explored masculinities revealed in two popular genres since 1997. In the three chapters which follow, I will address the question of masculinity relating to trauma in the contemporary Korean cinema subsequently to the economic crisis. Then, I will closely analyse and discuss the film texts for my thesis: *Happy End*, *Bad Guy*, *The Isle*, *Peppermint Candy*, and *Oasis*. The next chapter will examine hysterical excess of masculinity and point to the significance of film noir in relation to the forthcoming case study *Happy End*.

Chapter Three

Hysterical Excess of Masculinity in *Happy End*

The criminal charge of adultery violates the Constitution for it goes against the principle of proportionality and infringes the citizens' right to self-determination on sex-related issues and the freedom and privacy of personal life.[145]

Abolishing adultery will demolish an axis of 'minimal sexual morality' bringing about a lower awareness on sexual morality.[146]

The previous chapter has mapped the historical context of Korean masculinity and cinema in relation to Confucianism and militarisation in Korea. I discussed that the 1997 Korean economic crisis revealed not only financial complexity but also structural troubles. In addition, the chapter explored a history of Korean cinema from 1980s to 1990s in the perspective of the Korean New Wave and New Korean Cinema. This chapter starts to explore a proposition in which I argue that there are three key aspects of masculine trauma in contemporary Korean cinema. The chapter thus concerns the concept of traumatic masculinity as an exaggeration of masculinity. [147]

[145] On adultery law, judges Park Han-chul, Lee Jin-sung, Kim Chang-jong, Seo Ki-seog, and Cho Yong-ho said the government intervening and punishing an individual in the private realm was a violation of the right to sexual self-determination and privacy in their comments in favour of the judgment. Gwak Hui-yang, "Criminal Charges of Adultery Abolished after 110 Years, Violation of Right to Sexual Self-Determination," *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 27 February, 2015.

[146] On adultery law, judges Lee Jung-mi and Ahn Chang-ho objected the ruling that adultery was unconstitutional claiming. Gwak Hui-yang, "Criminal Charges of Adultery Abolished after 110 Years, Violation of Right to Sexual Self-Determination," *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 27 February, 2015.

For many years, the Constitutional Court of Korea had maintained the country's adultery law[148] in order to punish married people's infidelity, with Korea being one of a very few non-Muslim countries keeping the law. Adultery law, which has been used as a 'scarlet letter' that stigmatised many Koreans since the practice was first outlawed in 1905, and finally abolished on the 26th of February 2015. For 110 years, this law had punished cheating husbands and wives with prison terms, reflecting changes in a culture that now emphasises the significance of individuals' rights over the government's intervention. The Constitutional Court judges ruled seven to two that the criminalisation of adultery by Article 241 of the criminal code which made the act punishable by up to two years in prison was unconstitutional.[149] Interestingly, this was the fifth time in 25 years that a petition to abolish the controversial law was brought before the Constitutional Court. All four previous rulings maintained the law reflecting very conservative Korean culture.[150]

The reason why I mention adultery law before dealing with major issues in this chapter, is that adultery is a key theme in my analysis of my main text, *Happy End* (1999). There were two different arguments between the judges: privacy vs morality. According to Lee Kyung-mi, the justices also determined the statute excessively restricts basic rights, such as the public's right to sexual self-determination, without achieving the public interest of protecting the system of marriage. The other is for society. Two justices stated that abolishment of the adultery crime could destroy one of our basic pillars of sexual morality resulting in degraded sexual morality throughout society and causing disorder in that morality.[151] Even though there was adultery law to punish his wife, a male protagonist in *Happy End* punishes his cheating wife by himself in the

[148] According to Lee Kyung-mi, "an estimated 100,000 people have been criminally punished for adultery since the Korean criminal code was enacted in 1953. A total of 52,982 were prosecuted in the thirty years between 1985 and January, with 35,356 of them subjected to arrest. Of these, the 5,466 (including 22 arrestees) who were prosecuted after the last constitutionality ruling on Oct. 30, 2008, are eligible to request retrial. All ongoing adultery cases in courts are to be withdrawn." in Lee Kyung-mi, "Constitutional Court abolishes 'scarlet letter' law banning adultery," *The Hankyoreh*, 27 February, 2015.

[149] Lee Kyung-mi, "Constitutional Court abolishes 'scarlet letter' law banning adultery," *The Hankyoreh*, 27 February, 2015.

[150] Kang Jink-kyu, "Korean adultery decriminalized after 62 years," *JoongAng Ilbo*, 27 February, 2015.

[151] Lee Kyung-mi, "Constitutional Court abolishes 'scarlet letter' law banning adultery," *The Hankyoreh*, 27 February, 2015.

name of bad mother, not in the name of bad wife. Indeed, it is very significant aspect to view this film in the perspective of weak husband in the family.

This chapter consists of six sections. In the first section, I will introduce director Jung Jiwoo and his work, exploring how the mise-en-scène of Jung's films reflect his creative vision. It is interesting to find that all of his feature films are melodramas, and he made a few short films so far. His tetralogy of melodrama shows traumatised masculinity: *Happy End*, *Sarangni* (a.k.a. *Blossom Again*) (2005), *Modern Boy* (2008), and *Eungyo* (2012).

In the second section, I will discuss the femme and the homme fatale images in *Happy End* in relation to film noir. The film shows repeatedly a victim and a maltreater, and effectively explores the relevance between masculinity and trauma, the topics of this study. Amongst the patriarchal Korean society, a man experienced trauma due to his loss of economical competence and the extramarital affair of his wife. This trauma even causes the violence of murder. Jung made his debut as a director through *Happy End*, a story where an unemployed husband commits murder of his wife due to her affair. In addition, *Happy End* is a film that successfully expressed the social phenomenon of Korea after the economic crisis in 1997. It is a film where the position of males, who are represented as husbands and fathers in the Korean society amongst the realistic issue of economic crisis, can be identified.

In the third section, I will explore the loss of masculinity by means of the representation of disguised masculine images suffering from trauma. In *Happy End*, I also shall map out shifting gender hierarchies. The husband's role as a conventional male is changed by his unemployment. A lost sense of masculinity causes him to be traumatised so that he unavoidably becomes a typical housewife. In the fourth part of this chapter, I will explore the theme of castration anxiety. In *Happy End*, the male protagonist is endlessly threatened with the loss of masculinity. The expression of hysteric and excessive masculinity in this chapter eventually applied as a measure to escape from the fear of castration. This trauma of castration eventually originates

from weakened masculinity. The husband in *Happy End* represents the image of a castrated male owing to his wife's adultery.

In the fifth section, I will discuss the phenomenon of male aggression against women. In *Happy End*, a male protagonist inflicts severe violence on his wife, and he kills her after he discovers her infidelity. Especially interesting from my point of view is that a passive-aggressive personality transforms into an active-aggressive one. However, he does not display such cruel violence before he suffered from the trauma caused by his wife's betrayal. In this film, by dwelling upon the husband's murder, I will explore femicide which is the killing of women with intent as gendercide. In other words, the brutal femicide has an equivalent of the man's mental illness which is paralysed and traumatised. In the final part of the chapter, I will suggest an alternative analysis of *Happy End*. In this sense, I will argue that the narrative of this film is based on the husband's implementing of his fantasy experiences in relation to romance and mystery novels which he reads with great intensity. I suggest that he reflects the fiction from novels into his reality. In other words, he is writing a fiction which is based on historical or actual events

Tetralogy of Melodrama

Cynthia Childs has argued that *Happy End* shows the economic and political situation after the economic crisis in 1997. According to her the film is characterised by, "shifting gender hierarchies, the valorization of aggressive masculinity, the establishment of a modern national identity, and the social uncertainties of a faltering economy. *Happy End* is a film clearly situated within the significant political, economic, and social events of the period within which it was made." [152] Meanwhile, Kyung Hyun Kim makes *Happy End* link to *The Housemaid* (1960) directed

[152] Cynthia Childs, "Jung Ji-Woo's *Happy End*: Modernity, Masculinity, and Murder," *Asian Cinema*, Volume 16, Number 2, 2005, p. 210.

by Kim Kiyoung in relation to gender and family.[153] *Happy End* (1999) was director Jung Jiwoo's first commercial feature film. Prior to this film, he was known as an independent filmmaker through two short films; *A Bit Bitter* (1996) and *Cliffy* (1994). As mentioned before, Jung made a series of four melodramas: *Happy End* (1999), *Sarangni* (2005), *Modern Boy* (2008), and *Eungyo* (2012). Interestingly, the four commercial feature films that Jung produced were all melodramas up until now. Aside from the feature films, he has continuously directed five short films as well. After *Happy End* he constantly explores the relationships between men and women through the theme of love. He deals with very extreme affection such as adultery, love between a teacher and a student, love between an old man and a high school girl, and love between enemies.

Indeed, an auteurist approach is needed to understand *Happy End*. Great curiosity results regarding how the love that he mentioned changes in *Happy End*. Even though the initial plan was not intended to be like 'The Vengeance Trilogy'[154] by Park Chanwook from the beginning, four works which based on the theme of 'love' was produced. Accordingly, I will need to discuss his other three films first in order to understand *Happy End*. His tetralogy of melodrama depict not just love, but a particularly unconventional version of falling love featuring a femme fatale-like figure in all the films. It is very interesting that his consecutive films deal with eccentric love after his debut film, *Happy End*. As I mentioned before, *Happy End* is based on infidelity. Just like *Happy End*, in *Sarangni*, *Modern Boy*, and *Eungyo* Jung Jiwoo displays excellent talents in visualising the flow of delicate emotions.

In general, the femme fatale is understood as a seductively attractive woman who causes men to be led into dangerous situations. James Ursini and Dominique Mainon define the meaning of the femme fatale;

> The French phrase "femme fatale" literally means "deadly woman," which understates the human embodiment of lust and peril, that intoxicating allure of sex and death that makes

[153] Kyung Hyun Kim, "Lethal Work Domestic Space and Gender Troubles in *Happy End* and *The Housemaid*," *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 233-258.
[154] Park Chanwook's The Vengeance Trilogy is a series of his films dealing with vengeance, violence, sympathy, and trauma such as *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* (2002), *Oldboy* (2003), and *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* (2005).

> these creatures so fascinating. The femme fatale is a seek and sensuous creature, dangerous either physically or emotionally to her victims.[155]

In particular, film noir deals with the femme fatale in order to describe a male protagonist's extreme trouble and danger. Also Mary Ann Doane understands the femme fatale as being "the figure of a certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma."[156] In this way, the femme fatale leads men into danger regardless of whether this is deliberate. In Hyangjin Lee's article on Asian film noir including Korean film noir, she explores the vigorous transnational movement of Asian film noir, particularly Japan, Hong Kong, and Korea, and that it is not a phenomenon that is purely restricted to the USA, or even Europe. She argues that in Asian noir films;

> [D]omestic violence, corporal punishment, incestuous relationships and sexual abuse between family members are common in Asian extreme, and these are the most sensitive issues from a traditional Confucian perspective. The representation of violence and cruelty in hidden spaces such as homes or schools uses personal trauma to criticise the social negligence of those whose suffering goes unnoticed.[157]

According to Lee, many Asian film noir films deal with the themes of violence, punishment, incest, and sexual assault or rape. Even though *Happy End* is not a proper film noir, this film represents domestic violence and revenge due to a female protagonist's infidelity which is never forgivable from a traditional Confucian perspective I will introduce Jung's four melodramas in detail, namely *Happy End*, *Sarangni*, *Modern Boy*, and *Eungyo* to explore the characteristics of four female protagonists in terms of the femme fatale figure, and in relation to male protagonists' trauma.

In *Happy End*, set following the economic crisis in 1997, the main character of Seo Minki (Choi Minsik) loses his job in a bank. Even though he tries to get employment, he cannot find a new job. He stops applying for employment, and prefers to read novels in a second hand

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[155] From Introduction of James Ursini, Dominique Mainon, *Femme Fatale: Cinema's Most Unforgettable Lethal Ladies* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Limelight Editions, 2009).
[156] Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 1.
[157] Hyangjin Lee, "The shadow of outlaws in Asian noir: Hiroshima, Hong Kong and Seoul," Edited by Mark Bould, Kathrina Glitre and Greg Tuck, *Neo-noir* (London; New York: Wallflower Press, 2009), p. 120.

bookstore. After he loses his job, his life is similar to that of a housewife spending time watching TV soap operas and looking after his baby. He has never experienced this kind of life prior to losing his position in the bank. By contrast, his wife, Choi Bora (Jeo Doyeon) is a very successful woman running an English school for children, and she becomes the family's breadwinner. One day, Bora meets Kim Ilbeom (Joo Jinmo) who was her former lover when she was a college student, and they resume their relationship. When Minki discovers her infidelity, he kills Bora. Finally, the police arrest Ilbeom as Bora's murderer.

The economic crisis in Korea which started at the end of 1997, increased the burden laid on the people suffering from hardship. *Happy End* in 1999 was released in cinemas just after the financial crisis. In producing and releasing this film so soon after the economic crisis, given its themes and narrative content, it clearly engages with the social concerns of its time. But its marketing and promotion focused on sexual images like a female character's nudity and sex scenes in the film. This film made an appeal to its audience by starting with a strong sexual scene. The five-minute-long powerful sex scene between Bora and Ilbeom during the opening sequence used a long take and handheld techniques and heightened the intensity of stimulation to the audience. Two film posters below are filled with the inviting images of Bora. The film succeeded in reaching top six of the box office ranking of Korean films in 1999 and this was considered as due to the powerful opening sequence. Back then, there were many times when newspapers mentioned about the opening sequence of this film. Hence, this opening sequence led many audiences to be indifferent from the controversial gender politics or *Happy End* as well as the filmic questioning of the fiscal crisis, and political and social situation in contemporary Korean society.

[Picture 3-1] Two main posters of *Happy End*

(Image removed for copyright)

In *Happy End*, Minki has been unemployed for a long time. By contrast, his wife, Bora who is a very successful businesswoman enjoys her extra-marital affair with her ex-boyfriend, Ilbeom. Minki discovers their affair by chance and plans his revenge. In this way, their triangular relationship is filled with love, obsession, and betrayal. However, in this chapter, we will look at *Happy End* as a main text closely in relation to traumatic masculinity.

In *Sarangni*, a relatively complex film due to its experimental approach to time and memory, as I will indicate below, the director Jung explores a female teacher's nostalgia and love. Cho Inyoung who is a thirty years old and teaches mathematic, falls in love with her student. Even though Inyoung has a partner, she begins to desire the seventeen-year-old boy, Lee Seok who shares the same name with her ex-boyfriend. Many years ago, she loved Lee Soo who is Lee Seok's twin brother, but her love moved to Lee Seok after Lee Soo's sudden death. In the past, the reason why she loved Lee Seok is similar to the reason why she loves Lee Seok in the present.

In *Sarangni*, the most interesting aspect is that the characters who are 30 years old and 17 years old play the role as a mediator of connecting 17 year-old characters in the past. There are 3

characters named Cho Inyoung, Lee Seok, and Oh Jeongwoo, each with images of them when they were 30 years old and 17 years old. Therefore, there were a total of 6 characters. There were scenes with them as 30 years old, scenes when they were 17 years old, and also scenes when both images of when they were 30 years old and 17 years old coexisted. This film seems to present the appearance of people with the same names are experiencing similar processes of love and makes them seem like scenes from the past and show it as if the characters only have the same names but are experiencing totally different stages of love. Moreover, it causes them to look like different people who just coexist in the same era. This scene seems like a flashback and causes great difficulty for spectators to read the present reality with the past. Interestingly, despite the appearance of some scenes, there are no flashbacks in the film and it has never gone to the past.

One day, Inyoung invites the 17 year-old Seok to her house. Jeongwoo returns home with the 30 years old Seok. Therefore, Inyoung, the two Lee Seoks each as 30 years old and 17 years old, and Jeongwoo meet each other. Aside from these different people meeting up together this way, this film simultaneously calls attention to introducing other people into the story of a man and a woman. When she and the high school age Lee Seok meet up, the people who intervene are those of the same names. When the 17 years old Lee Seok asks Inyoung whether her name is really Inyoung, he is thinking of her as the female student. Additionally, the young Inyoung thinks about her first love Lee Seok when she seeks the older Lee Seok. Meanwhile, when the student Inyoung meetsLee Seok, the twin brother of Lee Seok, Lee Soo, intervenes.

Meanwhile, *Modern Boy* is a historical drama focused on the period of the 1930s in Korea under Japanese Imperialism. Lee Haemyeong who is upper class likes to attract modern girls in the Seoul city centre in 1937. One night, unexpectedly Haemyoung first meets Nansil in a modern club. Haemyoung falls in love at first glance when he sees Nansil and stays with her. He thinks that he finally has met the woman of his dreams, but right at that moment, one day the packed lunch she makes for him kills the government general he is working for and Nansil takes his things and disappears from him without any explanation. Unlike Haemyoung, Nansil is the

figure of mystery in *Modern Boy*. At first glance, Nansil seems like a modern girl performing in clubs, but she has so many secrets so it is difficult to find out who she really is. Her name is first assumed as Laura but she is also called Natasha and even has a Japanese name Asako. Nansil is not only a singer, but also a designer for a boutique, so it seems as if she has another hidden job. Then, Haemyoung starts searching for her with all his forces. However, he cannot find any trace of Nansil even though he keeps trying to search for her and he even hear that she is a married woman with a husband. Nansil is actually a fighter for independence. As Nansil is a character who is contrasted to the indifferent explanation of the world, it is not difficult to assume the development of the film. Nevertheless, Maemyeong believes that she has loved him. Once he says that he wants to become a Japanese, but finally he changes into a patriot due to his love. Since Haemyoung lives an abundant life due to his father being in the pro-Japanese group, he unwittingly becomes involved in independence movement while chasing after Nansil.

In the meantime, in *Eungyo*, Lee Jeokyo is a famous professor known as a poet. However, aside from this reverence, he would just be a lonely elder who would have to take care of his meals alone if it were not for his student Seo Jiwoo and Han Eungyo who came to his laboratory. Then, Eungyo suddenly jumps into his everyday life. His house is located in the quiet mountain, and only his student, Jiwoo went to his house. Then, a female high school student named Eungyo went to his house. Eungyo decides to help him with house chores. She is always full of laughter and Jeokyo becomes mesmerised in her young and refreshing physical attractiveness. While his feelings become more intense, the sense of defeat his student feels about him gradually increased. The man in his 70's feels like he is in love but it is towards a young female high school student. Generally, it would not both be love for a 70-year-old man to fall in love with woman with the same age as well as with a female high school student. This can be perceived as a dishonour. His life seems happy, but once he takes off his covering, he has no choice but to live in loneliness and he even looks like someone who is waiting for death. In fact, Jiwoo is someone who does not have any cultural gifts. However, he professes to stay by his teacher Jeokyo due to his admiration about literature. There is over 50-year gap between them. At first, Jeokyo sees a

vibrant youth in Eungyo, which is something he does not possess. He is preparing for his death, but Eungyo stands in the opposite side of him as she is needed more time to mature. If the film ends here, the audiences may think that Jeokyo only longs for a young body that can stimulate his latent sexual desires.

Just as Jeokyo says in the film, youth is not a reward given because someone does something well and so, old age is not a punishment resulting from mistakes. Nobody has the power to stop the flow of time. Growing older is not a punishment, but he has to be careful of expressing his concealed desire. There is nothing sadder for him than getting older. It is disappointing that his hands turned wrinkly, and he cannot even express his love to his beloved one. Jeokyo eventually turns away from Eungyo, someone whom he had missed dearly.

Nevertheless, Eungyo could share literary depth with Jeokyo, unlike Jiwoo. She has inherent literary gift and her cultural ability and youth in her enabled Jeokyo to return to his younger days. Therefore, Jeokyo imagines getting involved in physical love with her, even though it was just in his thoughts, and created a bond of sympathy that allowed the audience to understand. Meanwhile, the sudden appearance of Eungyo is shocking for Jiwoo. He had thought all along that he knew his teacher the best. Yet, his teacher is sharing mental sympathy with a young girl. Jiwoo has some mixed feelings of jealousy towards her because Eungyo is attracted to his teacher, Jeokyo.

All four of the films are based on the theme of love, but they are not ordinary love. The female main characters of the movies such as Bora, Inyoung, Nansil, Eungyo are all portrayed as femme fatale individuals. *Happy End* is about Bora who enjoys secret love affair with her ex-boyfriend by hiding it from her husband. *Sarangni* is about carefree 30 years old Inyoung who seduces innocent male teenagers and fills up her potential desires. Like Bora from *Happy End*, she lives with her partner, Jeongwoo and seduces other men. Nansil in *Modern Boy* uses Haemyoung, who is a debauchee but still holds innocent, to reach her intended goals. Finally, *Eungyo* is about

the love between a famous 70 years old poet and a young female high school student. However, the men experience deep trauma resulting from the pain of love.

Changing Gender Hierarchies

At the end of 1990s, a number of newspapers drew attention to the masculinity crisis in families. When the Korean economy stood at the brink of a recession in 1997, many businesses collapsed. In addition, the nation's unemployment rate went up enormously (up to about 7% in 1999) as I mentioned before. In relation to dismissal in the family, if the head of a family, being the breadwinner, loses his or her job, the family will suffer financial hardship. In general, a husband has a responsibility for the family in Korea. Similarly, a woman does housekeeping chores. As Seung-Kyung Kim and John Finch point out, in *Happy End*, Minki lost his job as a banker, but his wife still runs a small business so that his family does not face any economic trouble unlike other middle class households. At this point, we can see the shift of gender roles in the family, otherwise it is not easy to find this change. In particular, the gender hierarchy in the household is quite in a state of flux among middle class families. In other word, the upper and the lower classes stick to the hierarchy regardless the social changes, especially the economic crisis.

> As the financial crisis hit, economically secure middle-class families suddenly found themselves facing pay cuts and unprecedented fears about losing their jobs. By May 1998, 80 percent of Korean households had suffered significant reductions in income. As unemployment spread to banking and other managerial and professional jobs that had been considered secure, middle-class families no longer felt safe. Many people even felt that they had been pushed out of the middle class.[158]

If men lose a job, they feel social alienation more than women, because most men's identity is formed through their job. Consequently, long-term unemployment leads them to avoid their social contacts. The unemployment can be caused to deconstruct most families with economic hardships and conflicts. Therefore, if men are viewed as economically incompetent, they would

[158] Seung-Kyung Kim and John Finch, "Living with Rhetoric, Living against Rhetoric: Korean Families and the IMF Economic Crisis," *Korean Studies* - Volume 26, Number 1, 2002, p. 123.

experience the alienation in society as well as in the family. Even though the government has announced the economic recovery in 2000, there are still a lot of financial hardships for Korean people. Namely, the Korean government recovered from the crisis, but Korean people continue to face the difficulties.

> The IMF [International Monetary Fund] economic crisis affected the whole of South Korean society and undermined general expectations of continuous economic prosperity. Although the loans have been paid back and complete recovery was announced in 2000, the shadow of the crisis still looms over South Korea, making people less confident of the future.[159]

Meanwhile, *Happy End* covers a very controversial issue of the patriarchal system in the post-modern Korean society. In the modern Korean society, it was very important for men to have a strong patriarchal power in the family.

In *Happy End*, the situation of Minki who has been deprived of authority as a man and patriarch can be said to represent the wider mass unemployment of men which occurred after the financial crisis. The unemployment is embraced into the individual family, and it mostly overlaps with the shape of a man who cannot perform his economic role. To have lost economic power means that the person has been ousted from the public sphere and this means that the separation of the symbolic space occupied by man and woman has become obscure. Thus, if the man is a type of person who is only accustomed to his traditional public role and cannot contemplate other possibilities, his existence reaches an extreme point and may crack.[160]

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[159] Seung-Kyung Kim and John Finch, Living with Rhetoric, Living against Rhetoric: Korean Families and the IMF Economic Crisis*, Korean Studies* - Volume 26, Number 1, 2002, p. 135.

[160] Hwang Hyejin, "The transition in the representation of the relationship between male and female characters in Korean melodramas: Focusing on *Happy End and A Good Lawyer's Wife*," *Film Studies*, Vol. 24, 2004. p. 558.

[Picture 3-2] *Happy End*

For example, he finds the highway pass ticket for Sokcho discovered in the car when he is cleaning. Actually this used ticket is meaningless for us, but it explains the proof of the physical and emotional absence of his wife. It is not weird that the man who bows his head could be considered the man who lost his masculinity like the picture above. This shot shows his divided identity through the mirror reflecting in the lift after he becomes aware of her adultery. Interestingly, the lift is going up, but his head is looking down in the lift. The shot depicts his desperate mind painfully.

As I mentioned before in this chapter, *Happy End* describes contemporary Korean society, in particular, focusing on a middle class family suffering from the economic crisis in 1997, gender role changes, and three characters' deviation from long-standing customs and status. When compared with films featuring male adultery, there are only a few films displaying female adultery in Korean cinema. In particular, *Madame Freedom* (1956) and *The Ae-ma Woman* (1982) involved highly controversial issues in relation to housewives' infidelity. For cultural reasons, Confucianism influences Korean society to treat male infidelity generously, while being very harsh towards adultery by women. The films emphasised women in crisis who had an 'excessive'

sexual desire and dissatisfaction with their spouse. However, the majority of Korean films in the period of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s portrayed not female adultery, but male adultery. *Madame Freedom* pioneers the theme of adultery in the history of Korean cinema. However, in these films, female adultery is always sutured by means of punishing the adulterous spouse and subsequently returning her to the home. The hegemonic power of family completely belonged to the father or husband, in the result of that the films focus on male audiences not female. Thus, even though *Happy End* follows a similar narrative, it illustrates the deconstruction of patriarchal ideology by the appearance of a traumatic male protagonist, Minki.

It can be considered that Minki had been a conventional man before he would be an invisible cross-dresser who wears male clothes, but his behaviour, which has entirely changed, is unusual. When he worked as a banker, he hardly ever did housework. Since losing his job, he starts arranging items for recycling, cooking, cleaning, feeding the baby, and picking up the baby from nursery. Sometimes Korean husbands do these chores but they are more special for Minki who had previously conformed to the norms of patriarchal masculinity. Nevertheless, it has been observed that he does not have any choice to avoid housework because he is a jobseeker. Moreover, his wife forces him to do the work. It is important to emphasise that Minki's gender role consists of a few elements as a housewife through behaviour, housework, and his relationship with his neighbour. Meanwhile, he wants to hide the loss of his masculinity. That is why he pretends to be a housewife, by means of doing housework and looking after his baby. In a sense, he does this in order to disguise his true identity. Illustrating the disguise, his changed gender role emphasises a social taboo in this behaviour in the respect of the traditionally patriarchal system in Korea. Even supposing he wears suit outside, he shows his feminine behaviour and traits through doing housework.

In regarding this, Hwang Youngju points out hypocrisy of men's dis-empowerment in *Happy End*. The most important prop and motive used in *Happy End* is the shape of Minki who cuts the milk packs vulgarly sitting in the balcony of the apartment to show the reversed power

relationship with his wife. This is a challenge about the fixed idea that the people who collect the recycling waste are mainly wives and shows the conversion of the gender role. The separate collection for the environment, for example the task of cutting milk packs is the share of the wives, but by showing that the husband is doing that chore, the symbolic mechanism of disempowerment of husband's power is shown. On another hand, it is the milk box with ants. In fact, the wife's provocation that feeds the baby with the milk with a sleeping pill and makes him sleep and search for a housekeeper becomes the catalyst for reversal. Taking this as an opportunity, the husband holds murderous intent, puts a false charge on the housekeeper and plans a perfect crime to punish the wife. In a nutshell, the reason why he decided to murder his wife is rather from the focus on the baby's safety not from the betrayal against the husband. In other words, the assertion that the betrayal against the husband can be forgiven, but the betrayal against the baby cannot be forgiven was emphasised. The two devices in this film related to the milk pack and dry milk are doing their role as an important device which denies to accept the reversed shape of the universal power relationship between the wife Bora and his husband. To speak differently, when the man-centred way of thinking is spread deeply in the base of this film and thus the appropriateness that the unfaithful women should be punished is naturally emphasised, the conventional common idea that the nurturing related to the environment and dry milk bottles related to the separate waste collection should naturally belong to the woman from the male-centred point of view is being accepted.[161]

After losing his job, Minki begins to wear an invisible apron on behalf of his successful wife. Actually we cannot find any scene he is putting on an apron in *Happy End*. Instead, we can see Bora wearing an apron when she decides to stop cheating. However, generally an apron is an outer garment to cover mainly the body. Unlike this, an apron especially for men symbolises the loss of masculinity in Korean society. We often use an apron to explain the gender hierarchy in the family. Like other Korean men, Minki may not want wear it in front of others including his

[161] Hwang Youngju, "Politics and Woman in *Happy End*," *The Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12-13, 2002, pp. 179-200.

wife. Even though she complains about his behaviour, ironically she considers him as a housewife.

> Bora: Honey, what's matter with you? You've been watching soap opera! What are you, a housewife? I told you I was expecting a call. The baby was crying and you didn't ever care!
> Minki: Why don't you take care of her then?
> Bora: I'm working!
> Minki: Why do you have to bring work home?
> Bora: Why? Because I have to. And you want me to watch the baby too?

Bora destroys his masculine hegemonic position in the family as she says that she is working. Therefore, she confines him to the status of housewife. Furthermore, he is compelled to degrade his hegemonic structure and obey her order. It can be said that she drives him to such a cruel situation in order to comfort herself by turning her thoughts away from her infidelity.

[Picture 3-3] *Happy End*

> Bora: The water is boiling.
> Minki: What?
> Bora: I go out, work and make money. If you really want to stay home all the time, then it's your job to watch the stove. Do you know which store sells the cheapest juice? Which bakery has the best bread? And when are they fresh out of the oven? You don't like to think about them, do you? If you know you don't like it, then why don't you start looking for a job? Why are you sitting here and acting like a loser?

In this shot, the camera focuses on Minki and a boiling kettle behind him. Bora's face is getting upset because Minki is staying silent. In the beginning of this scene, the boiling kettle is framed behind her. She glances at it. It means that the power in the family moves to Bora. Minki totally lost his status in the family as a father and husband in the respect of patriarchy order. Notably, we can discover that his gender role is changed regardless of his intention.

Eros and Thanatos

Frank Krutnik's *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*, in particular explores film noir as a representation of masculinity in the 1940s in Hollywood. Especially, he examines the representation of masculinity in terms of "tough thriller" focusing on hard-boiled Hollywood films. Krutnik has pointed out the loss of masculine power:

> The transgressive adventure tends to be pitted directly against either the family or some other systematised figuration of the patriarchal order, or both. For example, in *Double Indemnity* and *They Won't Believe Me*, the hero specifically transgresses against a closed regime of masculine economic power—an insurance company, headed in each case by a powerful figure of male authority (the deceased 'Symbolic Father' Old Man Norton in the former, and Trenton/Tom Powers in the latter).[162]

In *Double Indemnity*, Phyllis Dietrichson represents the femme fatale who conspires against Walter Neff and Mr. Dietrichson. The femme fatale makes Walter murder her husband in order to get money from an insurance company. Finally, Walter realises she has betrayed him, which leads to him killing her. This is a very classic film noir femme fatale. Like this film, Bora in *Happy End* is killed by her husband due to her betrayal.

In *Happy End*, Minki, Bora, and Ilbeom *per se* are sufferers and abusers. For instance, Minki is fatally wounded due to his wife's adultery. It may, however, be noted that Minki is a murderer who kills his wife. Even though there was an adultery law to punish infidelity legally at that time,

[162] Frank Krutnik, "The criminal-adventure thriller," *In A Lonely Street: film noir, genre, masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 137-138.

he chose an alternative way to react. In addition, he sets a snare for Ilbeom. Indeed, Ilbeom is both homme fatale and victim of the femme fatale. Despite the fact that Bora is not a typical film noir's femme fatale, she leads the two men into risky circumstances. Also she is punished by her husband like the femme fatale in a classic film noir. Mary Anne Doane has argued that:

> The power accorded to the femme fatale is a function of fears linked to the notions of uncontrollable drives, the fading of subjectivity, and the loss of conscious agency—all themes of the emergent theories of psychoanalysis. But the femme fatale is situated as evil and is frequently punished or killed. Her textual eradication involves a desperate reassertion of control on the part of the threatened male subject. Hence, it would be a mistake to see her as some kind of heroine of modernity. She is not the subject of feminism but a symptom of male fears about feminism. Nevertheless, the representation—like any representation--is not totally under the control of its producers and, once disseminated, comes to take on a life of its own.[163]

In the first half of *Happy End*, the film describes Minki's weak and fragile masculinity threatened by his wife. For example, she treats him as a loser, and when he watches a TV drama, he cries. However, he tries to punish his wife's adultery not depending on the law. William Jankowiak and Angela Ramsey explain the femme fatale and the male beauty fatale (which is similar to the homme fatale). According to them, the femme fatale and the homme fatale leave someone suffered. In *Happy End*, Bora could be the femme fatale, and Ilbeom, the homme fatale. Continually a status fatale means a woman or a man leads someone to suffer in a narrative.

> The femme fatale or dangerous woman motif was coded as present if the tale implicitly or explicitly noted that someone suffered in some way due to involvement with a physically attractive female. A male beauty fatale was coded as present if suffering resulted from contact with a physically attractive male. The tale was considered to have a status fatale motif if it noted that someone suffered as a result of his or her involvement with a person of social distinction.[164]

Although Bora knows that her precious husband and baby are important, she enjoys a passionate love with a former lover, Ilbeom in order to fill what she is lacking. Sometimes she feels guilty and tries to abandon the relationship; but no matter when she does this, she still seeks to see Ilbeom. Therefore, her physically attraction involves him into her private boundary which means her pseudo family.

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[163] Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 3-4.
[164] William Jankowiak and Angela Ramsey, "Femme Fatale and Status Fatale: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Cross-Cultural Research*, Vol. 34 No. 1, February 2000, pp. 61-62.

Ilbeom is a physically attractive and fascinating 'homme fatale' "whose enchanting beauty and sexual power lead their partners to tragic ends."[165] According to Kazumi Nagaike, who explains that "a homme fatal is similar to that of the femme fatale prototype, which is basically signified in terms of the body rather than by any spiritual characteristics."[166] Ilbeom is Bora's former sweetheart and wants to have her, her baby and all of her possessions. His obsession with her leads him to the brink of ruin. His heart is set on her. Thus his deep attachment to her causes her do to be murdered by her husband. In the film, Bora considers only him as a physical or sexual partner.

Bora is, as often the fate of a femme fatale, killed as a punishment. Meanwhile, Ilbeom transgresses the border separating his private and intimate sphere from Minki's boundary. In other words, it can be argued that Minki's home is invaded by Ilbeom. By the same token, his appearance in Minki' apartment destroys Minki and Bora's intimacy.

Fundamentally Minki's traumatic masculinity is caused by Bora and Ilbeom. Some male protagonists use this excess of masculinity in order to cover their weak masculine hegemony. As a result, his sex role is changed in private or domestic boundary. Then his traumatic and fragmented memories are activated in the process of a posttraumatic period. By the same token, I shall explore castration and femicide in relation to the traumatic theme in *Happy End*. By exploring this assumption, I aim to illustrate an account of trauma theory in terms of the analytic approach to the filmic text focusing on a hysterical excess of masculinity. For instance, the main protagonist in *Happy End*, Minki lets us see his hysterical reaction to trauma through the use of female victimisation. In short, my discussion of this subject will deploy the psychoanalytic terms one by one in relation to masculinity and trauma.

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[165] Kazumi Nagaike, *Fantasies of Cross-dressing: Japanese Women Write Male-Male Erotica* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 41.
[166] Kazumi Nagaike, *Fantasies of Cross-dressing: Japanese Women Write Male-Male Erotica* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 42.

A Castrated Man Who Is Castrating the Phallic Mother

Before discussing castration anxiety, it is first necessary to describe its relationship to the phallic mother. The phallic mother is a mother phantasmatically identifying with a phallus, as Diane Jonte-Pace has pointedly stated, "Lacan constructs a multilayered negation of material presence through the notion of the 'phallic mother,' the phantasmatic image of wholeness through the symbiotic relation with the mother."[167] In *Happy End*, Bora is the femme fatale who is endowed her with the maternal phallus, as Margaret Cohen further elaborates, "The femme fatale, the phallic mother, and the new woman: we know this trinity from a now-classic body of feminist analysis on classic film noir."[168] Here the phallic mother and the new woman are similar to the femme fatale. By the same token, they are the illegal holder of the phallus like the femme fatale in film noir.

Meanwhile, Minki's economic disempowerment by means of losing a job makes him remote from institutions around him. In this case, it does not matter that Bora has an intention to isolate him or not.

> …. masculinity as personal practice cannot be isolated from its institutional context. Most human activity is intuitionally bound. Three institutions – the state, the workplace/labor market, and the family – are of particular importance in the contemporary organization of gender.[169]

In this account, Minki has lost or has been taken from at least two institutions such as the workplace and the family mentioned above. Indeed, it is not easy for him to keep or get his (new) workplace by himself. It is needless to say that we never see him in the workplace throughout the film. By contrast, there are a number of scenes depicting him in the family. It suffices to say that

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[167] Diane Jonte-Pace, "Situating Kristeva Differently: Psychoanalytic Readings of Woman and Religion," in David Crownfield et al., *Body/text in Julia Kristeva: Religion, Women, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 12.
[168] Margaret Cohen, "The "Homme Fatal", the Phallic Father, and the New Man," *Cultural Critique*, No. 23 (winter, 1992-1993), p. 111.
[169] R. W. Connell, "The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History," *Theory and Society*, 22(5), Special Issue: Masculinities. October 1993, p. 602.

he is placed at his apartment, a second-hand bookstore, and a supermarket as a private sector. In contrast to Minki, Bora and Ilbeom are positioned at her English language school as a workplace. Additionally, they are often located at Ilbeom's home to escape from her husband.

However, he seeks to protect a fundamental boundary, his family including his daughter, Yeonseo and Bora forever. As is well known, the workplace and the family are important for individuals. By the same token, he has nothing to confirm his presence and realises his absence in two institutions. In other words, he is being castrated through his isolation from the institutions.

Generally speaking, the phallus is a signifier for man in order to show his genital difference from woman. In *Happy End*, the knife which Minki uses when he murders his wife is a penis-symbol as well as a gun. Minki has castration anxiety that his phallus will be removed, perhaps as punishment for his misbehavior – his loss of job and masculinity. To some extent the theme of *Happy End* might be interpreted as a story about the hegemony of masculinity. For one thing, Minki is seeking his masculine hegemony which he lost for a while in the film. As R. W. Connell has aptly observed, "Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women."[170] He cannot change his subordinated position without murdering his wife under the authority of patriarchy. At last, the failure of hegemonic masculine images drives him to be castrated.

In relation to this aspect, Arthur Brittan has noted that boys have experienced the Oedipal complex and the castration anxiety according to Freud.

> For Freud, this process always involved a tremendous psychic battle in which boys overcame their Oedipal fixations on their mothers by internalizing their father's threat of castration. The successful resolution of the Oedipus complex meant that they became 'men'. Those boys who did not manage to identify with their fathers (from Freud's perspective) are the reserve army of future neurotics and social misfits. Freud's picture of male gender

[170] R. W. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), pp. 38-39.

> identity was therefore one in which identity was achieved at the cost of giving up one's mother. Admittedly, this achievement is always problematic and often unstable, but given that Freud was committed to a version of family life in which men always assumed the dominant role, and which he thought was both necessary and almost universal, it is not surprising that he saw father-son relationships as being the foundation stone on which all civilized life is built.[171]

At this point, I will explore how *Happy End* might be understood to symbolically investigate male anxieties in relation to Oedipal complex and castration. Minki follows a typical Oedipal trajectory, but he is facing the castration complex from Bora as a castrating mother. It is necessary for me to explain here that Ilbeom and Bora make threats for Minki to be castrated symbolically. In other words, they try to get rid of him in the family. For example, Ilbeom, Bora, and Bora's daughter, Yeon have a nice holiday in an area near a beach. They look like a real family. In the hotel, Ilbeom shows a pram with a name tag on which is written 'Kim Seoyeon'. In fact, he has inserted his surname, Kim, in front of Seo Yeon. Seo is her actual surname, given to her by her father, Minki. The concept of Kim Seoyeon being her daughter deepens the obsession toward her.

[Picture 3-4] *Happy End*

Due to the existence of this baby who is called two names (Seo Yeon and Kim Seoyeon), the audiences rethink and think who the baby's real father is. The baby is not merely a burden to solve the marital relationship, neither a being which lives miserable life being born in a wrong

[171] Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 29.

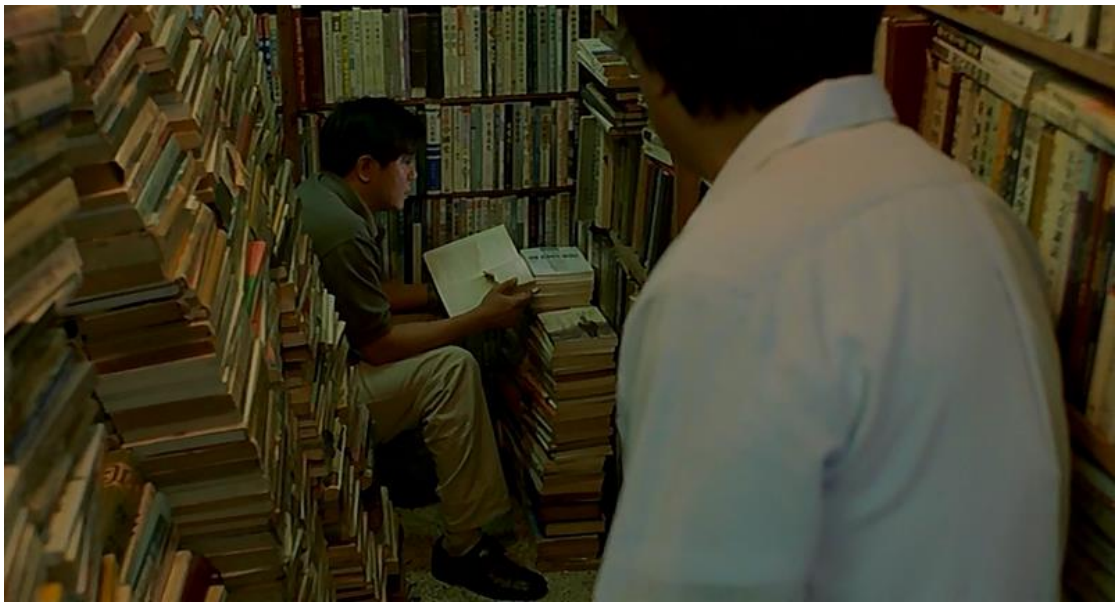
rhythm, but possesses a more powerful symbolism. However, it is not very clear to know the baby's father.

The audiences may want to know whether Bora is just cheating or not. Otherwise, Minki could be such a miserable man, if Yeon is not his daughter. The audiences may believe Yeon is a witness of their cheating, because she sometimes accompanies Bora when she meets Ilbeom. The scene of the baby staring as if it witnesses the adultery before they talk over the phone and move to a pub gives even the feeling that the attention of the baby and the audience are synchronised. If the baby might remember remembers while growing about the complexly tangled adultery situation, it must be too awful indeed, but such thing will not happen. It is because he is in the state when he starts to learn something and express emotions. The result of the adultery results in the miserable killing and death of the wife, collapse of the family and imprisonment, all tragedies for the family. If Minki does not reveal all this facts, the baby will live a life without knowing the tragedy that these people experienced. While the tragic conclusion of having lost his own mother itself can be negative conclusion too to the baby, since the baby is not a character who experience the adultery directly or indirectly, he is superficially in possession of the happiest ending among all the characters.

However, Bora and Ilbeom have a good time, probably her daughter too. There is no room for Minki, and his presence is meaningless. Therefore, his absence means that he has been already castrated by Ilbeom and Bora. In addition, when Bora has sexual intercourse with Minki, she has no feeling. Then she thinks about Ilbeom. The shot suddenly cuts to Bora and Ilbeom both naked on the bed at his home. It implies that Minki is castrated due to the loss of masculine power and strength. In other words, it is seemed that he reveals the loss of phallic power to Bora and Ilbeom.

The change of Minki after he finds out about the adultery of Bora supports the above interpretation. Romantic love, marriage and family are the sacred things that system provides.

Especially, the absolute maternal love toward the baby is the core demand for the wife of Minki. The maternal love becomes the device which calls again the self-respect of the husband who could not but to stay away and watch secretly while assuming the adultery of his wife. The man who has lost the economic power is an ousted being in the social sense. This social ousting leads to sex without manhood, the sexual relationship with no pleasure in the physical sense. However, his loss of symbolic and practical manhood means his absence in the family. Thus, Minki's attitude to ignore the adultery of his wife shows that he does not want the loss of authority. The existence of the blood which shares the genetic character of himself and his wife is the only excuse to justify this type of defence and final battle.[172] So Minki tries to forgive her adultery to protect his daughter, even though he lost his dignity as a husband. In other words, he wants to keep the status of the father. Therefore, this film continuously emphasises on Bora's maternal love. Whenever she loses the love, Minki begins to punish her in the name of the father, not in the name of the husband.



[Picture 3-5] *Happy End*

[172] Hwang Hyejin, 'The transition in the representation of the relationship between male and female characters in Korean melodramas: Focusing on *Happy End and A Good Lawyer's Wife*,' *Film Studies*, Vol. 24, 2004. p. 560.

Happy End moves from melodrama to thriller as soon as Minki discovers his wife's infidelity. He usually goes to a used book store in order to read love stories. He starts to read thrillers instead of romance novels. In this scene, the bookstore owner says to him like below.

> The bookstore owner: Are you OK? There are no romantic novels here. As you know, you can find the books over there. You can read only thrillers in this section.

Through a few thrillers, he learns to commit a crime to murder his desperate wife. But this scene never zooms in to show the title of thrillers. For the meantime, Bora decides to stop her infidelity and to be a good mother and wife as anticipated. At the same time, Minki discovers her adultery with her ex-boyfriend, Ilbeom. One day, she receives a call from Ilbeom, and she tries to get her child to sleep. But her baby does not sleep very well, so she gives a sleeping drug to her baby. The desperate wife leaves her young daughter alone at home in order to meet Ilbeom near her home. When Minki comes back, he discovers his baby is ill. On the way home from hospital, he miserably observes his wife's infidelity with Ilbeom at home. After this event, Minki confirms his plan to kill his wife. Finally, her murder is his hysterical defence in order to rebuild his loss of masculinity.

[Picture 3-6] *Happy End*

Just before this scene, Minki finds evidence in Ilbeom's home showing Bora is cheating. This two-minute-long take displays the barrier between Bora and Minki. There are many vertical lines to emphasise that their relationship is dividing. In addition, they have no conversation and no eye contact each other. The light of in this room depicts the two protagonist's condition. There are two different moods in the same space in this shot. Bora in a relatively high-key lighting is eating dinner and still enjoying her cheating. But on the other side, Minki sitting on the sofa hides his angry in a low key lighting with dark image.

Even though Bora is still enjoying her infidelity with Ilbeom, she later feels guilty as a mother and wife for her family. This distracted wife tries to finish her relationship with Ilbeom.

> Bora: I've got to end it. Just forget about it, Bora.
> Bora: Lately, I've been acting a bit crazy, haven't I? I've had a few things on my mind. But everything is okay now. Everything is … completely okay now.

Suddenly she realises she is committing bad actions against her family. Then she starts to do housework and talks to herself, as indicated by the exchange below. In *Happy End*, Bora wears an apron first time and it means that she wants to stop her cheating.

[Picture 3-7] *Happy End*

Another long take tries to separate them in one frame, then the camera zooms in Minki without any cut. Minki says "You… you're a good mother… for your baby." It means it is fine for him not to be a good wife any more.

[Picture 3-8] *Happy End*

This long take has never shown two people in one frame, just captured them one by one. At the end of this long take finally shows them in a same frame like the picture above. They try to reconcile with each other, but, unexpectedly, Ilbeom calls a stop to their conversation. It means that the ending of this film is rapidly becoming unhappy. At this moment, he gives up Bora as his wife. On the other hand, he just wants Bora to be a good mother for their daughter.

Female Victimisation, Hysterical Reaction to Trauma

Happy End starts with a scene depicting an illicit romance between Bora and Ilbeom. In the scene, Bora is walking along the corridor heading to the Ilbeom's home. Then, a camera movement takes us into his room. In the scene, there are long takes and handheld shots. Indeed, the long

take shots represent their vigorous and energetic lovemaking. These continuous shots make audiences involved this film as witnesses of the love triangle. The fierce intercourse scene between Bora and Ilbeom for the first 5 minutes at the beginning of the film elicits a strong sense of voyeuristic attention in the audience while it could not eradicate the sticky and sensual energy completely regardless of whether a handheld or a long take camera is used. By the same token, images in the scene are perceptibly shakier by means of the use of handheld shots. These tremulous shots mean that their love is dynamic but questionable and unstable. Then, a camera zooms in on Bora's finger wearing the wedding ring on his body. Even though she has furious sex with him, the camera movement portrays their instability.

The sex between Bora and Ilbeom presented by *Happy End* is a description of passion which is emancipated by exhausting all the energy. For Bora, to pursue sex for pleasure is shown as an expressive behaviour of her desire not to be shown in front of her husband who lost dominant masculinity. This surely is related to the changed identity of the man and woman and their relationship. What has changed is not only the hegemonic issue between man and woman which is formed by way of the medium called sex. She has the conviction that while she enjoys everything that she can enjoy, she does not indulge in it and can get out of it any time she wants. Only if they deal with things properly, they can live their lives without any further trouble. Other people think that the result of such acts are wrong, but they themselves believe that they can end their behaviours as a happy ending. That is the most fatal attack of desire and the most fatal shortcoming of the people. In the scene, Ilbeom considers a future for both of them, but Bora wants that the relationship will just be one time only in purpose.[173]

It is Ilbeom who makes people realise the illusion that they can get out of the indulgence only if they want. Audiences gradually realise that even though they let go of the counterpart, if that counterpart does not let go of them, they cannot get out it, but they eventually face a

[173] Hwang Hyejin, 'The transition in the representation of the relationship between male and female characters in Korean melodramas: Focusing on *Happy End and A Good Lawyer's Wife*,' *Film Studies*, Vol. 24, 2004. p. 554.

miserable result. It is not that Bora does not strive to abandon such desire. She detects danger several times and tries to get out it, but she pursues her desire only just for some more time and finally she fails in getting out of it. When she buys a checked shirt at a store and go to meet Ilbeom and sees that he is wearing the same shirt, Bora suddenly realises that she is in a very dangerous state of desire. Bora begins to know when she hears a warning from Minki. Nevertheless, she cannot get out of her desire and finally makes her husband feel castrated psychologically. Meanwhile, Minki's memories of trauma are potentially located in unconscious memories not still activated. By the same token, his fragmented memories of traumatic events such as his loss of hegemonic masculinity and Bora's extramarital love affair lie beneath his consciousness. However, these memories of traumatic events have already transformed into hysterical symptoms.

I have argued there is a passive-aggressive and active-aggressive man in *Happy End*. Generally speaking, the man who has passive-aggressive behaviour shows his aggressive desire in passive ways, and the man who has active-aggressive behaviour displays his violence directly. For example, Minki was not an aggressive man when we see the first part of this film. However, he is gradually changing his temper towards being an aggressive man, in detail from a passive-aggressive man to an active-aggressive man because of his wife's behaviour towards him. Therefore, a set of these processes explain his traumatised memory by means of femicide.

In that regard *Happy End* neither belongs to the genres of the action, the film noir, nor the Western, which all show the power of masculinity through male heroes.[174] We are not able to find such strong masculinity in this film because there are only two male protagonists who are defending a wife or an ex-lover. Indeed, Minki, Bora's husband has an unusually weak

[174] The action film and the western film represent usually the stronger masculinity than any other filmic genres, for example, Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) in *First Blood* (1982) and Joe (Clint Eastwood) in *For a Few Dollars More* (1965). Mark Gallagher writes that "The action film has historically been a "male" genre, dealing with stories of male heroism, produced by male filmmakers for principally male audiences. The genre's most intriguing development in the 1990s was the incorporation of formal elements associated with the "female" genre of melodrama." In Mark Gallagher, *Action Figures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 45. Generally speaking, the action film shows a heroic masculinity, meanwhile, melodrama focuses on female characters.

masculinity. By contrast, Ilbeom, Bora's ex-boyfriend who possesses a masculine image and professional job is always reminding her, in spite of her marriage. Even though Minki is not strong enough to show his masculine body or image, finally he tries to overcome his weakness by means of killing his wife. In *Happy End,* we can find Bora who is a successful career woman and becomes involved with her ex-first love, Ilbeom. On the other hand, there is Minki, her husband who looks after an infant child since he lost his job. Nevertheless, this film shows how cruel Minki is by killing his wife in order to punish her infidelity. The violence in this film is more severe than any other action film or western film. Though *Happy End* is not such a masculine genre, it represents effectively the images of aggressive and traumatised masculinity.

It is not easy to see this kind of film in Korean cinema in relation to gender politics. *Happy End* overthrows the typical gender roles dichotomised as male and female. As I said before in this chapter, traditionally, a man does not attend to household duties in Korea, even if he does not have a job. Bora is a successful executive in her field, but Minki is dismissed for a while. In relation to this, Lynne Segal points out the gender politics between husband and wife. "Along with their emphasis on the disastrous effects of male unemployment and poverty on family violence, they attribute this to men responding violently to threatened loss of dominance, status and privileges."[175] In *Happy End*, Minki has an inferiority complex from not having job, and this condition leads him to the extreme violence of killing his wife. According to Caroline Bainbridge and Candida Yates, male suffering occasionally leads to a hysterical defence against the weakened masculinity.

> The proliferation of discourses about male suffering and its representation in film is analogous to a hysterical defence against the losses of masculinity…. However, one can argue that the slippage from trauma to hysteria also has a usefully disturbing effect, as it provides the spectator with a glimpse of something else and the unspeakable losses of masculinity that lie beneath the excesses of the text.[176]

[175] Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion Changing Masculinities Changing Men* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 255.
[176] Caroline Bainbridge and Candida Yates, "Cinematic Symptoms of Masculinity in Transition: Memory, History and Mythology in Contemporary Film," *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, Volume 10, Number 3, December 2005, pp. 303-304

In the respect of gender hegemony in family, there is a very similar film to *Happy End*. In *How To Kill My Wife* (1994), Bongsoo is the owner of a film studio whose wife, Soyoung, works with him. She is very good in her field as producer. Her success causes him to be jealous. In the end, Bongsoo hires a professional killer to kill his wife. But the difference between *Happy End* and *How To Kill My Wife* is that the former is a thriller and the latter is a comedy. Even though *How To Kill My Wife* has a similar narrative, it describes the progress of a man trying to kill his wife using a comic approach. Therefore, from this it might be deduced that we cannot find the man with trauma in this film.

As Jill Radford has discussed, "Femicide has many different forms: for example, racist femicide (when black women are killed by white men); homophobic femicide, or lesbicide (when women are killed by their husbands); femicide committed outside the home by a stranger; serial femicide; and mass femicide."[177] She has categorized different forms of femicide and presented here a comprehensive perspective of femicide, an action commited by men.

Andrea Dworkin has defined the term of gynocide as "the systematic crippling, raping, and/or killing of women by men ... the relentless violence perpetrated by the gender class men on the gender class women."[178] Also in "The Sexual Politics of Murder" Jane Caputi follows Dworkin's definition to explain gynocide.[179] They argued that "honor systems are in integral part of the process of killing woman by their families or intimates, regardless of where the woman lives." In addition, they have pointed out that "an understanding of such honor systems can help us better explain the occurrence of intimate-perpetrated female homicides and why the incidence of these murders, and the violence that surrounds them, might be resistant to change in the face

[177] Jill Radford and Dinana E. H. Russell, *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (New York: Twayne Publishes, 1992), p. 7.
[178] Andrea Dworkin, *Our Blood: Prophecies and Discourses on Sexual Politics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 17.
[179] Jane Caputi, "The Sexual Politics of Murder," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Special Issue: *Violence against Women* (Dec., 1989), p. 439.

of increasing social disapproval."[180] In this sense, Minki's murder of his wife looks like a fulfilment of honour systems in modern Korean society under Confucianism.

> A wife's adultery and a daughter's premarital sexual activity are the most extreme violations of patriarchal community norms in certain societies, and therefore the ones that merit the most severe penalties sometimes even death.[181]

But it can be argued that Korean society does not allow such an honour system. It is my argument that a traumatised person exposes himself compulsively to situations reminiscent of the traumatic events. As re-remembering traumatic experiences belonging to the past, the memories make him recall his trauma at present. This trauma is generally expressed by patriarchal violence included murdering. Michael P. Johnson has called patriarchal terrorism which focuses on the women's movement and the feminist perspective.

> The term *patriarchal terrorism* has the advantage of keeping the focus on the perpetrator and of keeping our attention on the systematic, intentional nature of this form of violence. Of course, the term also forces us to attend routinely to the historical and cultural roots of this form of family violence.[182]

In the perspective of feminist approach to this film, in particular Minki's murdering his wife, I would suggest that his violence is absolutely patriarchal terrorism. In other words, his patriarchal construction of female victimisation inevitably entails and compels Bora's punishment. When he stabs her with a knife on the bed, he allows her to recognise him as if this victimisation is an inescapable process against her adultery. Therefore, his patriarchal terrorism is a hysterical reaction to trauma and there is no celebration of her victimisation in the film. In addition, he does not try to rebuild his loss of hegemonic masculinity from Bora who is brutally victimised.

In this case, the female victim is Bora. Some films try to kill a male protagonist by their wives. Clearly, most prominent of gendercide is femicide. Put otherwise, there are a number of

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[180] Nancy V. Baker, Peter R. Gregware and Margery A. Cassidy, "Family Killing Fields: Honor Rationales in the Murder of Women," *Violence Against Women*, vol. 5, no. 2, February 1999, pp. 164-165. Also see, K. Polk, 'A reexamination of the concept of victim-precipitated', *Homicide Studies*, 1, pp. 141-168.
[181] Nancy V. Baker, Peter R. Gregware and Margery A. Cassidy, "Family Killing Fields: Honor Rationales in the Murder of Women," *Violence Against Women*, vol. 5, no. 2, February 1999, p. 169.
[182] Michael P. Johnson, "Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence against Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 57, No. 2, (May, 1995), p. 284.

female victims by means of male violence. In relation to this, in Margo Willson and Martin Daly's discussion of "Despite the contemporary scourges of serial killers, rape-murders, and homicides in the course of robbery, most murdered women are killed by their mates,"[183] one details turns out to be particular interest, they try to point out that even though murdering women can be happened in different ways, most femicides are committed by partners.

> … the study of aggression and violence is moving away from assumptions of single motivational system – because aggression and violence are not goal but strategy. Instead, it aims to understand the contextual, person-environment interactions or, more specifically, an analysis of why physical aggression, as a strategy, is chosen by this particular person in this particular context to achieve this (or these) particular goal(s).[184]

In *Happy End*, Minki has already set up an alibi before he is examined. On the surface, his extreme aggression looks like his goal. Most obviously, his murdering his wife is not his goal, it is process or strategy to obtain and confirm his masculine power. Minki shows his violence towards his wife, Bora and the other man, Ilbeom.

To some extent the theme of *Happy End* might be interpreted as a story about the hegemony of masculinity. For one thing, Minki is seeking his masculine hegemony which he lost for a while in the film. Minki cannot change his subordinated position without killing his wife under the authority of patriarchy. As Neil Frude has noted, economical power in the family is very important for Minki to have a confidence as a breadwinner. As a result, his loss of earnings caused his masculinity to be symbolically attacked by his wife. In particular, Minki's unemployment effectively destroys his family.

> Unemployment not only brings loss of income and status but also increases the partner's isolation from outside social contract and brings them into close contact for prolonged periods. This can produce chronic irritation, particularly if living conditions are cramped. There may be disputes over who is to 'blame' for the lack of employment, and a partner who has lost self-esteem by virtue of his or her unemployment may feel under attack by the other. With few resources available to break up the day, and with little to look forward to, both partners may become bored and irritable, and in such circumstances a husband's anger may be vented on his unfortunate wife.[185]

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[183] Jill Radford and Dinana E. H. Russell, *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (New York: Twayne Publishes, 1992), p. 83.
[184] Paul Gilbert, "Male Violence: Towards an integration," ed. John Archer, *Male Violence* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 355.
[185] Neil Frude, "Marital Violence: An interactional perspective," Ed. John Archer, *Male Violence* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 157.

According to Freud, "Hysteria in males gives the appearance of a severe illness."[186] In this film, Minki is in no pain after killing his wife. Due to this case, his hysteria appears, and causes him to murder against Bora. As often happens with *Happy End*, Minki is inevitably linked to the traumatic and hysterical memory inevitably.

Implementing Fantasy Experiences

In this part, I seek to challenge the audiences' widespread assumption that Bora is murdered by Minki with patriarchal violence. This alternative analysis can change the whole narrative structure. As we have seen, the final scene is very ambiguous making it very difficult to comprehend this film. The director Jung leaves us wondering whether the whole story of this film really happened, in particular, whether the murder took place or not. In my opinion, it is possible that Minki's product of his imagination or a daydream. There are a few clues for this interpretation in the final scene of the film.

The last scene of the film also finishes with the sight of the baby. Minki has just woken up after taking a nap with his young baby. In details, when the baby and Minki were sleeping together, he wakes up and reveals how uncomfortable his sleep has been, but the baby sleeps alone calmly. There is a milk bottle in the floor. The baby who falls asleep while sucking the milk bottle can be a happy ending. Regarding this, I assume that all narratives happened before waking up could be a daydream, in particular, a nightmare exposed Minki's uncomfortable sleep. Following the scene, the ending title 'Happy End' comes to us, then, the word 'Happy' gradually disappears. It seems that this film ends with happy ending. In other words, the director infers vaguely that the story can end happily.

[186] Sigmund Freud, "Hysteria," *Standard Edition*, vol. 1. p. 52.

Secondly, a lamp of condolence is flying up from the bottom of apartment to Bora's balcony. In this shot, we do not know exactly if it is her image, smoking a cigarette in the balcony, is a ghost or not. However, there is a possibility that she is not a ghost. In Korea, when a family member dies, others attach the lamp of condolence in order to let people know of the death. In this case, Bora lets the lamp go in order to let audiences discover that she is not murdered.

There is another possibility to analyse this film with different perspective. There three scenes depicting Minki at a second-hand bookstore. I presume that Minki is implementing his romance novel throughout the film so we can watch what he reads. He endows Bora with the heroine committing adultery. In other words, it is probably easy for him to empathise with the character in his books. In addition, he is putting his mystery book into practice. Therefore, it is said that her adultery and his murder are a set of implementation agreements reflected his fantasy experiences reconstructed from the novels.

The first scene of second-hand bookstore is followed the opening scene describing Bora and Ilbeom's frenzied lovemaking. When they are lovemaking on the bed, this scene unexpectedly changes into the bookstore focused on the door written "Books." Then the following shot shows Minki who is crouching and unstably reading a book there. In the scene he is completely captivated in a romance novel, as he does not care whatever the bookshop owner says. Minki says to the bookstore owner that "Well, it's closer to a mystery story than a love story. But a real love story, it's so sad. It breaks your heart. Now that stuff is really good." In a second-hand bookstore, he usually reads romance novels. Especially, he loves to read the sad and painful romance novels. After that, he goes to a park to read the book which he bought. He is so impressed this book enough to make him cry during the reading.

The second scene of second-hand bookstore is next to the scene which illustrates his failure to get a job and his disappointment in a heavy shower in the street. The camera zooms out the bookstore to find him with very cheerful old music. Finally, the camera movement captures

Minki who is reading a book enthusiastically. Still, Minki does not realise his wife's infidelity. So it is said that he is reading the romance story. The third scene of second-hand bookstore is followed the scene which he knows finally Bora's adultery with her ex-boyfriend. The bookstore owner says to him that "Are you feeling OK? There are no romance novels here. They're over there. That's the mystery section now." In this scene, he is reading a mystery book with great intensity.

However, it is evident that the happiness of *Happy End* which is the punishment about the betrayal cannot be found in the successful daily life of Minki. Whether he can re-enter the public order which had ousted him before is still obscure and as long as he lives as a coarse man, the manly happy end is impossible forever. This film shows the reality where the frustrated hope of man, in other words the hope of man to continue the narcissism through other person, the wife's love and approval reaches an end. His unconsciousness must have believed that if his wife disappears, his manhood would be recovered. But, the conclusion of the movie is not happy. Perhaps, Minki will suffer from a sense of guilt for a long time and the daughter who is growing will remind him of his wife. This is the very tragedy of the manly identity which needs the attention of the woman, a third person whom he dominates in order to continue his domination.[187] Throughout the film, Minki implements his imagination restructured from the novels. These attitudes express his compulsory anxiety occurred from his traumatic events. Basically his trauma is originated by his loss of workplace as one of institutions including the family and the state.

On the other hand, some feminists approach to *Happy End* with other perspective. According to Hwang Youngju, the appraisal that this film eventually lies in the male-centred way of thought comes from the dramatic solving method in the conclusion of this film. In other words, this film has the development which can be possible since there is a premise that

[187] Hwang Hyejin, "The transition in the representation of the relationship between male and female characters in Korean melodramas: Focusing on *Happy End and A Good Lawyer's Wife*," *Film Studies*, Vol. 24, 2004. p. 562.

extramarital affair of a husband is a one-time betray that can be forgiven, but extramarital affair of the wife is an infidelity that cannot be forgiven and is an illegal act that should be punished. However, it should be pointed out that in the assessment of this patriarchy, as one type of an ideal male, violence has been used to solve the extramarital affair. The way of solving incidents using most dramatic violence not even considering other alternatives to solve the extramarital affairs of the wife is interpreted as an example of showing every aspects of our current society which has been gendered although this is a film which pursues dramatic fun.[188] In an interview, Jung mentioned this film was based on a real story, so he could not avoid the same conclusion inevitably, even though it is not necessary for Minki to kill his wife.[189]

Conclusion

In analysing *Happy End* this chapter has explored four aspects: the femme fatale, changing gender hierarchies, castration, femicide, and implementation of fantasy related to the theme of trauma. I argued Ilbeom as the homme fatale like typical film noir in the 1940s and Bora as the femme fatale in classic film noir make Minki a victim and wrongdoer simultaneously.

In addition, I explored the theme of castration anxiety. In *Happy End,* Minki's castration complex drove him traumatised due to the loss of masculinity power. Finally, his trauma caused his wife's murder with unbidden memories of trauma. It is very controversial to comprehend the director's final scene in the film. Is she a ghost or an illusion? I answered he implements his experiences as if they are in reality. Five major findings from the above discussion should be highlighted. Proceeding from what has been said above, it should be concluded that Minki's hysterical excess of masculinity in *Happy End* came from his trauma.

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[188] Hwang Youngju, "Politics and Woman in *Happy End*," *The Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12-13, 2002, pp. 179-200.
[189] Kim Youngjin, *Four Rookie Directors* (Seoul: Seoul Selection, 2008), p. 119.

In the next chapter, I shall look at male protagonists' distorted pleasure in Kim Kiduk's works, *Bad Guy* and *The Isle* which are describing traumatised men.

Chapter Four

Distorted Pleasure in *Bad Guy* and *The Isle*

The people in my films are not bad peoples or good people,
they are just people. And my protagonists,
whether they have done good deeds or bad,
are the people that have made me a director.

Kim Kiduk[190]

The rise of Korean cinema at the turn of the century is a wonder to many outside observers. Long obscure in the hinterland of world cinema, Korean cinema suddenly became one of the most vibrant national cinemas in the world. A host of films garnered prestigious awards at international film festivals and its popular audience and scholarly interests in it increased exponentially. In particular, Kim Kiduk has become one of the most well-known Korean directors. Kim who was the Special Director's Award Winner of *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter… and Spring* (2003) and received the Golden Lion Award for best film *Pieta* (2012) in Venice International Film Festival in 2004 and 2012, has directed a number of films exploring obsessive love, surrealism, traumatised men, and cruel violence.

This chapter looks at the concept of trauma through close analysis of Kim Kiduk's films in relation to masculinity, and in particular their tendency to represent what I refer to as men's

[190] Kim Kiduk, "Movie Is My Struggle," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 68.

'distorted pleasure', namely a traumatic masculinity that represents a vision of 'twisted pleasure': rape fantasy, sadism and masochism. Generally, the weakness of masculinity leads to violence toward females. In other words, it implies that this is the violent response of all men, when they lose their strong masculinity. Nevertheless, male protagonists try to construct their masculinity with many devices such like fantasy or nostalgia. Those with issues concerning their masculinity and therefore concerns of the validity of patriarchy, often overcompensate with overt and dramatic displays of machoism and violence. This chapter shall start by asking the four questions below.

Firstly, why is there so much enthusiasm about Kim Kiduk at the moment? Many people are interested in him regardless of whether they like his films or not. Actually, the interest of film scholars is even greater than the audiences. His films did not get much attention from the public audience besides a few of his films, with Kim Kiduk's best box office hits being *Bad Guy*, with approximately 700,000 audiences in 2002, and *Pieta* with approximately 600,000 audiences in 2012.[191] Moreover, the overall number of audiences from these two films are larger than his other films. Yet, there is a very active field of research about him in the academic field. In particular, foreign researchers are continuously producing monographs, journal papers, book chapters, and theses about him, for instance, Marta Merajver-Kurlat's monograph, *Kim Ki Duk: On Movies, the Visual Language*, Adrien Gombeaud and three French film critics' *Kim Ki Duk*, Hye Seung Chung's monograph, *Kim Ki-duk*. Researchers are continuously writing about him as if Kim Kiduk is making a film each year to meet new audiences. As a result, the amount of researches about him are being released more than Park Chanwook and Bong Joonho, directors who have achieved commercial success in the domestic box office. What is the reason behind this?

[191] Korean Box Office: All-Time Top 10 which are the highest grossing films in Korean box office history by admissions. 1. *Battle of Myeongryang* (2014) Admission 17,613,682, 2. *Ode to My Father* (2014) Admission 14,239,351, 3. *Avatar* (2009) Admission 13,302,637, 4. *The Thieves* (2012) Admission 12,983,341, 5. *Miracle in Cell No. 7* (2013) Admission 12,811,213, 6. *Masquerade* (2012) Admission 12,323,438, 7. *The Attorney* (2013) Admission 12,323,438, 8. *Haeeundae* (2009) Admission 11,324,433, 9. *The Host* (2006) Admission 10,917,221, 10. *King and The Clown* (2005) Admission 10,513,715. See Korean Film Council's Box Office. [http://www.kobis.or.kr/kobis/business/stat/boxs/findFormerBoxOfficeList.do?loadEnd=0&searchType=search&sMultiMovieYn=&sRepNationCd=&sWideAreaCd=]

Secondly, why do the male characters in the films of Kim Kiduk feel unfamiliar or paralysed? The men that appear in his films are not the common types of people that can be seen around us. The men whom we cannot commonly meet are the main characters in his films. We may feel that the male characters that he constructs are 'unnatural' in some way. According to Kim Kiduk in his interview, he points out that "male protagonists in my films look like stronger than women, but they are frail men. In Korean society, once the military was the only place to make men stronger and manlier. Not anymore."[192] It is because Kim Kiduk's male characters are full of trauma. The trauma of the two characters such as a man full of silence from the film *Bad Guy*, and a man who searches for death on his own in the film *The Isle*, will be explored.

Thirdly, why do the films of Kim Kiduk make us feel uncomfortable? His films make people feel uncomfortable. Additionally, that sense of inconvenience even makes us painful after watching his films. Simply speaking, it is due to the violence of his films. Kim's films often directly display negative elements such as violence, cruelty, and rape. Therefore, I will explore his works including mainly *Bad Guy* and *The Isle* (2000) with an auteristic perspective. In particular, sadomasochistic images which portray violence can easily be found in his films, and this is one of the traits that one might associate with the director's authorship.

Fourthly, does sex provide salvation or redemption for a male protagonist? The films of Kim Kiduk portray sex more than love. In other words, his films show the instinctive sex instead of describing melodramatic affection. In fact, the men who appear in his films were not composed enough to love. Additionally, they are people who do not know how to love because they have not been loved before. For them, there is no such thing as beautiful love. They simply use sex as a measure to treat trauma, a source of pain.

[192] See Kim Kiduk's full interview at the end of this chapter.

It is now time to meet the male characters of Kim Kiduk who made us feel uncomfortable. In particular, the images of violent men displayed in the films by centring on male protagonists will be explored. Accordingly, the men displayed in his films are consistent. This similarity holds trauma and this displays violence and cruelty in reality as a result.

In Kim Kiduk's films, violence is realistic and, at times, it is depicted more realistically than the real. The violence appearing in his films is created by a male character, intent on oppressing an individual with a weaker social position. Therefore, watching his films often causes discomfort, as I mentioned above. No wonder that his critics are equally divided into those who praise and those who are heavily critical of his work. In the chapter, I will explore in detail Kim Kiduk's two films *Bad Guy* and *The Isle* which show traumatised masculinity. However, in relation to the two films, it is necessary to briefly explore his other works such as *Crocodile* (1996), *Wild Animals* (1996), *The Birdcage Inn* (1998), *Real Fiction* (2000), *Address Unknown* (2001), *The Coast Guard* (2002), *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003), *Samaritan Girl* (2004), *3-Iron* (2004), *The Bow* (2005), *Time* (2006), *Breath* (2007), *Dream* (2008), *The Bow* (2011), *Amen* (2011), *Arrirang* (2011)[193], *Pieta* (2012), *Moebius* (2013), and *One on One* (2014).

This chapter focuses in particular on *The Isle* and *Bad Guy*. By pursuing the analyses of these two films, I will argue that men in crisis become traumatised men. All these texts mentioned above approach trauma theory in order to analyse the past memory of males suffering from a certain disturbance and a personal catastrophe. In this respect, trauma theory could be a useful tool in interpreting memory in Kim Kiduk's cinema. Indeed, trauma theory can be used to analyse cinematic texts that themselves focus on personal memories and individual trauma. Examples of personal incidents that result in the development of traumatic memories are incidents such as family violence, rape, car accidents and so on. That is to say, in this chapter I shall claim that trauma

[193] Especially, the film *Arirang* is a pseudo-documentary on Kim Kiduk himself as a serious director. In the film, Kim shows even his traumatised masculinity depicting an agonised self.

theory can also be deployed to analyse numerous texts relating to trauma and personal memories in detail, even though not always on the scale of major traumatic events such as the Great War and the Holocaust, traumas depicted in films such as *Schindler's List* (1993) and *The Pianist* (2002). Film scholars have used theories of trauma to inform readings of film that are sometimes implicit in nature. For example, Michael Williams has done some very interesting work on shell-shock in terms of trauma, particularly, war trauma with images of Ivor Novello, who was one of the most famous stars of British silent cinema. Williams argues that the neurotic and deadly images and symptoms of Novello could be understood to produce "a delirious, hysterical, performance of the body", with 'symptoms' arguably correlating with those of trauma and PTSD, particularly through Novello's association with the Great War.[194]. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, I suggest that reading characters, performance, and film narratives in terms of their implicit, or explicit, link to trauma in relation to social upheavals can be very productive. There are many events that have made global impact in recent years, including 9/11, Darfur, Rwanda, Ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and so on, and represented in films including *Reign Over Me* (2007) and *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). In this study, I am exploring the way the social upheaval precipitated by the economic crisis in Korea can be linked to the unbearable personal unbearable events, and traumatic memories, rendered in the cycle of films under scrutiny in this chapter. As will be discussed, Kim Kiduk's films represent the traumatised events of masculinity in so much as males construct their personal memories, fear, and suffering as trauma.

Why Kim Kiduk?

To understand Kim Kiduk's films appropriately, we need to look at his personal life which reflects on his work. Kim's first film struck similarities with his own life story. This was because every

[194] Michael Williams, *Ivor Novello: Screen Idol* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), p. 22.

episode in the film had his biographical footprint, and his own life was almost like a work of fiction and was surrounded in mystery. According to Andrea Bellavita, it was hard to differentiate between his artistic creation and real life. It is a possibility that Kim did not speak about his life in detail in order to reach closure on his past and to leave the reconstruction of his biography to fans and critics through interviews and observations only.[195]

Kim was born in a mountainous village in Bongwha, Gyeongsang Province in 1960. He was a raised in a poor catholic family and after graduating from a vocational school specialising in agriculture, he worked as a factory worker until he was twenty. As a child he broke the arm of another child which is an indicator of his unstable childhood and was forced to quit school after his brother was suspended from school. His father was a veteran and his mother was blind. His life was very dynamic and full of drama although it was virtually unbeknownst to others. Unlike, other directors from the same generation Kim Kiduk hailed from an environment that was far from academic. There was no way for him to come in contact with any of the arts, let alone film, and so faced with this situation he chose the military and entered the marines when he was twenty as a sergeant and stayed until he was twenty-five. This is perhaps why it is so easy to find traces of Kim's own persona in the character Sergeant Kim in *Coast Guard*. His experience in the army is the first aspect of his life that formed his cinematic imagination. The problems between the individual and aspects of the army naturally became the foundations for *Address Unknown* and film *Coast Guard*. In *Wild Animals* there is a masculine and soldier-esque friendship between the South Korean painter Chunghae and the North Korean soldier Hongsan. You cannot know who you meet and what you met in the army. Perhaps it is the young men obsessed with the myth of victory and North Korea film in *Coast Guard*. Private Kang shows his excessively violent nature in his desire to achieve his goal of killing a spy. However, he mistakenly murders a man in a tragic situation of misrecognition. Or maybe they are the violent people who insulted and tortured the protagonist in

[195] Andrea Bellavita, "Kim Kiduk's films which are not enough," *Seven Film Directors of Korea*, ed., Joo Jinsook (Seoul: Bobooks, 2009), p. 129.

Real Fiction.[196]

As I said before, Kim Kiduk is the most well-known Korean director, but Korean critics in general have been harsh in their treatment of Kim's films, often equating him with his violent male protagonists. Feminists have been particularly critical, calling him a 'psycho' or a 'good-for-nothing filmmaker.' One writer even observed that, based solely on depictions of the family in his films, the director's mother must not have loved him. "It makes me sad," Kim responds, "to read these false and humiliating statements about my family. There are no excuses for these kinds of statements. Personal attacks like this should not have anything to do with my work as a filmmaker."[197] Because of these criticisms, particularly the ones from Korean scholars and reviewers, and because of what he believed to be serious misunderstandings of his films, Kim announced after the release of *Bad Guy* in 2002 that he would stop giving interviews altogether. He is highly suspicious of the few critics who actually have something positive to say about his films, such as Paek Sangbin, a psychiatrist who has called for psychoanalytical readings of Kim's work. Although most of the characters in *Address Unknown* are based on the director's childhood memories and personal anecdotes, he remains skeptical of analyses that attempt to unlock the meaning of the films through recourse to his biography. Regarding these anti-Kim Kiduk critics, Marta Merajver-Kurlat has undertaken an interview with Kim, who states:

> There are many diverse feminists, ranging from just a female activist to a female college. When it is a group, some movies become their flag or, in my films' case, it becomes their political target. There are times when only a cut from my movies is required for their ideology, but if you watch my entire film, you may consider me to be a feminist. Therefore, I think there are various possible interpretations. Whether they use my films to be a model of female derogation or a weapon, all in each case is their problem. If they find my movies unpleasant, that's because they only think of the feminist movement without knowing life as a whole. I make movies about people rather than movies about women.[198]

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[196] Andrea Bellavita, "Kim Kiduk's films which are not enough," *Seven Film Directors of Korea*, ed., Joo Jinsook (Seoul: Bobooks, 2009), pp. 129-130.
[197] For the interview with Jung Seong Il from which this excerpt is derived, see: "Post New Wave Film Director Series: Kim Ki-Duk," *Screening the Past*, 21 November, 2002, www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0902/byfr14a.html.
[198] Marta Merajver-Kurlat, *Kim Ki Duk on movies, the visual language* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2009), p. 27.

In this interview, Kim expresses his wrath against Korean feminist critics. From *Crocodile* in 1996 to *Pieta* in 2012, Kim is still considered as anti-feminist or rape film director. Actually there are two distinctive perspectives on Kim Kiduk's films in Korea. Feminist film critics particularly dislike his films, but in general male film critics defend them. In an interview, Kim says he does not care their response and criticism.

> I sincerely mean it when I say that if women did not exist I would not be able to do anything as a man. To me men and women are two contrasting things like day and night. It is like how there is no black without white, and like how there is no day without night. But why do I keep degrading women? I have always received criticism from feminists. I don't care if they call me a harmful director who would meditate inside a woman's womb. But I am not afraid, if I was a man who sold his woman's body for money, then I am a criminal, not a director and you can put me in jail.[199]

According to female film critic Joo Yooshin, who criticises Kim's films in relation to their representation of female protagonists, recent Korean films are directly attacking and damaging women, physically and psychologically, and in turn taking away their autonomy, their self-esteem and sense of self. At the centre of this exists Kim Kiduk's films, especially in *Bad Guy*. This film is not a bad film for showing violence against women. The important problem is how it is applied, within what context, and how this takes effect politically. As with his previous films, the rage felt by a man living on the bottom of society is concentrated towards women. Blackmail, violence, rape and so on brings a sense of compensation, healing and self-affirmation to the man. The tale of the self-completion of a bad man and the downfall of an ordinary woman is a repeated motif. In the films, male superiority and power only comes from the male, hence the power of the penis is emphasised in a way that is totally unacceptable in reality and this penis fascism which refers to the penis-centred society as the symbolic phallus, not fetishism is passed off as art. The bizarre love that is romanticised in the name of fate keeps repeating a subtle message. The message is based on the idea that the sexual nature of women is that of a prostitute and can truly reach salvation when

[199] Kim Gyeong, "Kim Kiduk confesses himself," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 58.

she accepts this truth. Also it emphasises that this whole process of acceptance is the implementation of a man who loves and understands a woman. In other words, this film is just an act of social excreting by one man who provides no reflection on women. The mere fact that this film exists and is communicated in Korean society is a threat to women and the act of supporting this film for whatever reason is insulting women.[200] Kim Kiduk has already recognised that Korean feminists despise him seriously. But he thinks it is not fair to consider him as a male chauvinist. Furthermore, he insists that he might also be the victim of Korean patriarchal system:

> I have unfairly been made an enemy of women. Some women have called me phallic-oriented macho and some have said that I was capable of turning women I loved into a prostitute and some pity me, saying that I do not know what it is to love because I have never been loved. They can think what they want. Macho? To be honest I don't even know what macho means. There is no doubt that I am the victim of a patriarchal family but there is no way I wanted to be like that defeated tyrant. My mother's influence was more significant.[201]

In contrast, according to female film critic Kim Seemoo, who defends Kim' work, Kim Kiduk is an uncommon director in the way he causes controversy with every film he makes. Critics agree that there is a problem in him portraying women as prostitutes or whore-like in his films. Of course, not all women start as prostitutes in his films but as the film progresses they change into whores. So when *Bad Guy*, a film actually set in a brothel, began production, the criticisms already existed. I think that the mere fact that the female protagonist is a prostitute should not be a target for criticism. The important problem is not the subject itself but how the subject is going to be treated. Just because the woman is a prostitute does not mean the quality of the film will decrease. The subject has nothing to do with aesthetic execution. It has moved beyond the sensationalism that comes with dealing with prostitution. Therefore we have nothing to gain if we merely view this from this perspective.[202]

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[200] Joo Yooshin, Kim Seemoo, "Is *Bad Guy* really bad?," *Donga Ilbo*, 10 January, 2002.

[201] Kim Gyeong, "Kim Kiduk confesses himself," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 57.

[202] Joo Yooshin, Kim Seemoo, "Is *Bad Guy* really bad?," *Donga Ilbo*, 10 January, 2002.

Regarding the concept of love in his films, Kim Kiduk was asked whether he has loved before. He has noted that "my job is to observe people but more essentially it is to love people. Rather I ask those people if they know what love is. If they have loved it was probably within the accepted norms and morals of society but I wonder whether that is all there is to love."[203] According to Kim Kiduk, people who have loved know why Heejin in *The Isle* put fish hooks into her uterus and pulls. Now, people always want a stable position within the safest moral system. But when things get more difficult a system of sadism, self-mutilation and masochism appears. And those things break down. In the end, love is self-mutilation and masochism broken down. Love is a mysterious emotion that sometimes causes self-infliction that is so close to death. Maybe to him, love is a path to rediscovering his animalistic aspect. Love begins at the point where our intellect, morality, social status and class cease to exist.[204]

Outside of Korea, Kim's films have had the most success at the European film festivals. As I mentioned before, since the acceptance of *The Isle* into the Venice International Film Festival, which introduced Kim's work to continental Europe, his films have been shown regularly at the major festival locations—Rotterdam, Cannes, Berlin, Venice—and won numerous international awards and accolades. At the 2004 Berlinale, Kim's status as an auteur was secured when he won the Silver Bear Award for Best Director for *Samaritan Girl*, a film about two teenage girls who prostitute themselves in order to fund a trip to Europe. The jury at the 2004 Venice festival awarded him the same prize for *3-Iron*. His films touch on everything from rape to mutilation and even hints at cannibalism.

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[203] Kim Gyeong, "Kim Kiduk confesses himself," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 58.
[204] Kim Gyeong, "Kim Kiduk confesses himself," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 58.

Hye Seung Chung's monograph, *Kim Ki-duk*[205] investigates "poetically political statement about social marginalization."[206] Chung's study is very informative and wide-ranging on Kim Kiduk. She explains Kim's cinema through Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of *ressentiment* which means a specific kind of anger and resentment mainly explored in *Address Unknown*, *Bad Guy*, *The Isle*, *3-Iron*, *Birdcage Inn*, *Samaritan Girl* and *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter . . . and Spring*. Hye Seung Chung argues that Kim Kiduk's cinema has many controversial issues relating to the historical context of modern Korean society, referring to the extremeness of his films. Also she mentions brutalness in his films, addressing male protagonist swallows fishing hooks in *The Isle*. In particular, she addresses silence among his male characters such like Hanki, Hyunshik and Taeseok.[207]

Adrien Gombeaud and three French film critics wrote a book entitled *Kim Ki Duk*, which was translated in English in 2006.[208]. It is the first full-length book written about Kim Kiduk as filmmaker. Adrien Gombeaud and other critics explore all of Kim's films, from *Crocodile* in 1996 and *The Bow* in 2005. In the book, the critics analyse Kim's work in detail focusing on characters and the director's dominant themes which are violence, unfair society and marginal life, and gender issues. Marta Merajver-Kurlat's monograph, *Kim Ki Duk: On Movies, the Visual Language* is not a theoretical analysis of Kim's films, but this book is important as a biography exploring his life and work, particularly as it includes many interviews with Kim.[209]

Steve Choe has argued that Kim Ki-duk's cinema presents violence or gender politics and questions the meaning of ethics within the global context. He analyses one of Kim's films, *Address*

[205] Hye Seung Chung, *Kim Ki-duk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).
[206] Hye Seung Chung, *Kim Ki-duk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), p. 7.
[207] Hye Seung Chung, "Beyond "Extreme": Rereading Kim Ki-duk's Cinema of Ressentiment," *Journal of Film and Video*, Volume 62, Numbers 1-2, Spring/Summer, 2010, pp. 96-111.
[208] Adrien Gombeaud, Rivière Danièle, Demir Anaïd, Lagandré Cédric, and Capdeville-Zeng Catherine, *Kim Ki Duk*, Paul Buck and Catherine Petit, trans. (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 2006).
[209] Marta Merajver-Kurlat, *Kim Ki Duk: On Movies, the Visual Language* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2009).

Unknown regarding its ethical relationships.[210] By the same token, Chuck Kleinhans has explored that *Address Unknown* raises the question of a political allegory of modern Korea in 1970s, especially focusing on violence and social injustice through a U.S. military base town.[211] Steven Rawle has noted that Miike Takashi and Kim Kiduk construct the extreme movement of Asian cinema. In his article, Rawle explores translationalism between these well-known directors and fractured identity and gender issues in *The Isle* and *Bad Guy*.[212] Min Hyunjin analyses closely Kim Kiduk's three films, *Crocodile*, *The Isle* and *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter… and Spring*. He approaches to Deleuze's notions of affect and sensation with Kim's these three films, referring to Deleuze's two Cinema books, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*.[213]

According to Kang Seongryul who is a film critic and has an amicable attitude to Kim Kiduk's work, a larger premise of Kim Kiduk's films is that capitalism is sick. As capitalism is not operating properly because of this sickness, those who suffer from it are not the established sector of society but the lower-class people. Kim Kiduk describes this fact too boldly. In his films, a lower-class male who lives an animal-like life appears. All he does is to harass those who are weaker than himself using force in order to maintain his life. As he is a male, a screen often appears in which a female, who is considered weaker than himself, is being exploited. Also, as he is a grown-up, a screen also appears naturally in which a child is being exploited by an adult.[214] As Seongryul argues, this current keeps on appearing in almost all of Kim Kiduk's films. Only different methods of presentation are being employed to describe this lower echelon life of the sick capitalist system. In *Address Unknown*, Kim Kiduk finds its main reason in the Korean War and the culture of American soldiers. In *The Coast Guard*, he questions how the Marine Corps makes a man crazy in a time of national division.

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[210] Steve Choe, "Kim Ki-duk's Cinema of Cruelty: Ethics and Spectatorship in the Global Economy," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, Volume 15, Number 1, Spring, 2007, pp. 65-90.
[211] Chuck Kleinhans, "Dog Eat Dog: Neo-imperialism in Kim Ki-duk's *Address Unknown*," *Visual Anthropology*, Volume 22, Issue 2-3, 2009, pp. 182-199.
[212] Steven Rawle, "From The Black Society to The Isle: Miike Takashi and Kim Ki-Duk at the intersection of Asia Extreme," *Journal of Japanese & Korean Cinema*, Volume 1, Number 2, 1 December 2009, pp. 167-184.
[213] Min Hyunjun, Kim Ki-duk and the Cinema of Sensations, PhD Thesis, University of Maryland, 2008.
[214] Kang Seongryul, 'Kim Kiduk and Salvation of Sick Capitalism,' *Open History*, Vol. 49, 2012, p. 243.

In *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter… and Spring*, he draws on how people fare or suffer after joining secular life against the backdrop of Buddhism. Kim Kiduk goes on. In *Samaritan Girl*, he lays out a punishment on paid sexual exchange with a minor as unethical. In *3-Iron*, he renders a figure of suffering female in class-oriented social order. And in *Time*, he criticises a phenomenon of capitalist society that allows plastic surgery of human body.[215] In particular, the main texts in this chapter, *Bad Guy* and *The Isle* also represent the unfair society and the lower-class people's real life. To sum up, Kim Kiduk reenacts aspects of lower class life minutely one by one who are suffered from trauma and marginalised by the society.

In contrast, Tony Rayns fiercely criticised Kim Kiduk as did other Korean feminist film critics, Yu Gina, Joo Yooshin, and Seo Insook.

> Even those who have never sat through a Kim Ki-duk film may have gathered from these thumbnail descriptions that he is not a master of psychosexual sophistication. Nor, as it happens, is he a great director of actors or an acute analyst of Korean society, politics, or history. In fact, to be frank, the writer-director you can infer from his films comes across as just a teensy bit naive when it comes to sexual politics, social criticism, and religious inklings. But he does have two things going for him. One, he's an instinctive provocateur, as gleefully malicious in his punishment of audiences as Fassbinder ever was. Two, he comes up with the occasional visual-dramatic idea that's simply terrific, such as the accidental liebestod at the bottom of the Han River in the final reel of *Crocodile*, or the Chinese calligraphy written using a live cat's tail as the brush in *Spring, Summer*.[216]

In his attack on Kim's films, he describes them as being very naïve and tough. In addition, his work is not unique and just copied Fassbinder's style. As a result, Rayns believes Kim is one of the most overrated director in Korean cinema so far. However, Rayns admits his international renown, when he begins his article in *Film Comment*. According to him, "There's no doubt that Kim Ki-duk is a singular, possibly unique, figure in world cinema. He's an authentic primitive, an autodidact who has successfully parlayed his limited talents into an international career. Achieving this took both hard work (he has made at least one feature a year since 1996) and luck, but he couldn't have done

[215] Kang Seongryul, "Kim Kiduk and Salvation of Sick Capitalism," *Open History*, Vol. 49, 2012, p. 244.
[216] Tony Rayns, "Sexual Terrorism: The Strange Case of Kim Ki-Duk," *Film Comment*, 40. 6, 2004, pp. 50-51.

it without the help of several European stooges."[217] He argues that Kim Kiduk is better known at least in Europe than Im Kwontaek, Lee Changdong, Hong Sangsoo, Jang Sunwoo, and Bong Joonho.[218] Rayns is interested in only the poor visual style of Kim. Apparently, his ostensible reason to criticise the films (in particular, he mentions Kim's visual-dramatic idea is simply terrific) is that they are uncomfortable to watch.

Meanwhile, Thomas Elsaesser investigates realism in world cinema, focusing on Kim Kiduk's *3-Iron* as new realism and space. He argues that "the new ontology is characterized by 'ubiquity', here defined as the felt presence of pure space."[219] Regarding Tony Rayns' article, Thomas Elsaesser argues like below:

> No doubt there are any number of interpretations of this strange tale, perhaps even an old Chinese or Korean ghost story, from which the central idea is taken. There is certainly the accusation, made by Tony Rayns, that Kim Ki- duk 'shamelessly plagiarized Tsai Ming-liang's Vive l'amour' (Rayns, 2004, pp. 50–1), but what is intriguing is the extent to which *Bin jip* [3-Iron] responds to, and indeed expands on, the idea of ubiquity (and its corollary, invisible presence) to produce a new concept of cinematic indexicality and evidence, while 'educating' the spectator into another mode of 'being present'.[220]

In addition, Elsaesser points out the relationship in Kim's films as triangular. According to him, "many of Kim Ki-duk's films are 'boy meets girl' stories, or tales of doomed romantic love, which he complicates by having a third person interfere – often enough an older man, a father figure, a patriarchal husband, or other representative of authority and the law."[221] Actually, we can see love triangle in Kim films such like Seonhwa, Taeseok, Minkyu who is Seonhwa's husband in *3-Iron* and Hanki, Seonhwa, Hyunsoo who is Seonhwa's boyfriend in *Bad Guy*. I will show the examples of these perverted triangular relationships.

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[217] Tony Rayns, "Sexual Terrorism: The Strange Case of Kim Ki-Duk," *Film Comment*, 40. 6, 2004, p. 50.
[218] Tony Rayns, "Sexual Terrorism: The Strange Case of Kim Ki-Duk," *Film Comment*, 40. 6, 2004, p. 50.
[219] Thomas Elsaesser, "World Cinema: Realism, Evidence, Presence," eds. Lucia Nagib and Cecilia Mello, *Realism and the Audiovisual Media* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 12.
[220] Thomas Elsaesser, "World Cinema: Realism, Evidence, Presence," eds. Lucia Nagib and Cecilia Mello, *Realism and the Audiovisual Media* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 14.
[221] Thomas Elsaesser, "World Cinema: Realism, Evidence, Presence," eds. Lucia Nagib and Cecilia Mello, *Realism and the Audiovisual Media* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 13.

Paralysed Men: Hanki and Hyunshik

Kim Kiduk repeatedly displays very similar characters in films such as *3-Iron*, *The Coast Guard*, *The Isle*, *Crocodile*, *Wild Animals* and *Bad Guy*. It is these similarities that allow his films to create a certain kind of masculinity when combined. First the most notable of these is the similarity of main characters. For instance, the name Seonwha is used in *3-Iron*, *The Coast Guard*, and *Bad Guy*. In *3-Iron* Seonwha is a housewife, physically abused by her husband, in *The Coast Guard* Seonwha is the college girlfriend of Private Kang, and lastly in *Bad Guy* Seonwha is a college student who turns into a prostitute by Hanki. Not only are names used repeatedly, similar character set-ups can also be found. The beach Hanki and Seonwha drive to in *Bad Guy* is the setting for *Birdcage Inn*, this similarity also draws similarities between Seonwha and Jinah. Also the characters Yongpae, Chunghae, Mangchi, Gaenoon, and Hanki are all portrayed by the actor Cho Jaehyun in *Crocodile*, *Wild Animals*, *The Isle*, *Address Unknown*, and *Bad Guy* respectively, showing the similarities of a continuation of traumatic masculinity.

Kim Kiduk's films show frequent acts of cruelty and earlier films are no exceptions. Because Kim wants to depict his characters' unsettled mind caused to express severe violence and cruelty later. In *Crocodile*, Jeon Musong is trapped in a coffee vending machine he treasures and is killed by a boy that he treated as if his grandson, who unknowingly shoots the vending machine with him trapped inside. To add to this, Cho Jaehyun then drinks from the vending machine and in turn drinks the man's blood. In *Wild Animals*, the same actor, Cho Jaehyun impales the man who hurts the woman he loves. In *The Isle*, the fish hook scenes are not the only violent scenes in the film, a woman is bound by her hands and feet and drowns in the water, fish are flayed whilst still alive and are released back into the water bleeding and with half their flesh torn away, frogs smashed against rocks and then skinned to be eaten right away, fish being electrocuted etc.

In the film *Crocodile* Cho Jaehyun plays a character who robs people of their money while they are trying to commit suicide at the Han River, and then proceeds to lose that money through playing poker. His anger is shown in his violence towards the weak and also through rape, but he also shows avoidance of society in the form of handcuffing himself to the body of a dead woman and drowning. Death itself is avoidance in this film. His character in *Wild Animals* is also the same. He is an art student studying art in Paris but is reduced to stealing other people's art work and selling them. His anger always results in him starting brawls in the streets and being beaten to a pulp. He chose Paris as a means of avoidance but in the ends up living under the control of the local gang there.

The Isle, as well as previous works all portrays the socially depraved and the outcast. These are common subjects dealt within cultural media but Kim Kiduk focuses on the hatred and the avoidance of the depraved and socially out cast. In *The Isle*, Hyunshik is a character who murders his lover for sleeping with another man and has hidden hatred. Heejin does not explain her hatred but she hates the world, this hatred takes on the form of silence. She sells drinks and her body but does not respond to the gaggle of men who bait her. Here, one may wonder if her silence is indeed deliberate and not some disability but I would argue that this silence is a personal choice. This is because of the sequence where Heejin resists Hyunshik's attempt at rape but understands his sexual impulses and emotions and calls a brothel by phone for a girl to service him. This scene is possible because Heejin chooses not to speak, and her deliberate silence stems from her hatred.

The cruellest scene during the film is when Hyunshik is dragged out of a bathroom after he has shoved a fish hook down his throat and when Heejin places fish hooks in her vagina and thrashes around while her pure white skirt becomes stained with her blood. But these scenes betray a sense of intense loneliness rather than just emphasising cruelty. It also expresses the feeble relationships that people living in modern society form by manifesting it in the form of a hook and

float. It is also a metaphor for the human obsession with 'fishing' other people's body and soul and not resting until they possess it for themselves.

Even though it is arguable as to whether Kim's films make direct reference to Stockholm syndrome — a hostage's sympathetic response to the hostage-taker — Kim's two films are narratively based on Stockholm syndrome which means. Seonhwa and Heejin have sympathy with two male protagonists, Hanki and Hyunshik. In *The Isle*, director Kim illustrates the relationship between Hyunshik and Heejin who are isolated from the world. In other words, I would argue that Stockholm syndrome here serves more to signal the bringing together of those marginalised and rendered 'other' by society. For Seonhwa and Heejin, the two male protagonist are hostage-takers. Nevertheless, the two women have a sympathy to Hanki and Hyunshik who are suffering from trauma. That is why the film's mise-en-scène can be viewed as being both beautiful and grotesque at the same time. He was a police officer before shooting his girlfriend. Heejin has sympathy with Hyunshik who escapes from his guilt, even though he was so aggressive to her. There is one reason why they have Stockholm syndrome for two male protagonists.

In *Bad Guy*, one day Hanki finds a beautiful college student sitting on a park bench. He is attracted to her suddenly. However, she disgusts him when he glances at her and sits down beside her. He is still attracted to her. So, he decides to make her a prostitute. Even though a man tries to rape a girl, he could not go through with it himself, and the audiences have to decide whether the man is really a bad guy, or not. In this film the male protagonist has an Oedipal complex. This Oedipal complex is his trauma which he could not remember, but experience. For instance, Hanki has lost his masculinity for a long time because he could not access the Name-of-the-Father as an Oedipal complex during his childhood.

The relationship to the father is a theme that is prominent in Kim Kiduk's autobiography.

Here, he relates that the first place he went to escape his very violent and patriarchal father was the marines. He volunteered because he thought that the marines could not be worse than staying at home with his father but suddenly he came to realise that the violence and oppression there was not so different to that of his father's. It was the same with his studying abroad in France. When people considered working for one the major corporations like Samsung to being in the elite class, he did not even qualify to apply with his academic record. It was this inferiority and fear of his father that he ran away from when he went to France. Indeed, he could not hate his father despite all that he did, he was a victim himself. From this perspective, one can read the son and father from *Address Unknown* as basically a self-portrait of the director and his father. His father still writes to the prime minister every 25th of June. The letter is always about how he sacrificed himself and received bullet wounds for his country and how he should receive compensation. It has been going on for decades with no result, it is really quite tragic in Kim's real life. Normally most people just give up and cut their losses short but this man keeps insisting that the country compensate and he takes out his anger and frustration on his children. This is the saddest comedy of his life. But he grew to understand his father after he married and had children of his own. Now that poor man only looks forward to say that he is the father of Kim Kiduk.[222] As a result, the absence of his father develops not only his trauma, but also male protagonists' trauma in his films. Indeed, Hanki has never seen such a beautiful lady, as he has lived with his mother and a few prostitutes surrounding him. When he saw her, he burst out his latent trauma.

In the meantime, Kang Seongryul argues that Kim Kiduk gradually reduced the amount of dialogue employed in his films. Instead, he reenacts the possibility of salvation from suffering through practice of asceticism or wading through everyday life. In the last chapter of *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter… and Spring*, not a single line of dialogue is employed. And then, in *3-Iron*, the high point of Kim Kiduk's films by many accounts, this tendency seems to have found its completion.

[222] Kim Kiduk, "Movie is my struggle," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 46.

Still, his films underwent numerous transformations from *Samaritan Girl* to *Time*, *Breath*, and *Dream*. In *Arirang*, which may be called a self-documentary, the number of dialogues between characters was reduced to just a few, including scenes where he talks with another self. Because there is nobody in *Arirang,* Kim Kiduk talks alone. In *Amen*, all you can hear is a few utterances where the heroine calls the name of her boyfriend. You might say he is more experienced now and looks more like a true artist. He no longer exhibits anything raw but tries to deliver his visual image and silent action allegorically. More and more, his recent films resemble intellectuals' films telling what he wants to say in a roundabout way. In the process, you may say the power of his strong appeal somewhat receded.[223]

Throughout all his films, it is a little contradiction to say that silence is also an important method of communication. The male characters of Kim Kiduk are mostly silent. But the silence is depicted as and more intense than the silence of women in his films. Changgook from *Address Unknown*, Hanki from *Bad Guy*, Taeseok from *3-Iron*, the elderly man in *The Bow*, the executioner in *Breath* all have minimal or no lines at all. It is through silence that they communicate. Even though Changgook can speak fluent English, he does not speak unless completely necessary, this is because of his problems with his mother and his negative feelings towards his father's country; America. The reason why they find speech uncomfortable is because they feel uncomfortable communicating through a systematic language that most people in society use. Therefore, when even silence cannot express their feelings, they communicate through violence, which is the language of the body.

Violence is direct, primitive and destructive. That is why the screen is full of blood and profanity. Yongpae and Hanki grew up in the wild and never learnt to suppress their instincts. These savage men only view women as a way of fulfilling their animalistic urges. The reason why the male characters are so obsessed with sex and rely on primitive violence is because of family, especially their mothers. The only character who has a mother in Kim Kiduk's films is Changgook

[223] Kang Seongryul, "Kim Kiduk and Salvation of Sick Capitalism," *Open History*, Vol. 49, 2012, p. 247.

in *Address Unknown*. Here, an absence in family and mothers resulting in lack of socialisation skills is the root of male violence.

Sexual violence towards women and an absence of mother figures in Kim's films paradoxically show the goals of the film. It is paradoxical in the way that it shows something to get across the point that it is the very thing that is lacking. It also shows the value of something by using the absence of that very thing to emphasise its importance. So the violence and absence is a methodological violence and methodological absence that emphasises communication and reconciliation as a way to overcome otherness. Violence in men is usually the last resort in escaping from extreme environments in Kim's films. When Yongpae stops his violence towards Hyungjung in *Crocodile*, he leaves the jungle-like world under the bridge and transcends to peaceful waters and when Hanki from *Bad Guy* leaves the brothel with Seonwha; the victim of his violence, it shows the flipside of male violence. It can be read as a desire for a family with a stable mother-figure.

Female characters are also people belonging in the lower socio economic class. They are also people who are alienated wanderers who cannot find their place in society. Also, they are not the leading forces behind any social change or advancement therefore they are seen as oppressed and discriminated against. Female characters are also alienated from themselves. In Kim's films women do not look in the mirror for themselves because the act of looking at their own face is an act that brings pain. Seonwha is kidnapped and turned into a prostitute in *Bad Guy*, when she looks into the mirror it is not to apply makeup to her face. She was once a college student who now looks into the heavily made up face of a prostitute and wipes her face with lipstick. Her expression is full of despair which contrasts with the faces of other normal women who look into the mirror to beautify themselves. Also in *Birdcage Inn*, Jina and Haemi use the mirror as means to monitor other people. To them, the mirror is only a means to reflect other people.

Enjoy Your Sadism/Masochism

Kim Kiduk's films which involve sadomasochism are not unusual. In fact, his work places sadomasochism as part of everyday narratives. Kim has created stimulatingly violent images in order to illustrate trauma.

[Picture 4-1] *Bad Guy*

In *Bad Guy*, Hanki has installed a specially fitted two-way mirror which lets him look at Seonwha, now a sex worker, having sexual intercourse with her customers. In this scene, he transfers from a sadist into a masochist by watching his lover's sex with the other. In the early stage, he sexually assaults her on the street. In addition, there are many scars in his body. The kinds of body wounds that Hanki has are portrayed throughout most of Kim's work. Kim is interested in characters who are physically wounded. For example, in *Address Unknown*, Changkuk, one of the male protagonists swallows a steel wire and then excretes it.

A sadomasochistic image develops between this unhappy man, Hyunshik and the mute woman, Heejin in *The Isle* and their relationship facilitates a series of extremely violent sex and mutilation scenes. A visitor on the fishing cabin fillets both sides of a live fish before throwing it back into the lake. In addition, Hyunshik in *The Isle* swallows a bunch of fishhooks like Heejin inserts them into her vagina. Thus, Kim has noted like below in relation to masochism:

> These scenes of self-mutilation are all about sadomasochism. They are the only type of immediate responses that my characters are capable of showing. At the same time, the physical wounds are symbols, expressing how the characters are struggling in society. There are a couple of scenes in *Bad Guy* when Han-Ki is wounded by other gangsters in front of Sheon-Hwa [Seonhwa]. I placed Sheon-Hwa [Seonhwa] in these scenes so she could see Han-Ki 's pain rather than hear him talk about it. I only hope the audience can see Han-Ki express his pain through his silence.[224]

[Picture 4-2] Sehee wearing a mask in *Time*

In *Time*, Jiwoo is shocked by his girlfriend, Sehee's desire in order to make him belong to her. She has disappeared to have major plastic surgery to change her same boring face of which she always complains. Six months later, he meets a woman who is called Saihee which means 'new Sehee' in

[224] Jung Seong Il from which this excerpt is derived, see: "Post New Wave Film Director Series: Kim Ki-Duk," *Screening the Past*, November 21, 2002,
[www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0902/byfr14a.html]

Korean. He cannot recognise her because she has been totally changed since undergoing plastic surgery. In the end, she tells him the truth that she is Sehee and wearing a photocopied mask of her old face like the picture above. She wants to go back, but now it is impossible. On the contrary, Jiwoo tries to change his physical identity through the same plastic surgery she had done. He disappears for six months to recover from the surgery. In other words, he discovers sadomasochism by means of plastic surgery like Sehee. Also *Time* describes a modern social issue in Korea constructed on uncertainty. At present, Korea is a country obsessed with plastic surgery. Many women, even men, have this cosmetic surgery.

Wild Animals, Kim's second film is about two male protagonists who are illegal immigrants in Paris, a South Korean painter, Chunghae and a North Korean soldier escaping from the military, Hongsan. This film is based on Kim's experience in Paris. He focuses on their friendship like a buddy film, as they struggle for a living in the city. Hongsan comes to Paris in order to join the Foreign Legion. On the one hand, Chunghae comes to study art in Paris, but he steals other painter's pictures and sells them for a living. Thus, using the innocent Hongsan to make money for himself Chunghae uses innocent Hongsan to make money. Chunghae loves an illegal immigrant, Corinne from Hungary, and Hongsan falls in love with Laura, an adopted Korean woman. Finally, Chunghae's sadistic behaviour and offending eventually brings about his ruin.

In *Samaritan Girl*, two secondary students, Jeayoung and Yeojin make money through prostitution. Jeayoung has sexual relationships with her clients, while her best friend, Yeojin manages her money in order to raise money to go to Europe someday. However, Jeayoung commits suicide and Yeojin takes over Jeayoung's clients. One day, Yeojin's father who is a detective discovers his daughter's misbehaviour. After that, he punishes men who sleep with his daughter with great vindictive rage and agony. The agony that he feels in discovering his daughter's actions results in him taking out his vindictive rage on the men that she sleeps with.

In *Crocodile*, there are a number of malicious rapes, and hysterical beatings. These themes are continuously repeated in his work by his film, *Time*. A violent mugger, Yongpae nicknamed Crocodile lives under a bridge beside the River Han along with an old homeless man and a street boy. She lives with him and gives up escaping from him, because she has no place to go. He rapes and beats her, but falls gradually in love. Unfortunately, she kills herself by means of jumping into water. Her lack of position in society sees her stay with him despite the multiple rapes and beating that he bestows upon her. However, despite the fact that he eventually falls in love she succeeds in committing suicide by drowning. Finally, Yongpae follows her. In the water, he has already made a room with a comfortable sofa and a nice picture on a wall. He places her body on the sofa, and handcuffs himself to her. In this point of view, Anaid Demir has noted that "The body especially is the place for all suffering and if one grapples with all extremities possible it is to better to escape it or prove that one is really and truly made of flesh and blood. Sado-masochism is present in all its cuts, all its burns, and sutures."[225] Hence they kill themselves as a meaning of suture for their salvation. In this fashion suicide becomes the suture that will allow them to obtain salvation.

By the same token, in *Address Unknown*, Changkuk is a half-Korean and half-American teenager and lives with his mother who misses her husband who was a soldier in an American troop in Korea and has gone to the United States. Changkuk's mother sends his father a number of letters and waits for answers for about twenty years, even though they are all returned stamped 'Address Unknown'. In this film, Changkuk can be a victim and harmer in the relationship with his mother at the same time. As I mentioned before, he is discriminated against because he is mixed race. Consequently, his rage against those who look down on him has erupted, killing another harmer towards him and suicide himself.

[225] Anaid Demir, Cédric Lagandré, Catherine Capdeville-Zeng and Danièle Rivière, *Kim Ki Duk* (Paris: Dis voir, 2006), p. 46.

In *Real Fiction*, a street painter illegally taps into telephone calls made from a public phone box. He is presented as very shy and timid. He has been tormented by a variety of figures from a woman who tore up his paintings, his cheating girlfriend and best friend, and insulting photographer. On the surface, his revenge is located in his potential desire. It may, however, be noted that his latent drive to be avenged is finally uncovered. He tries to kill those who have hurt him and made him traumatised in body and mind. He tries to take revenge on those that he sees as responsible for the traumatisation of his mind and body. His crisis in masculinity results in violent revenge against those that he sees as responsible for his anguish. Regarding this, Kim Kiduk explains in his interview at the end of this chapter that all relationships in my films are based on victims and harmers. If we are victims and maltreated, we can be traumatised. Also, this traumatised person can be another harmer towards the relatively weaker, or injure himself or herself. Admittedly, human beings' life is such a competitive hierarchy like food chain.

Sex as Salvation from Trauma

It is known that Kim had become a centre of attention as he received several awards from international film festivals for his films. However, he became famous through the advocacy and criticism of his films. Those who advocate him due to his of excellent methods of handling mise-en-scène or visualisation of the images, call him an auteur or cult director. On the other hand, those who detest cruelty and excessive violence on women along with distorted images of the female characters featured in his films, argue that his films are being overestimated, and severely criticise his works from a feminist viewpoint. Meanwhile, Kim thinks he is saved by his films showing brutality and violence. As we have seen, Kim overcame his inferiority by means of his work.

> To be honest, the reason I am here today is because of my sense of inferiority, and there is

> no doubt that i was influenced by lack of academia and isolation. However, on the flipside there is no doubt that those people who are in the mainstream also have complexes of their own. How could Kim Kiduk, someone who has had such an underprivileged life compare to those learned beings? That's probably what they will say. But I laugh at those people who have read the same books about films and say the same things when they analyse films. They do not have any humanism; all they have is information-oriented criticism. . .. My characters may seem morally bizarre but it is easy to understand them if you ask yourself about the nature of human beings.[226]

The world of Kim Kiduk's works is of self-revelation through the representation of social problems and complex themes of human dignity, forgiveness and reconciliation, participation and salvation. However, his films have failed to attract a wider audience because they have qualities of extreme cruelty, aggressiveness, and hostility towards women and society. He deals with the problems of the inner part of human existence and displays the process of the turn of his thematic consciousness. The sadistic and masochistic demands, perverse expression and aggressiveness towards the social standards which his characters' display, and his disinterest in popularity, are his thematic consciousness as an author which he appears to show through his films.

The male protagonists of Kim Kiduk have sexual partners for their salvation such as Hanki has Seonhwa and Hyunshik has Heejin. To Hanki, Seonhwa is an object of innocence whom he has cannot approach. Even though Seonwha is adulterated, he cannot covet her body. In other words, he made her impure like him by turning her into a prostitute. Therefore, this is an expression of similarity. It is because absolute salvation is not possible without a sense of kinship. In contrary, the body of Heejin is impure to Hyunshik. At first, Hyunshik did not see Heejin as an object of salvation as Heejin tried to redeem Hyunshik who was under suffering. Consequently, sex will be observed as a form of salvation by focusing on *Bad Guy* and *The Isle*. Hanki does not talk much in the film. Kim has pointed out,

> If Hanki were a talkative person, then he might have been seen as a con artist. His silence is a symbol of sincerity. We did have lines for him at first. However, I got rid of them after

[226] Kim Kiduk, "Movie is my struggle," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 55.

> a few practice readings. The same thing happened with the actors in my earlier film *The Isle*. I got rid of most of their lines after I realized how powerful their silence would be.[227]

In *Bad Guy*, Hanki who is a local gangland pimp spots young Seonhwa, a pretty college student, waiting for her boyfriend on a park bench. He sits next to her, creating a disparate scene of two classes in soft harmony, until she sneers at his advances and rushes into the arms of her preppy boyfriend.

[Picture 4-3] *Bad Guy*

Offended, he grabs her and forcefully kisses her. However, Hanki's look is met with contempt and out of rage he kisses her forcefully. He is met with fury from her boyfriend and some passing soldiers and is beaten. Seonwha expresses her spite and loathing for Hanki by spitting on his forehead and this shocking scene re-emphasises Kim Kiduk's style. Seonhwa demands an apology, and when Hanki refuses, he is beaten by a group of soldiers who had witnessed the assault. As a final insult, Seonhwa spits in his face while he is restrained, humiliating him. As the story unfolds,

[227] For the interview with Jung Seong Il from which this excerpt is derived, see: "Post New Wave Film Director Series: Kim Ki-Duk," *Screening the Past*, November 21, 2002,
[www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0902/byfr14a.html]

Hanki's love and loathing for Seonwha turns her into a prostitute and this process is presented to the audience by the director as voyeurism. However, it is a paradox in the way Seonwha begins the love the man who destroyed her life, and then expresses love by screaming "You bastard, how am I supposed to live after you die?" before he is about to be wrongfully executed for murder.

Soon after, Seonhwa makes the mistake of taking a seemingly forgotten wallet filled with cash. She is apprehended by the owner, and forced to a pay a huge sum or be turned in to the police. With no money, she signs a contract that results in her being sold into prostitution to repay the debt. Whisked away to the neon colours of a Seoul brothel, her introduction to street life is harsh and cold, her teacher an iron-hearted woman with only disdain for the untrained Seonhwa. As she is brought into her drab room for her first encounter, we learn who is really behind her imprisonment. Watching from behind a double mirror in her room, Hanki sits. As Seonhwa descends further and further into street life, she becomes a full-fledged prostitute. After a failed escape attempt, Seonhwa is taken to the seashore by Hanki. Here she is confronted with a series of mysterious torn photographs that seem to suggest a hidden past or even a possible pre-determined future between Hanki and herself. Then, Kim Kiduk has noted this film in an interview:

> I hope that most people will agree that Kim Kiduk's stories, settings and characters are all spontaneous. The themes that appear in *Bad Guy* are a theme that I believe that I can really do justice to. There is a question in society that stems from a form of prejudice. That is the question of segregated social institutions. It is a known fact that I am come from a non-institutional background. Even though I try to not to separate everything into "institutional" and "non-institutional", it is still the standard everywhere else. It the same with the way people view me. I have been open about my background and education. Sometimes I am questioned about my past and judged on that instead of the focus going to my films. They deny it, but it is inevitable because they are in the centre. You have to see someone who does not live in the centre to be able to see areas such as these. I wanted to show through the medium of film that these people are not living in a wretched area of life, but they are in fact living within the norms of human behaviour.[228]

Seonwha may not have purified the sins of Hanki and guided him to the road of salvation but she at least provides Hanki with a chance to escape the phallus-centred underworld full of animalistic

[228] Jung Sungil, *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb* (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 347.

violence. The hymn that plays during the epilogue is symbolic. The lyrics of the song talk about the Jesus Christ and by using this hymn, Seonwha is likened to the messiah and it is in this way that this film achieves religious meaning. Seonwha gains religiosity when she purifies the soul of Hanki, who is the epitome of evil, by sacrificing herself. She was the victim of Hanki's monstrous desire and was unwillingly taken down into the underworld. This is also the reason why Seonwha and Hyunjung have different methods of coping. Unlike Hyunjung who gives up and chooses to end her life in the underworld, Seonwha resists and violently opposes the underworld of the others. That is why it is such a reversal when she leaves the brothel with Hanki. The basic relationship of prostitute and pimp remains the same. Seonwha still wanders the seaside looking to sell her body and Hanki still attracts customers for her. However, for Seonwha there is a change in attitude compared to when she was forced to sell her body in the brothel. After the act of prostitution is over, she smokes cigarettes with Hanki, and looks out onto the water with him. It is a scene that signifies that she has overcome the painful process of communication and accepted the world of the others and reached a state of reconciliation with Hanki.

If Seonwha did not exist, and if she did not accept her life as a prostitute, Hanki would still be living as a brothel thug. She is the ultimate factor in deciding Hanki's fate. Seonwha is the biggest victim since she falls from an innocent college girl to a prostitute working in a brothel. It does not matter whether she is working in a brothel or a truck, the fact that she is working as a prostitute means that she is a social and sexual outsider. However, Hanki turning into a pimp from a brothel thug is significant. Hanki enters a family-like structure. Seonwha stops Hanki's soul from further depravity from the moment she allows the two to reach a couple-like relationship of prostitute and pimp.

Meanwhile, in *The Isle*, the owner of the floating fishing cabins, Heejin, is an unspeaking woman who delivers her visitors to floating fishing houses in the lake. She also delivers food and prostitutes to them. Hyunshik is on the run from the police after discovering his wife along with

her lover in bed, he shot both of them. After that, Hyunshik who is a suffering young man comes here and rents a yellow fishing cabin on the lake for a while. She helps him from the pain through having sex with him such as his rescuer.

The audience might think that if the man truly loved Seonwha then he would have let her go back to her life as a college student. If that was the case, then the man's sacrifice could leave a lingering sense of sublimity. Or, the two lovers could abandon their depraved life styles and choose a lifestyle that is more to the social norm. This is a predictable ending regarding the discourse of love. However, it is as if this film laughs in the face of those people. In the last scene of the film, the two renovate the back of a truck to make it similar to a brothel room and travel to the seaside, here they start a life of the woman selling her body to men and Hanki tidying up after Seonwha after she has finished having sex with other men. The film questions what love is by presenting an unusual ending. How are we to view this film that is so different to the ordinary idea of love?

Kim Kiduk has noted that the female character on *The Isle* also sells her body. To which we say that she is not selling her body but merely living with her body. We all utilise parts of our body to maintain a living. Those who do not accept her ways of making a living will classify her into a social category. Misunderstandings such as these are the causes of conflict and that is the cycle in which the world revolves around. Therefore, we do not hate those who criticise; in fact, we wish them to be even more sceptical and stimulate me but only from a more objective point of view. We want people to see *The Isle* as a sad and beautiful film. The extreme scenes in the film are only extreme when viewed for the first time; if you view the film again you will find new emotions, they will be able to see that it really is a lonely film. It is depicts the loneliness of living in the 21st century, the rippling water is the cities we live in and the floating houses on the waters are ourselves.[229] According to Kim, his film represents our inability to reach out to others and our unwillingness

[229] Kim Kiduk, "Movie is my struggle," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), pp. 98-99.

to relinquish people who do walk into our lives. But all of this is a loneliness that everyone living in this time has felt. *The Isle*, as well as many of Kim's films may be hard to understand if you approach sex, violence and love from a conventional point of view. But film has infinite possibilities of expression.

In *Bad Guy* we can see this kind of 'love' in the love that Hanki's subordinate, Myeongsoo, shows towards Seonwha. Unlike Hanki who never shows his feelings, Myeongsoo tells Hanki that it is his wish to date a college girl. Why? Myeongsoo's status is that he is Hanki's underling, he is a social misfit and the narcissism in his ego has been trodden on by society. So possessing Seonwha is a way to get back the narcissism he has lost because her status as a "college girl" is a status that evokes envy in him. Myeonsoo aids Seonwha in escaping from the brothel on the terms that she be his girlfriend, however he helps her with the knowledge that Hanki will catch her and bring her back the brothel. This shows he never intended to let her out of his control and thanks Hanki for bringing her back to the brothel even though he aided in her escape. The act of letting her escape is in fact a ploy to further tie Seonwha to himself so he can cure his trauma. He desires sexual contact with Seonhwa but his trauma makes himself unable to perform the act instead turns the desire for sex into misplaced violence towards the object of his desire. His entire personal narrative is marked by his traumatic sexual and psychological urges and as a result violence ensues. His inability to communicate his needs and societies inability to find a place or a role for him that is not highly marginalised results in Hanki been simultaneously both victim and offender. This can be seen as a selfish 'love' rather than a nurturing love.

Hanki's voyeuristic acts display the scopic drive inherent in all human beings. Not once does he directly require sex from Seonwha, he never approaches her, merely observing her through a window. At the end of this film, Seonwha decides to be a prostitute for Hanki. When Hanki and Seonwha reach the ocean, another Seonwha goes into the ocean and dies; this death is not a literal death but a metaphorical death that is in a way a baptismal event that allows Seonwha to leave her

college-student self and to be reborn. Seonwha, who achieves the ability to change because of Hanki leaves her brothel life and begins her life in a truck offering herself to other men. But actually she has two opportunities to escape during her time in the brothel. However, she returns and waits for Hanki time after time. She looks like accepting male rape fantasy filled with the desire as salvation.

In *The Isle*, Heejin places fish hooks into her uterus to make Hyunshik return. Making Hyunshik return to her is a sacrificial act of rescue because Heejin does this with the knowledge if Hyunshik were to leave he would be caught by investigators who would arrest him and take away his freedom, or Hyunshik can try kill himself again. It is this reason why Heejin sacrifices herself to return Hyunshik to the uterus and assist in his rebirth. Like Seonwha in *Bad Guy*, Heejin sacrifies for men as salvation in terms of prostitution.

Before humans are brought out from the womb they live in amniotic fluid for 10 months; a perfect environment that provides them with every need. But after they come out into the world the world is full of unfulfilled desire they never experienced while in the amniotic fluid. Sometimes you cannot count on love and sometimes people must be wary of other people. However, in retrospect, it can be said that these people have forgotten what it was like to have come from that perfect place within the womb. The feeling of unfulfilled desire increases as the days go by and the feeling of absence becomes worse. At first what was just a simple feeling of unfulfilled desire develops in proportion and in turn transforms into dangerous desire. This is the reason why human desire is fundamentally dangerous sometimes, whenever he or she wants to have unfulfilled desire.

That is why the last scene of the film has such a lasting impact. The imagery of walking back into the maternal amniotic waters is a symbol of salvation. Also, in Kim Kiduk's films, a river or sea often appears as the spatial background. He transforms the images of sea or river into a symbol. Water, with its life line-like property, is used as a device that can save violent people. Reading this

symbol is the step in finishing the film *The Isle*. Depending on the trend people call it bizarre or grotesque. His manic quality is revealed in the film *The Isle* and the fish hook is the tool that reveals this quality. According to Kim Kiduk in an interview,

> I want to represent our original body without any accessories which make us hide our faults and shame. Then, it is not important to know good from evil. I would like to express the point or moment focusing on human beings for human beings' sake.[230]

Kim represents the original body with womb here, even though it looks like hurting oneself. To accurately describe the womb in the film *The Isle* would be to describe it as a bleeding womb punctured with fish hooks. This is a passionate protest against the world as well as an attempt to keep one man from leaving. Mute Heejin begins to accept the world after meeting Hyunshik and the womb is the passage to accepting the world and the fish hook that pierces the womb is the obsessive fear of losing that passage and the fishing line attached to it is the line that connects her to the world as if a baby has an umbilical cord in the womb. In this scene, Heejin wants strongly to rebirth connecting the cord. Therefore, we can see there both her death and rebirth.

The salvation that Huynshik seeks in a film is to leave the reality as we know it. He can choose death instead of living like an animal, or put himself in a state that is not much different from death, or live an out-of-this-world life in solitary supremacy. In *Crocodile*, Akeo dies in the end. There is no way out for him other than death. In *Isle*, the hero of the film drifts away as if he is dead. In *Address Unknown*, a mixed-blood dies as if he committed suicide and his mother becomes one with him by eating his dead body. In *Samaritan Girl*, the father who punished her daughter and her partner in sexual intercourse for favours goes to jail. In *3-Iron* or *Empty House*, the couple continues to love each other as if they were out of this world. One dies or gets out of the mundane world, or lives one's life in a false recognition that he or she finally got out of this world. That is the method of salvation for Kim himself.[231]

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[230] See the interview with Kim at the end of this chapter.
[231] Kang Seongryul, "Kim Kiduk and Salvation of Sick Capitalism," *Open History*, Vol. 49, 2012, p. 246.

The setting of *The Isle* is the most striking aspect of the film. In the first scene, the foggy river and the houses floating on top of it look like islands that make up one archipelago. Also, the silhouette of the ferries drifting between the islands make the film look like it was taken straight from an oriental painting. *The Isle* is frequently taken as a metaphor the isolated relationships between people, as the movie progresses into the second half; the sense of isolation is deepened. The fog becomes thicker, and the bungalows visible through the fog seem more quiet and further apart from each other. So when the film reaches its end, the mise-en-scène becomes more like an abstract painting.[232]

Also in *Crocodile*, Akeo rescues a raped woman who tries to commit suicide by throwing herself in the river and then continues to rape her again. However, she returns to the river and forms a relationship with the crocodile representing the woman who embrace the world even though she receives pain. Even in *Birdcage Inn* the prostitute and the college girl who were in conflict with each other understand and relate to each other and end with the college girl offering her womb in place of the prostitute's. Water, in Kim Kiduk's films is an omnipresent force that also symbolises the womb. In *Crocodile*, Hyunjung dives into water and enters Yongpae's space, and through hardship enters the water again and faces death (salvation). In *Wild Animals*, Chunghae and Hongsan are captured by gangs and are forced to descend into the water and then return to the world. They are killed by Laura. In *Birdcage Inn*, Jina gives water to the goldfish that symbolises Jina and the prostitute before her; she eventually reaches freedom by working together with Hyemi's family.

Seonwha from *Bad Guy* did not realise she had another side to herself and also did not realise that she could become a social and sexual outcast. She was from a middle class background which is unusual for a character in one of Kim Kiduk's films, she was a normal, shy girl who had an

[232] Baek Moonim, "Fishing education, making relationship through trauma," *Kim Kiduk: Wild Life or Sacrificial Little Lamb*, ed. Jung Sungil (Seoul: Haebokhanchaekilgi, 2003), p. 217.

introverted boyfriend. She is wearing white clothes at the beginning of the film. This emphasises her character that symbolises the world of good. Seonwha falls under the plans of Hanki, the king pin of the brothel, and signs a disclaimer to her body and is kidnapped by Hanki and taken to the brothel. The brothel is place that Seonwha has never experienced before and is a monstrous underworld to her. To her, Hanki is a monster, and his appearance is the trigger that allows the hidden self that lay within her to surface. To her this is an unimaginable reality.

Discovering your other side is a painful process. It is not because of weakness on Seonwha's part, it is also not a problem prevalent in Seonwha. It is the universal problem in humans to often demonise the self, due to fear. Seonwha's behaviour is merely a conventional and customary reaction; she became a prisoner of the devil. However, to Hanki, Seonwha is his other. She is the different form of god that was repressed within in the monster. Just like outsiders and monsters, to humans. To Hanki, the universal human emotion of love is strange and frightening to him. In addition, to him, interacting with Seonwha is not like interacting with a normal prostitute from the lower class. To Hanki, Seonwha is like a goddess and kidnapping her was like awakening his inner/other self.

Although Hanki is the one who kidnaps Seonwha, he does not desecrate her himself. He leaves her as a symbol of abstinence and treats her as a forbidden figure. According the Greek and Roman legends, Hade does not consummate with Persephone for a long time after he kidnaps her. It is because of the respect for the sacredness of virginity and the ideal self. It is in that aspect that Hanki and Hades; the two kings of the underworld, are alike.

The characters in Kim's films also do not have homes. They live in such areas as under the Han River bridge in *Crocodile*, brothels in *Bad Guy*, military towns in *Address Unknown*, water front military base camps and sashimi houses in *Coast Guard*. These places are all places that are cut off from the outside world. In this absence of traditional domestic space, Kim's films bear a connection to characteristics identified with film noir, and in both the case of 1940s Hollywood

noir, and the films of Kim Kiduk, this might be connected to contemporary social and political upheaval. In relation to homelessness in noir, Vivian Sobchack has noted that "a house is almost never a home. Indeed, the loss of home becomes a structuring absence in film noir."[233] Continually she points out the absence of home in details.

> The intimacy and security of home and the integrity and solidity of the home front are lost to wartime and postwar America and to those films we associate at both the core and periphery of that cinematic grouping we circumscribe as noir. Both during and after the war, the phenomenological coherence of the domestic life of family and home was shattered, dispersed, and concretely re-membered elsewhere: in hotels and boradinghouse rooms and motels, in dinners, in bars, in swanky and seedy cocktail lounges and nightclubs, all places for transietnts, all fragmented, rented social spaces rather than coherently generated palces of social communion, all substitues for the intimate and integral domestic space of home.[234]

According to her, the loss of home in film noir is based on showing characters suffering from the social trauma like the Second World War. By the same token, these closed areas incubate an environment where a normal family structure cannot be formed and leads into an abnormal lifestyle in Kim's films. Even if those places take on the form of houses, they are mostly unstable and fluid. Places such as the bungalow, temple and fishing boat in The Isle and *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter… and Spring* and *The Bow* all provide basic necessities but those structures are fluid houses on water. The normal family home or a typical family is not a common feature of a Kim's films. On the surface level, the only common feature is the conflict between men and women and violence and hatred. Through showing divided families and the barren inner workings of the individual, Kim paradoxically emphasises the meaning and importance of family.

Conclusion

[233] Vivian Sobchack, "Lounge Time: Postwar Crisis and the Chronotope of Film Noir," Edited by Nick Browne, *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, University of California Press, 1998, p. 144.
[234] Vivian Sobchack, "Lounge Time: Postwar Crisis and the Chronotope of Film Noir," Edited by Nick Browne, *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, University of California Press, 1998, p. 146.

The ineffectual nature of masculinity in terms of the social and historical legacy of Korea's past results in male violence towards women becoming the means through which they can exercise the power that they are unable to exercise in the wider political and social sense. Kim utilises props to deliver meaning. For example, the copper swing is to evoke empathy and interest in her loneliness, fish to show her rejection of biocide, the bicycle to show her need to regress back into a free life, the hanged man to show her scepticism regarding her own life etc. The thoughts and feelings of the man are expressed without the need for words by props alone. The motor boat and the rowing-boat show the duality and hypocrisy in human nature, so does the prostitution that comes in the guise of delivering coffee. The *soju* bottle and the copper swing representing loneliness are also example of props and sets that contribute to the excellent mise-en-scène.

In *The Isle*, also, when introducing the characters most of them are shown through the window and it is this physical sense of enclosed space that expresses the inner emotional repression of these characters, especially the shot where a steel-covered window reveals the interior just enough for the audience to make out the female protagonist leaning against the side. This shows her loneliness and the dissatisfaction in her life.

The Isle subtly questions human want and delivers a message about the way to salvation. This film is the film that is the most Kim Kiduk-esque. Every scene uses mise-en-scène to its fullest and is loaded with symbolic imagery; a trademark characteristic of Kim Kiduk. However, absence and salvation is expressed in the most horrible and violent way. The frequent portrayal of self-mutilation and murder, and the unexplainable sense of anxiety within the characters make us feel uneasy because it is as if that same anxiety is within our own sub-conscious.

In *The Isle*, Kim Kiduk uses paradoxical angles during these following scenes; the phone conversation of the hypocritical fisherman. The shot where the camera looks up at the fisherman

through the water, and the money scattered across the water. During this scene the audience experiences a resistance in accepting the image and feels alienated because of the juxtaposing of the camera angles with the message, this shock is intended to make the audience look upon themselves.

If you observe many of Kim Kiduk's work, you may be able to take note of the different coloured sets and various symbols. In *The Isle* you can observe the blue water contrasted with the red of the setting sun and the yellow, blue, green and purple bungalows that each holds a different meaning. The yellow bungalow is the place of love in this film; the love triangle between the coffee delivery girl, the man and the female owner of the bungalow takes place in this setting. In the purple bungalow the death of the coffee delivery girl occurs and the pimp discards a dead body there and also the cruel handling of fish all happen here.

The excellent use of mise-en-scène is also the reason why we are able to see connections across his films. *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* and *The Isle* use the same set which is why we are able to see the point he makes about people living in suspension in both films. People in denial of reality and people who wish to return to innocence are common characters in his films.

Interview with Kim Kiduk[235]

Lee: You appropriately combine realistic images with abstract images in your films. Namely, your films are very realistic, but sometimes we can find some non-realistic scenes. Why do you use these scenes?

Kim: We are happy or unhappy with the physical reality of our present life. I believe that there is another value in mind we cannot see it. In other words, it can be a fantasy. Whenever I made a film, I use fantasy in order to console myself and others in our misfortune. As you know that, our real life is not happy, even though we have a lot of money, reputation, and power. I want to represent our original body without any accessories which make us hide our faults and shame. Then, it is not important to know good from evil. I would like to express the point or moment focusing on human beings for human beings' sake.

Lee: Why do you often use violence such as self-injury, beatings, murder, and rape in your films?

Kim: In my films, all relationships are based on victims and harmers. This relationship can be natural in our life. You can see victims and harmers in the history of world. Besides, it is very meaningful that the hegemonic relationship can be changed between them. If we are victims and maltreated, we can be traumatised. Also, this traumatised person can be another harmer towards the relatively weaker, or injure himself or herself. Admittedly, human beings' life is such a competitive hierarchy like food chain.

[235] This interview was carried out with questions to Kim Kiduk by email on January 21, 2008. His answers are dated on January 22, 2008.

Lee: I know you were a street painter in Paris once. I think you are interested in mise-en-scene. Specially, props and space in your films are quite unique. Why are you keen on these?

Kim: Generally, I make a film with low budget. In other words, I do not have enough money to make a film. So I use space and props to express different human beings' images. In my case, I want to show different images in a space as many as I can. There are three things in my films: space, characters, and props. First of all, space is a basis of my films among them.

Lee: In *The Isle* and *Bad Guy*, male protagonists look very powerful. On the other hand, they reveal their internal weakness as a man. It means that they have double images referring to weakness and strength at the same time. As far as I know, they are wounded and traumatised by the relationship with others'. For example, we can see traumatic men like Hyunshik in *The Isle*, Hanki in *Bad Guy*, and Private Kang in *The Coast Guard*. What do you think about them?

Kim: I believe that even though men are stronger than women in Korea, they can be refined by women. As you know, we think fathers have more power in the family than mother in Korea. But mothers are stronger than fathers in reality. By the same token, male protagonists in my films look like stronger than women, but they are frail men. In Korean society, once the military was the only place to make men stronger and manlier. Not any more. For instance, Private Kang tries to get his false image of masculinity. He is really a poor man suffering from an obsession. Even among those who look like him, some feel compelled to rationalise it.

Lee: In my point of view, your initial works from *Crocodile*, *Wild Animals* to *The Coast Guard* are very violent, and we can see some rage or wrath against our society. Also they are looking for salvation. From *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring,* your films gradually began to change. If you agree with me, is there any reason?

Kim: I agree with you. I wanted to express rage and wildness through my initial films. But now I would like to see the world around us from a different point of view unlike my early films. I think directors as authors need to change which you can not find in the previous works. I still do not know what the world is. What is a human being?

Chapter Five

Personal Trauma Within the Larger Historical Context in *Peppermint Candy* and *Oasis*

The reverse chronology in Peppermint Candy is a form of searching for identity…
In Oasis, because Gongju is disabled, communication itself is blocked.
Jongdu is a troublemaker who seeks out other kinds of communication.
He annoys people and makes them feel uncomfortable.

Lee Changdong[236]

I have argued in previous chapters that many men in present Korean society long for a time when men had a monopoly of power. A troubled sense of yearning implies that a person who wants to avoid the present tries to recall the past. Men's nostalgia for the past is a factor that helps to explain why male protagonists in contemporary Korean cinema experience hardships. The responses of masculinity in a crisis as represented in recent Korean films articulate a desired return to the past, to the recovery of earlier gender relationships in modern Korean society, which constitutes a regression into fantasy and nostalgia. Against this context, in this chapter, I will explore two films by the director Lee Changdong; *Peppermint Candy* (2000) and *Oasis* (2002), and address issues including nostalgia, fantasy, and Christianity, as well as the films' use of particular devices such as flashback. I will also place the films within the director's broader work and style. Lee's films are noted for their engagement with certain aspects in Korean society through an approach that can be

[236] Kim Youngjin, *Lee Chang-dong* (Seoul: Seoul Selection, 2007), p. 61.

identified as social realism. By this term I wish to infer that Lee's films often highlight problems in Korean society that affect the working class and the socially disadvantaged, including the disabled and labourers. His films provide an opportunity for thinking once again about the classes that Korean society has forgotten. This is a common theme in all of his films, not just in *Peppermint Candy* and *Oasis*. Lee's films are also known for their reinterpretation of the Christian understanding of salvation. Salvation in Christianity is a fundamental element maintained through religious belief and prayer, but Lee indirectly challenges this. Although Christianity features repeatedly in his films, they are ultimately anti-Christian overall. For example, in *Peppermint Candy* and *Oasis*, characters are seen praying, but this is depicted as nothing more than an ostentatious religious seriousness, where prayer has lost its true meaning. Although Lee has claimed in interviews said his films are not anti-Christian, his films convey the message that that religion cannot provide salvation, and also no escape from trauma.

As in the case of Kim Kiduk, Lee's films have attracted attention from a number of film scholars. In one of his books, David Bordwell refers to *Peppermint Candy*, as an example of a reverse-order murder mystery, and connects it to similar Hollywood films such as *Vanilla Sky* (2001) and *Wicker Park* (2004).[237] David Desser has similarly observed that "*Peppermint Candy* has already entered the canon of experimental narrative features with its reverse chronological presentation, preceding the critically acclaimed *Memento* by a number of months."[238] Roger Luckhurst also mentions *Peppermint Candy* in passing as an example of a film that links the issue of trauma in relation to time travel and narrative loops.[239] Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park, Todd

[237] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells it: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2006), p. 103.
[238] David Desser, "Timeless, Bottomless Bad Movies," ed., Frances K. Gateward, *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 89.
[239] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 204.

McGowan, and David Martin-Jones have analysed Lee's films in terms of trauma, memory, and national identity.[240] McGowan has argued the following:

> [W]ith *Peppermint Candy*, Lee Changdong creates a work of explicitly national cinema designed to not just lay bare the illusions of national and national identity, but to also break with the conception of temporality that serves as the foundation for national identity.[241]

He also notes the featuring of individual trauma, especially with regard to the male protagonist in *Peppermint Candy*, but unlike my chapter, his emphasis overall rests on the question of national identity.

Before I am going to analyse two films in more detail, I shall begin by looking at Lee's development more broadly. Prior to becoming a filmmaker, Lee used to be a high-school teacher and wrote novels.[242] His interest in films only began after the age of forty. He has also been a Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism for the Republic of Korea in 2003 and 2004. His debut film in 1997 was a film noir, *Green Fish* (1997), in which the main male protagoinist is driven toward destruction by a group of gangsters. Even though this first film was not commercialy successful, it received critical praise. *Peppermint Candy* (2000), which I will discuss in more detail below, was followed by *Oasis* (2002), which was nominated for a director's award in Venice Film Festival. Lee's fourth film, *Secret Sunshine* (2007), depicts a woman suffering from personal trauma, while his latest film, *Poetry* (2010) portrays a 66-year old grandmother's trauma living with her grandson.

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[240] Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park, "Peppermint Candy: The Will Not To Forget," *New Korean Cinema*, eds. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer (New York: New York UP, 2005), pp. 159-169; Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

[241] Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 205.

[242] According to Lee Changdong in an interview, "One thing I learned as a novelist is asking questions about life and the world we live in. A novel is not only telling a story, but also asking questions about life, like other forms of art. That attitude did not change when I made movies. I ask audiences questions through movies, and I hope that audiences find the answers on their own." Tim Grierson, *FilmCraft: Screenwriting* (New York and London: Focal Press, 2013), p. 72.

Apart from being characterised by their socially realist perspective, Lee's films also frequently engage with the effects of modernisation on Korean. In *Green Fish* (1997), for example, the male protagonist Makdong has just been discharged from the army and tries to find a job in order to escape his hometown near Seoul. For a while, he lives with his single mother and disabled brother. He meets a club singer who is the girlfriend of a local gang boss, eventually becoming a member of the gang. This film depicts the effects of a corrupt society on an individual. The countryside near Seoul's metropolitan area is meant to signify the contrast and difference between Korea before and after modernisation. Naghun Song, Ashok K. Dutt, and Frank J. Costa have pointed out that "During the last three decades, urbanization in Korea as an outcome of economic modernization, significantly affected Korean society. Successful macro-economic performance accelerated urbanization and gave the country a highly urbanized population."[243] Kim Uchong has suggested that

> It was not the general condition of dislocation and poverty but the economic recovery and development of the 1960s and the 1970s that awakened political consciousness. Economic development in particular, stirs up dormant negative feelings inevitable in a society torn by ideologies, wholesale dislocation, and strife. The use of state power for the social mobilization required for economic development was bound to meet with popular resistance if such power lacks a popular social base, as was the case with the regimes of Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan.[244]

Industrialisation and urbanization have changed the class structure in Korea. Hong Dooseung classifies Korean social classes: the upper-middle class, the new middle class, the old middle class, the working class, the urban lower class and the rural lower class like below:

> The upper-middle class includes doctors, engineers, professionals, and managers who possess profound knowledge and professional skills. The new middle class refers to typical white-collar workers, such as semi-professionals and clerical workers. The old middle class refers to self-employed workers. The working class is equated with blue-collar workers

[243] Naghun Song, Ashok K. Dutt, Frank J. Costa, "The Nature of Urbanization in South Korea," ed., Ashok K. Dutt, *The Asian City: Processes of Development, Characteristics, and Planning* (Copenhagen: Springer, 1994), p. 127.
[244] Kim Uchang, "The Agony of Cultural Construction," ed., Hagen Koo, *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 176.

> such as production and service workers employed by others. The urban lower class is often called the "marginal class," and it includes street vendors and day labourers.[245]

Regarding Lee's attidue towards the modernisation of Krean society and its effects on the country's class system, Todd McGowan has suggested that *Peppermint Candy* "does not move backward in time in order to illustrate the successful progress of the South Korean nation; instead, it does so in order to depict the reoccurrence of a failure or a failed reoccurrence and thus to undermine the spectator's attachment to nation as a foundation for identity."[246] Lee criticises the effects of modernisation and capitalism in creating an unfair society in Korea that chases money and wealth, and where the gap between rich and poor is getting bigger and wider. Lee proposes that Korean society's unceasing development towards urbanisation needs to be met with a greater amount of self-reflexivity, and his films are meant to function in this self-reflective manner, in the sense that they "selfconsciously acknowledge or reflect upon their own status as fictional artefacts and/or the processes involved in their creation."[247]

Lee Changdong the Self-reflective Realist

In this section I want to discuss the relationship between realism and self-reflectivity in Lee's films further, and mention the importance that the director places on qualities such as interiority, individualism, and innocence. Lee's films are mostly rooted in the everyday by using existing places as settings such as Ilsan in *Green Fish*, Gwangju and Garibongdong in *Peppermint Candy*, Seoul and Uijeongbu in *Oasis*, Milyang in *Secret Sunshine* and Gyeonggido in *Poetry*. Actual places, towns and

[245] Hong Dooseung, "Social Change and Stratification," eds., Doh Chull Shin, Conrad P. Rutkowski, Chong-Min Park, *The Quality of Life in Korea: Comparative and Dynamic Perspectives* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), p. 46.
[246] Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 184-185.
[247] Jill Nelme, *An Introduction to Film Studies* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 156.

regions are portrayed with a sense of intimate closeness, aided by a visual style and narrative focus that remains realist and materialist. Socio-economic conditions as well as political and historical contexts have a direct influence on the life of individuals, especially in *Green Fish* and *Peppermint Candy*. At the same time, Lee uses a sophisticated style of narrative structure to deliver a richer understanding of these themes. His films draw awareness to the modernisation of Korea by critically dissecting the present, and particularly in his recent films *Secret Sunshine* and *Poetry*, they explore the thoughts and developments of the reflective individual.[248] Indeed, if *Green Fish* and *Peppermint Candy* offer an analysis of the modernisation of Korean society and the history of its tumultuous development, *Oasis* and *Secret Sunshine* try to provide an answer to the cause of this problem; by shifting focus to and exploring the concept of collective consciousness and the inner psyche of the individual. Lee's films have in common their preoccupation with the internal world of characters who respond dynamically to the reality in society, yet this internal world triggers cognitive and sentimental connectedness in the viewer based on sympathy with the main characters. His protagonists are rooted in reality, but also sometimes estranged from reality, and this estrangement is linked to the characters' past, their fantasies, desires and hopes. In this respect the scenes in Lee's films which break away from realism actively intervene in order to develop a greater realism about the internal world of the main characters.

In *Green Fish* and *Peppermint Candy* Lee explores the theme of untarnished memory being trampled by violence. Talking about *Oasis*, Lee, has claimed that matters of innocent love and the problem of blocked social and individual communication is explored in the film: "I wanted to tell a story about communication breakdown in *Oasis*. I think Korean society and today's world have a serious problem with communication. I tried to put the issue of communication into a love story. The two main characters in *Oasis* have a communication problem. They are abandoned people on

[248] Joo Jinsook, "Lee Changdong's films as self-reflective style of Korean society," ed., by Joo Jinsook, *Talking about Seven Korean Film Directors* (Seoul: Boun Books, 2008), p. 14.

the margins of society who are not recognized by anybody."[249] Lee also explores violence and forgiveness in *Secret Sunshine*, and specifically the notion of innocence as examined through the main female character, an ordinary teenager with a passion for literature. Lee insists on the existence of innocence in reality, which is reflected in the allusions and associations of his film titles, which relate to subjects such as green fish, peppermint candy, oasis, sunlight, and poetry..[250] Through the story of its main character in *Secret Sunshine,* Lee interrogates the meaning of forgiveness and irony. *Poetry* also seeks to identify the pain and cost of forgiveness felt by humans and search for answers about its significance.[251]

Recall Order as a Recollection of the Traumatic Event

The protagonists in Lee's films are traumatised and suffering from deep pain. They are often both perpetrators of violence and victims, as in the case of Makdong in *Green Fish*, Youngho in *Peppermint Candy*, Jongdu and Gongju in *Oasis*, and Sinae in *Secret Sunshine.* They are characters who undergo personal pain experienced while being faced with a harsh reality. A good example is the opening sequence of *Peppermint Candy*, where a man drops in on a reunion between old friends at a riverside. After becoming extremely intoxicated, he climbs onto a railway bridge and while facing a high-speed train screams, "I want to go back."

[249] Tim Grierson, *FilmCraft: Screenwriting* (New York and London: Focal Press, 2013), pp. 74-77.
[250][http://bbs.movie.daum.net/gaia/do/movie/menu/review/read?articleId=193459&bbsId=review1&prevArticle=&TOKEN=&pageIndex=1]
[251][http://bbs.movie.daum.net/gaia/do/movie/menu/review/read?articleId=193459&bbsId=review1&prevArticle=&TOKEN=&pageIndex=1]

[Picture 5-1] *Peppermint Candy*

Like Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000), Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible* (2002), Roger Avary's *Rules of Attraction* (2002), and François Ozon's *5 X 2* (2004), *Peppermint Candy* presents its narrative in reverse chronological order, following the protagonist Youngho as he reflects on the most important twenty years of his life. As Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient have suggested in their analysis of *Peppermint Candy*, the device of reverse chronology works for weakening hegemonic masculinity and showing the contemporary Korean history with social events.[252] *Peppermint Candy* consists of seven sequences entitled 'Festive riverside reunion', 'Camera', 'Life is beautiful', 'Confession', 'Prayer', 'Visiting', and 'Picnic'. Todd McGowan has pointed out, that "in each of the film's seven sequences, the spectator sees Youngho endure some type of trauma linked to a trauma that the developing nation experiences at the same time, building up to the connection between Yong-Ho's break with Sunim coinciding with the Gwangju Massacre."[253]

[252] Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient, "Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: The Politics of Memory and Modernity in the Fractured Films of Lee Chang-dong and Hong Sang-soo", ed., Frances K. Gateward, *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 126-127.
[253] Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 185.

In the first sequence, set in 1999, Kim Youngho is in a picnic park by a river which he and his girlfriend Sunim visited twenty years previously. In 1979, he was confident and happy, but now he does no longer have any dreams or hopes for the future and is on the verge of suicide. The music fades and a railroad bridge and the picnic site come in to view. Youngho witnesses common middle-aged men and women –those who enjoy drinking – are having the time of their lives. As shown in the still above, and as mentioned previously, he mounts the railway bridge at the same time a train is approaching. Then, he shakes the dust off his feet and faces death on the railroad while screaming into the train, "I want to go back again". As I will argue this scene is particularly significant for this chapter to explore the male character's past. In this process, we clearly find nostalgia and traumatic events to understand the protagonist's present.

Peppermint Candy is reminiscent of *Citizen Kane*, in the sense that a series of flashbacks expose the protagonist's whole life. In the same manner, flashbacks reveal one by one what drives Youngho to his suicide. The train which charges in mediates the time travel between sequences in the film and it can be considered as signifying the ferocious life which does not have an end and just keeps rushing by. After the opening sequence, the film proceeds in inverse chronological order and ultimately reveals desire as the cause behind Youngho's decadence. In an interview, Lee describes Youngho like below:

> The main character denies his past. *Peppermint Candy* contains many confrontational elements. Small objects like a photo, peppermint candy, a dog… When Youngho first meets his wife, he teaches her to ride a bicycle. Then his wife learns how to drive while having an affair. Many opposing elements remind him of the past, which forces him to taste the bitter ironies of his life. He tries not to feel them, and even when he does, he tries not to show it. In a conventional flashback, the audience emotionally reacts when the protagonist feels something even if they don't know what's happening. In my film, the protagonist seems insensitive and conceals his feelings. Because of this, the audience can feel things through his past.[254]

As Lee suggests, Youngho refuses his memory, whether traumatic or not. Throughout the film, the male protagonist is eager to go back to his past. Nevertheless, Youngho conceals this desire because

[254] Kim Youngjin, *Lee Chang-dong* (Seoul: Seoul Collection, 2007), p. 65.

he was brought up hiding his feelings in front of other people, as do many men in Korean society. Therefore, Youngho is not able to share his pain with those around him and is in distress. Instead of seeing suicide as giving up on life, it is the expression of desire in him to discover his untarnished memory. That is why the end of the film feature bright sunlight. The place where Youngho kills himself is the same place where he experienced the happiest moment in his life.

In the second sequence, Youngho is forty years old, and unemployed in 1999. He has lost his family, dreams, and ambitions. He plans to punish the person who destroyed his life and also kill himself. He has nothing left except a pistol to kill himself. He meets the husband of Yoon Sunim, his first love, and visits her in the hospital where she is in a persistent coma. Yoon Sunim symbolises innocence as Youngho's first love who gave him peppermint candy. Her death, which always remains as a sense of guilt in his heart, signifies the loss of untarnished memory. But apart from representing a lost ideal of innocence, the comatose woman also means that as in many other contemporary Korean films, the story is mainly about the male protagonist and his trauma. Indeed, as Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient have pointed out, "despite *Peppermint Candy*'s narratologically and politically counterhegemonic discourse, strong female characters remain absent. There are four women sprinkled throughout the narrative (…). Each represents a stereotype, respectively: virginal first love; unfaithful bad wife; seductive mistress; and heart-of-gold prostitute."[255] Yoon Sunim's husband gives Youngho an old camera which Sunim kept for a while. The camera that she left with Youngho represented the dream and passion he carried when he was a young man but even that was sold off. However, he takes out the old film in the camera and falls into tears. Just like what can be identified here, Youngho continuously goes through conflicts and wanders between untarnished memory and reality. However, he just sells the camera to get some money. Therefore, audiences know that he lost his innocence selling the apparatus, which still

[255] Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient, "Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: The Politics of Memory and Modernity in the Fractured Films of Lee Chang-dong and Hong Sang-soo", ed., Frances K. Gateward, *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 126.

contained the happiest moments from his past. After meeting Sunim in the hospital, he suddenly feels some pain in his leg, something that will only be explained in the sixth sequence, but which already illustrates how external pain is brought out internally.

In the third sequence, Youngho is thirty-five and runs a furniture shop in the summer of 1994. This sequence depicts Youngho's wife Hongja cheats on him with her driving instructor. Even though he is aware of this fact, he remains silent as he is also having an affair with one of his employees. Then he runs into an activist student who was tortured while Youngho was a detective.

In the fourth sequence, Youngho is a detective and his wife is expecting their first child in the spring of 1987. But he is shown becoming bored with both his job and his wife. One day, he visits Kunsan for business. It's a time of repeated student demonstrations against the dictatorial regime, and Youngho has a reputation for using torture in his interrogation methods. Gradually, he is becoming corrupt, but there is still his sincere desire to hold onto his innocent heart even amongst the process of corruption.

The fifth sequence is very important to understand Youngho's trauma. In the sequence, Youngho is a clumsy rookie detective in the fall of 1984. He is surrounded by senior detectives who employ unethical violence to obtain information, while Youngho becomes increasingly violent himself. He begins to torture university students who join the street protests. A sudden and unexpected meeting with Sunim ends with the latter bursting into tears and leaving behind a camera, which he returns to her. Like the peppermint candy of the title, the camera symbolises innocence, but Youngho refuses to receive it because he has already been polluted. As a result, he rejects Sunim's love and salvation. Youngho is also shown to be traumatised from the memory of accidentally killing a schoolgirl in Gwangju during his military conscription. It is this trauma that leads him to become a violent man. He considers his trauma as a weakness therefore he attempts to hide it by adopting a hegemonic masculinity. For this reason, he rejects Sunim as his wife to prove

his masculinity and marries Hongja instead. Youngho changes into an aggressive man who cannot hold the innocent love with Sunim who works in a candy factory.

The sixth sequence shows the moment when Youngho loses his innocence as the consequence of historical and social turmoil. In this sequence, Youngho is in the middle of his military service in May 1980. One day, Sunim comes to the army base to meet him, but fails to find him. However, Youngho sees her while driving in a truck but does not call out to her. So he is not able to meet up with Sunim, who came to visit him, due to an urgent dispatch while the peppermint candies that she sent are brutally stamped on by other soldiers' combat boots. Symbolically the boots mean social or national power and the peppermint candies signify Youngho and Sunim's untarnished memory and innocence. Subsequently, Youngho is seriously wounded in Gwangju, and eventually kills a schoolgirl by mistake. This sequence refers to a dramatic moment in Korean post-war history, the Gwangju Democratic Uprising in 1980, a notorious incident in which civilians were killed by military soldiers sent by the dictator Jeon Doohwan. Cho Joohyun summarises the massacre as follows:

> After the fall of Park's regime, Korea briefly experienced liberation from dictatorial rule until the Gwangju massacre abruptly halted democratic processes in May 1980. This massacre occurred when the military was ordered to suppress the people's demonstration against the declaration of martial law on May 17, 1980 in Gwangju. The governmental formally announced that 179 civilians were killed and about 1,000 were seriously wounded in the process. However, the exact number of deaths and the persons responsible for ordering the opening of fire remain unknown. Since then, the Gwangju massacre has become a symbol of the Korean people's desire for democracy and served to unite virtually all kinds of progressive government.[256]

In the final sequence, Youngho is just twenty years old in the autumn of 1979. The last scene goes back to the picnic site that was first introduced at the beginning of the film, and younger Youngho and Sunim are enjoying their picnic. He falls in love with Sunim and thinks that the peppermint candy given to him by her has the best taste in the world. The picnic takes place in a riverside location under a railroad bridge, and it is also the space of untarnished memory where the first love

[256] Cho Joohyun, "The Politics of Gender Identity," ed., Chang Pil-wha, *Women's Experiences and Feminist Practices in South Korea* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2005), p. 235.

between Youngho and Sunim. Even though it is the same place, there are sights of young people playing the guitar and singing which conveys a totally different atmosphere compared with the first sequence. The film ends while the screen is filled up with Youngho's view heading towards the sky while lying on the riverside and the music is fading out.

Kim Youngjin has suggested that "the year 1979 holds the memory of Youngho's first love. By using 1979 as its fulcrum, and by centering on a time of both historical crisis and personal dreams, *Peppermint Candy* invites us into a past that could have led to another present, which differs from the actual present."[257] This innocent period of his life is the only time of happiness for him. In the film, Lee shows us Youngho's painful experiences and the national trauma of modern Korean history. Actually his dilemma is originated from the uncertain society. In other words, he turns into a traumatised man after rejecting Sunim's proposal. As McGowan argues, "With the focus on the intersection of Youngho's personal history and Korean national history, the reverse chronology of *Peppermint Candy* would seem to indicate the intent of showing the development and ultimately the origin of contemporary Korean national identity. The narrative structure shows Korean history from the perspective of the present, which allows the spectator to view historical events while knowing what they portend."[258] I have argued that the modern Korean society in the 1980s and 1990s was shaped by a number of upheavals, with many consequences that were not good for people. In these two decades, innocent people like Sunim could not survive. As we have seen, Sunim's death represents this phenomenon. In contrast, Youngho can endure a little bit longer than Sunim because he has already abandoned his consciousness and naiveté. Whenever Youngho realises his guilt and complicitness in the corruption of society, he tries to kill himself. In addition, when he faces a speedy train, he says he wants to go back. At this time, audiences wonder Youngho's preferred time in his life. The final sequence is the correct answer of this question. He wants to go back to the time when they went on a picnic in 1979.

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[257] Kim Youngjin, *Lee Chang-dong* (Seoul: Seoul Collection, 2007), p. 36.
[258] Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 182.

Apart from illustrating the relentless rush of modern life and of individual destiny, *Peppermint Candy* is a film that connects trauma (both individual and national) with nostalgia. Nadia Seremetakis has attempted to define nostalgia in her essay "The Memory of the Senses" as follows:

> In English the word nostalgia (in Greek *nostalghia*) implies trivializing romantic sentimentality. In Greek the verb *nostalghó* is a composite of *nostó* and *alghó*. *Nostó* means I return, I travel (back to homeland); the noun *nóstos* means the return, the journey, while *á-nostos* means without taste, as the new peaches are described..... Thus *nostalghia* is the desire or longing with burning pain to journey....In this sense, *nostalghia* is linked to the personal consequences of historicizing sensory experience which is conceived as a painful bodily and emotional journey.[259]

The term nostalgia is originated from two Greek roots. Nostalgia is only pseudo-Greek, or nostalgically Greek. A Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer coined this word in his medical dissertation in 1688. Therefore, nostalgia originated as a medical term not from poetry. He defined nostalgia as the sad mood originating from the desire for return to one's native land.[260] According to Annette Kuhn, "memory work can create new understandings of both past and present, while yet refusing a nostalgia that embalms the past in a perfect, irretrievable, moment." [261] Joy Damousi argues "Nostalgia is most commonly associated with fantasy."[262] By the same token, Pam Cook argues "nostalgia is generally associated with fantasy and regarded as even more inauthentic than memory."[263] She defines nostalgia as a state of longing for something that is known to be irretrievable, but which we seek anyway.[264] "The more self-reflexive nostalgic films can employ cinematic strategies to actively comment on issues of memory, history and identity."[265] According to John Marshall Kephart, "Nostalgia is often thought of as a sentimentalized relation to the past, one which is a romantic mis-remembering of historical events. When one speaks of nostalgia, it is often in regards to an affective yearning for "days-gone-by", as we are nostalgic for the past to the

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[259] C. Nadia Seremetakis, *The Senses Still* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 4.
[260] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 3.
[261] Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p. 10.
[262] Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 68.
[263] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 4.
[264] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 2.
[265] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 4.

degree that there is some aspect of our individual and collective history that is inaccessible in the present."[266]

Pam Cook's discussion of nostalgia in cinema is particularly useful for an understanding of *Peppermint Candy*. According to Cook, the self-reflexive nostalgic films depicts actively on themes of memory, history and identity. As I have argued in my reading of *Peppermint Candy* above, Lee similarly tries to link the male characters' memory with broader issues of Korean history and identity.

Male Masquerade and the Concealment of Weakness

In *Oasis*, Hong Jongdu (Seol Kyunggu) is newly released from jail after having served a sentence for manslaughter in a hit-and-run traffic accident. In fact, it was his older brother who caused the accident, but he was jailed instead. After being released from the jail, he has no place to go. His family has already moved on without telling him where. Jongdu's criminal record follows him wherever he goes, preventing him from finding a job. Jongdu visits Gongju (Moon Sori), the daughter of the man who he killed by accident, and her family, because he wants to apologise. Gongju (literally meaning 'princess' in Korean) suffers from cerebral palsy, but her brother spends her disability pension for himself. Jongdu tries to sexually assault Gonju when he visits her. But he stops raping her because she defends herself very strongly. But even though he is convicted of attempted rape, they gradually fall in love. As Heinz Insu Fenkl has pointed out, "at the very end of *Oasis*, in its denouement, Lee floods the interior of Kong-ju [Gongju]'s apartment with new light, and though she is reading Jong-du's correspondence from prison, the tone is romantically

[266] John Marshall Kephart (III.), *A Man Like the One that Married Dear Old Mom: Nostalgia and Masculinity Crisis in Late 20th Century American Culture*, University of Southern California, PhD thesis, 2008, p. 130.

optimistic. All the trauma and negativity of 'the night before' have been transformed into a bright condition full of hope and potential. As Kong-ju sweeps her apartment with a hand broom, the dust motes float in the air like luminescent snowflakes."[267]

Oasis is a melodrama which is rather different from a typical love story, as Andrew Sarris's review notes:

> Lee Chang-Dong's *Oasis*, from his own screenplay, continues the steady stream of distinguished Korean films to our shores. There's no particular pattern to these films, and *Oasis* is clearly one of the strangest films from anywhere, focused as it is on the socially disruptive romance between a slightly retarded and socially maladjusted ex-convict named Hong Jong-du (Sol Kyung-gu) and Han Gong-ju (Moon So-ri), a young woman almost completely disabled by an attack of cerebral palsy.[268]

Meanwhile, Joo Jinsook has argued that *Oasis* pushes the formula of the melodrama to extremes and delivers repulsion and pain in viewers in place of the usual welcoming of escapism that comes with a melodrama about a man and a woman. According to Joo, the audience cannot escape into the love story of Jongdu; who is unpredictable in behaviour and Gongju; who lives in a place where anyone can come and go, but who cannot be free herself because she does not have control over her body or her speech.[269] According to Joo, their relationship becomes a source of discomfort for the audience as they cannot help imagining the pressure the characters would face from others if their relationship became known, and this discomfort is amplified by the fact that excluding the two protagonists, the ideas and speech of the people in the film are similar to ours.

The gender hierarchies in *Oasis* are represented interestingly. Although Gongju has a disability, she comes across as a much stronger character than the male character Jongdu. In this respect, *Oasis* recalls Rolf de Heer's similalry themed *Dance Me to My Song* (1998). De Heer's film portrays

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[267] Heinz Insu Fenkl, "On the Narratography of Lee Chang-dong: A Long Translator's Note." [http://www.heinzinsufenkl.net/caf/narratography.html]
[268] Andrew Sarris, "In Full Swing: Sexual Liberation in L.A.", *New York Observer*, 24 April 2004. [http://observer.com/2004/05/in-full-swing-sexual-liberation-in-la/]
[269] Joo Jinsook, "Lee Changdong's films as self-reflective style of Korean society," ed., by Joo Jinsook, *Talking about seven Korean film directors* (Seoul: Boun Books, 2008), p. 32.

Julia who suffers from cerebral palsy and communicates with her computer. The film investigates the relationship Julia has with her carer Madeline. Julia requires a carer for independence, but Madeline mentally abuses Julia in an attempt to enhance Julia's dependence on her.[270] According to Albert Moran and Errol Vieth, "*Dance Me to My Song* is very recognizably a women's film, ostensibly joined to the others under discussion here because it has to do with a woman's feelings and suffering."[271] Like *Dance Me to My Song*, *Oasis* represents a female protagonist attacked by cerebral palsy and the power relationship she faces with the people in her life.

As we have seen with the case of *Peppermint Candy*, Lee is primarily known for his social realism. That is to say, there is no fantasy in his work. Thus, one could ask why does he use elements of fantasy in *Oasis*? But, as Katherine A. Fowkes has suggested, "using the term "fantasy" to describe a film does not necessarily force us to fall back on the same old binary of fantasy versus reality. Rather, within the context of mainstream cinema, the term could be understood to refer to "fantastic" story elements that are integral to the film's story-world."[272] This is particularly true in the case of Jongdu's story, who cannot find the past he wants to recapture, hence Lee's films enacts a few fantasy scenes instead to show Jongdu's nostalgia. This recalls Pam Cook's argument mentioned above that nostalgia is linked to fantasy.

[270] Katie Ellis, "Dance Me to My Song," ed., Ben Goldsmith and Geoff Lealand, *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Intellect Books, 2010), p. 71.
[271] Albert Moran and Errol Vieth, *Film in Australia: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 199.
[272] Katherine A. Fowkes, *The Fantasy Film* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), p. 5.

[Picture 5-2] *Oasis*

Jongdu recognises himself in a disabled girl. As Michael Smith has argued in a journal article concerning the psychology of disabled children, "the more physically disabled a person is the more they are removed from the reality of everyday tasks, socialisation, exploratory activities and physical access."[273] In a similar process, society through its prejudices and injustices has removed Jongdu from everyday life and socialisation and has literally taken his physical access by means of imprisoning him. Smith also points out that for disabled people "fantasy can be an escape from the unacceptable realities of their everyday life with its hard won achievements. At other times fantasy can serve as a denial of the disability."[274] In this respect, then, both, Jongdu and Gongju are removed from the reality, and reliant on their respective fantasies.

Jongdu does not know how to love when he visits Gongju and cannot hide his strong sexual desire. He looks like animal and when trying to rape the disabled woman, he aggressively tries rear-

[273] Michael Smith, "The Secret Life of the Physically Disabled Child," ed., Ved Prakash Varma, *The Inner Life of Children with Special Needs* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), p. 39.
[274] Michael Smith, "The Secret Life of the Physically Disabled Child," ed., Ved Prakash Varma, *The Inner Life of Children with Special Needs* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), p. 39.

entry positions to have sex with her. The way this scene is staged suggests an animalistic quality to Jongdu. The character has a fantasy of raping a woman. Tanya Horeck has suggested that "following this patriarchal use of the term, the expression 'rape fantasy' has generally been understood in two ways in feminist discourse: in the first instance, 'rape fantasy' refers to lurid male fantasies of violating helpless women. In the second instance, the term refers to the troubling 'female rape fantasy', in which women fantasize about being sexually violated by men."[275] This quote differentiates usefully between two understandings of male and female rape fantasies. In general, male rape fantasy refers to sadist sexual desire, but female fantasy connotes masochistic sexual desire. In the perspective of the fantasizer, male rape fantasy is active as a perpetrator, but female fantasy is passive as a victim. However, perpetrating rape on women is not always main male fantasy. Some men themselves have fantasies in which they are forced into sex by women.[276] Meanwhile, a cop has her blood as evidence to show that Jongdu robs Gongju of her virginity. The cop also is a man, so this causes further pain for her in being forced to mentally revisit the crime by a patriarchal figure.

Some feminist critics like Sim Youngseop and Hwang Jinmi have attacked *Oasis* for its chauvinist masculine perspective. In detail, the victim of rape, Gongju calls Jongdu to know his love. Jongdu is clearly a sex offender, nevertheless, Gongju forgives him readily. For feminist critics Lee's film reveals a rape fantasy. Sabine Sielke argues that "both feminist thinkers and female authors insisted that just as male castration anxieties do not suggest that men wish to be castrated, so-called rape fantasies do not prove that women crave sexual violation."[277] In *Oasis*, we cannot prove Gongju's rape fantasy, but obviously Jongdu has a fantasy to perpetrate the rape on her. How does the raped woman identify her rapist? In reality, it is not impossible to happen. That is why some female critics criticise Lee's film for the ways in which it perpetuates patriarchal ideology. In

[275] Tanya Horeck, *Public Rape: Representing Violation in Fiction and Film* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 4.
[276] Joseph W. Critelli and Jenny M. Bivona, "Women's Erotic Rape Fantasies: An Evaluation of Theory and Research," *Journal of Sex Research*, 45 (1), 2008, p. 65.
[277] Sabine Sielke, "Fantasies," ed., Merril D. Smith, *Encyclopedia of Rape* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), p. 72.

terms of my own focus on traumatised masculinity, however, I would argue that in the figure of Jongdu Lee presents us with a case of a weak masculinity. This weakness is evident even in the middle of Jongdu's sexual aggression. Jongdu is not by any understanding a normal person, and everybody easily recognises him to be abnormal. His weird behaviour makes his family and neighbours embarrassed and turns him into an outcast. Yet despite both being outsiders, Jongdu and Gongju are by far the most sympathetic characters in the film, while their supposedly sane and healthy relatives (Gongju's brother, Jongdu's brother and sister-in-law) and Gongju's carer are uncaring, manipulative and exploitative.

Throughout the film, Gongju dreams that she is 'normal'. The discrepancy between reality and the desire of being normal is frequently expressed through fantasy scenes. When Gongju is left alone at home she dreams of flying birds in the house. She plays with a mirror to reflect sunlight on the ceiling of her muted flat. Abruptly, the light transforms into white doves flying through the room. But when she she throws away her mirror, the fragmented pieces of glass turn into white butterflies. In scene travelling in the subway, she hits Jongdu with an empty bottle on his head, rising from her seat and standing in front of him. In another scene, she suddenly arises out of her wheelchair in the garage and she and Jongdu have a little argument like other lovers. In yet another instant, they dance with an Indian boy and a lady, and a baby elephant, a scene that is set in an oasis in the middle of dessert. A literal oasis is constituted by heat, palm trees, a calm atmosphere, and human habitation. In *Oasis*, there is an old-fashioned carpet hanging on a shabby flat. Embroidered on it are a girl dancing with a naked boy, an elephant, desert, palm trees, and oasis. But then, there is a shadow of a plane tree shaking anxiously above the carpet in the opening sequence of *Oasis*. This long take summarises the whole story of this film. At first, this carpet is dark and there is the shadow of tree on it. It means that there will be a number of difficulties between the leading protagonists in the film. The dark carpet is hung on the wall even while Jongdu and Gongju are talking on the phone in the middle of the film. But, gradually it is getting brighter and calmer on the carpet. The ending of the film shows a brightly shining carpet, perhaps due to the fact that the tree

has been cut down, and Gongju who is cleaning with a serene look on her face. In the end, it signifies how Gongju uses Jongdu's love to overcome the darkness and stereotypes of the society. Therefore, this film starts with this dark carpet and finishes with a shining one.

[Picture 5-3] *Oasis*

Christianity in Lee's films

As stated previously, there are many scenes relating to Christianity in Lee's films such as *Peppermint Candy*, *Oasis*, *Secret Sunshine* and *Poetry*. According to James Huntley Grayson,

> Christians of all groups constitute more than one-quarter of the South Korean population. Conceptually, Protestantism has exercised an extraordinary influence on the other religious traditions—in helping to create a more outward-looking attitude among Catholic Christians, by providing both a sense of competition and a model for growth that aided in the revival of Buddhism, and by being a conceptual inspiration for various non-Christian new religious movements.[278]

[278] James Huntley Grayson, "A Quarter-Millennium of Christianity in Korea," eds., Robert E. Buswell and Jr. Timothy S. Lee, *Christianity in Korea* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. 22.

In various fields such as education and medicine, Christianity has been very influential in Korea, and nowadays is an energetic force in everyday life. This presence is clearly acknowledged in Lee's films. In *Peppermint Candy*, for example, Hongja invites the colleagues of her husband and provides a meal for them. Before eating the meal, she starts praying. She prays intensely but people around her do not join her in prayer. The contents of her prayer are fine, but she does not seem earnest. It looks like she is praying just because there are people around, not because she wishes to pray to God. There is another praying scene in the fifth sequence of this film. When they are in a cheap hotel, Hongja prays indifferently before having sexual intercourse with Youngho. Youngho himself confesses he does not know how to pray. Especially, we can expect their relationship in terms of the broken mirror as a symbol of destruction on the headboard that attaches to the head of a bed in their hotel room. In other words, it is a behaviour in which humans try to become forgiven by God's name instead of repenting for their corrupted lives and Lee raises the theme of religion again in *Secret Sunshine*.

[Picture 5-4] *Peppermint Candy*

Hongja: Thank your Lord. Today, my family has moved into a new house. Thank you for bringing us together at this precious time. Bless everyone here to have a good time sharing delicious food. We pray for our peaceful mind. Please protect their business. Dear God, our Father. Please let them be healthy. Bless these young lambs. May this family continue to love and believe … (tearing)

In *Oasis*, there are two prayer scenes. One is during the scene when Jongdu wishes to pray in the street and prays with his family. As the pastor leads the prayer, only Jongdu cannot concentrate. He opens his eyes during the prayer and looks at the sky. "Does God really exist?" His expression is full of suspicion. However, Jongdu is very happy with the first praying scene. After he meets Gongju, Jongdu asks the pastor to pray for him. The second scene takes place in a police station. The pastor asks the policemen to release Jongdu so that he can pray. As soon as the prayer begins with his family, he shakes off the dust of his feet and runs away. This prayer is meaningless to Jongdu. Therefore, he is unhappy with the second praying together in the police department after arresting due to raping Gongju.

[Picture 5-5] *Oasis*

(In the street)
Jongdu's Mum: The pastor came to see us, and he is just leaving.

Pastor: I've heard a lot about you. You've been through a lot.
Jongdu: Thanks for your concern.
Jongdu's Mum: He sang in the choir when he was little.
Pastor: Is that so?
Jongdu: Do I ask a favour? Would like to pray for me?
Pastor: Why not? Let's pray together.
Let's all pray together, holding hands. Our Father in heaven, please watch over a poor soul who waits upon Your salvation. Please forgive his sins. We beseech You to bestow Your blessings upon him. And to protect his soul from evil. This young soul seeks to be reborn in Your everlasting love.

[Picture 5-6] *Oasis*

(In the police department)
Jongdu's Mom: Remember our pastor, right?
He wants to see you. He wants to pray for you, so that's why I brought him.
Pastor: Jongdu, the best thing at a time like this is prayer. Let's be seated. Excuse me, but could you take off his handcuffs while we pray? Let's pray. Dear Father Almighty, please forgive this poor lost lamb as he struggles to find salvation.

Especially in *Secret Sunshine,* Lee presents us with a portrait of Christianity in Korea. Sinae[279] who has lost a son falls in despair. Suddenly she participates in a prayer's meeting. Unlike the two scenes

[279] The first name Sinae may literally mean 'God's love' or 'God loves you'.

showing praying together in *Oasis*, there are a number of scenes featuring Christianity in *Secret Sunshine*. There is a scene when Sinae goes to visit the murderer who killed her son, in order to forgive him. The killer does not feel any guilt towards Sinae and says, "I was already saved by God." The murderer might have been forgiven by God but it is a shameless form of faith in which he was not even a bit considerate to those who live in pain because of his immoral actions. Sinae wants to show that she met God and was full of his grace so she declares in her birthday party to people around her that she was going to visit the murderer of her son and forgive him. Even from the beginning, it is evident that it represents an insincere form of forgiveness to just demonstrate her faith to other people. Then, the message is speaking to us. Would it be considered as true forgiveness if we go to jail, hold their hands, and cry while telling them that they have been forgiven? It mentioned about how forgiveness mentioned by God is not a minor form of heart or sympathy. It seems as if the film is carefully suggesting how true forgiveness is like the last scene when one forgives by closing their eyes, listening to the sounds of barber scissors, and feeling a trigger in their heart. It asks back on whether forgiving by claiming to forgive someone is really appropriate. Even in *Poetry*, the Christian aspect is mentioned through the main character visiting a Catholic Church. In the church, Sunday mass for victims is in progress.

In *Secret Sunshine*, Lee portrays religious problems in details such as how the main character lost her child and became absorbed into Christianity but felt a sense of betrayal. In regards to this, Lee mentioned in an interview that "there might be a misunderstanding about this but I did not have any negative intention. He said, "I guess there was a misunderstanding about my attitude towards the church in my previous works. However, the scenes of prayer in *Peppermint candy* were included since it is a common sight in Korea. I did not mean to portray it as a ridiculous act." In *Oasis*, the main character asks for prayer and also prays alone after experiencing love. Lee again emphasised, "I did not do it intentionally but there is a scene where the main character ran away during prayer. It can be interpreted that Hong Jongdu was released by God." He also said, "I wanted to actively discuss the issues of religion and share it with the audience." He claimed, "They

are problems of specific religions and it is true that I was careful since it is a problem related to the transcendental and absolute being. All the persons concerned with the film were concerned that it might bring up pointless misunderstanding. However, pastors and believers provided much greater understanding than we had expected. They understood it as in-depth comprehension about Christianity. We could make this film through active support such as an actual pastor appearing in the film for the prayer scene." Lee revealed the actual motive of direction for the film about how it is 'a film about humans, but God" and how "the will of God exists in the hidden place." He said, "I do not make films about God. I wanted to make a film about humans and speak to the audience about the will of God exists in humans even if he is not exposed through them."[280]

In the same way, Lee repetitively mentioned Christianity in his films to reflect on his perspectives about religions. However, his films refer to religion in daily life instead of giving interest to the salvation and affection granted by religion. Religion is always around us, and it is not hard for anyone to meet Christians as the monophasic moments.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter I have posed questions that interrogate the construction of traumatised men in Lee Changdong's films approaching issues of nostalgia, flashback, fantasy, and examining Christianity in *Peppermint Candy* and *Oasis*. First of all, I explored Lee's films in terms of social realism which mainly depicts socially low-class people such as working class labourers. Second, I have looked at the male protagonist's trauma by using a reverse chronology in *Peppermint Candy*. Third, Lee's *Oasis* described the male protagonist's weak masculinity in the perspective of rape and

[280] *Joynews* [http://joynews.inews24.com/php/news_view.php?g_menu=701100&g_serial=260040]

fantasy. Fourth, I discussed Lee Changdong's Christian worldview regarding salvation in *Peppermint Candy* and *Oasis*.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This thesis has explored traumatic masculinity in contemporary Korean cinema since the 1997 economic crisis using a textual and contextual level of analysis. In Chapter One, I discussed the scholarship which has already addressed masculinity in Korean cinema, and in particular, I explored the increasingly masculine trajectory in Korean cinema since the 1960s. I also addressed the textual and theoretical methodologies which the thesis will deploy in addressing my chosen case studies. Chapter Two explored the extent to which Confucianism and military culture has had an influence on Korean masculinity. In addition, I argued that the 1997 Korean financial crisis revealed not only financial complexity but also structural troubles. Building on this, the chapter then explored a history of Korean cinema from the 1980s to the 1990s in the perspective of the Korean New Wave and New Korean Cinema. In sum, I argued the historical contexts of Korean masculinity and cinema focusing on a) male dominance, b) the pre and post-1997 Korean cinema, and c) the melodrama and gangster genres as essential aspects in comprehending the background of masculinity in contemporary Korean cinema.

In Chapter Three, this study discussed what I term a 'hysterical excess' of masculinity dealing with a case-study of *Happy End*. What I attempted with this film is an examination of hysterical excess of masculinity by means of femicide which signifies female victimisation in *Happy End*. Proceeding from what has been said above, it should be concluded that this excessive masculinity differs from hypermasculinity which is a term for the exaggeration of hegemonic masculine power. Therefore, I looked at the progress of Minki's traumatised masculine images.

Chapter Four employed the concept of 'distorted pleasure' to examine Kim Kiduk's films, in particular *Bad Guy* and *The Isle*. The chapter looked at the concept of trauma through close analysis of Kim Kiduk's films in relation to traumatised masculinity, and in particular their tendency to represent a vision of 'twisted pleasure': rape fantasy, sadism and masochism. Therefore, I found it reasonable to assume that the weakness of masculinity led to violence toward females because masculinity has little influence on reality. Those with issues concerning their masculinity and therefore concerns of the validity of patriarchy, often overcompensated with overt and dramatic displays of machoism and violence.

In Chapter Five, I discussed two films directed by Lee Changdong; *Peppermint Candy* and *Oasis*, utilising analytical approches to nostalgia, flashback, fantasy, and Christianity. First, Lee showed the aspects of our society, realistically through social realism. Second, he reminded the audience of the trauma of the main characters through the journey back to the past. Third, the male protagonists in the films of Lee Changdong wore masks to hide their weak masculinity. For example, in *Oasis* Jongdu's rape attempt may be considered an expression of 'strong' masculinity, however, this shows his weakness as well. Fourth, Lee's films described the Christian world view, however, reinterpreting the Christian salvation. Lee's intention of stressing Christianity in his films means that even the religious salvation cannot rescue a man who suffers from a trauma. According to Lee, religion impacts our social life and permeates our daily life on a fundamental level, with all cultural practices. [281]

At the time of the economic crisis in 1997, the presence of the male emerged as a serious concern in social discourse. As multiple dimensions of discourse activities and cultural activities to dismantle the authority of the male-dominated patriarchal society became active, the male-centred presence was adopted as the subject of public discourse. The presence of the man represented as father or husband has lost or sought to change its position that it has robustly occupied from modernisation in the 1960s-1970s to the present. Masculinity, which generally appears as male-centralism is dismantled and newly

[281] *Joynews* [http://joynews.inews24.com/php/news_view.php?g_menu=701100&g_serial=260040]

marginalised, was reproduced in the arena of a discourse and the discussion and reflection on masculinity became live in a number of directions.

Many broadcasting media, newspapers, and academic sectors in Korea have formally expressed Korea's economic crisis in 1997 as a crisis attributed to IMF so-called 'IMF crisis' or 'IMF catastrophe', rather than an internal crisis of Korean economy. This indirect expression might be explained by Korea's doubt about its economic crisis. Korea probably made such a roundabout expression regarding its economic crisis in order to protect the value of Korean men who had achieved remarkable economic growth. It might have been due to Korea's desperation of not destroying the achievement made by Korean men over the 50 years. For that reason, Korea expressed its internal crisis as an economic crisis in order to avoid its responsibility and developed a logic that foreign capital threatened Korea's economy. As above, to Korea, the 1997 economic crisis was not a crisis itself in economic aspects. Facing the overall crisis, Korea, on the other hand, made efforts to restore its lost international prestige and to overcome the financial crisis by adapting to the global order.

An atmosphere of having to restore men's power and authority in the similar context to nationalistic response overwhelmed the social discourse. This supports that in the period before and after the economic crisis, compared to the previous period, Korean films also experienced transformations and tendencies made regarding the crisis of masculinity and the self-awareness projected. In addition, more attention was paid to male reproduction than female reproduction. Such a social phenomenon continued in the period around the economic crisis in 1997 and even after the 2000s around which the crisis triggered due to poor economy and thus a sense of crisis became less.

According to Joo Youshin, the cinematic reproduction of men surrounding their situation placed in a crisis through the fluctuations in the gender dynamics, which resulted from the economic collapse, massive social advance of socially released women, and soaring divorce rate since the economic crisis, takes strategies: possessing men's reversed authority as the imaginative resources to reconstruct masculine

subjectivity, overcoming the crisis of masculinity on the other hand, and at the same time mobilising home and family relationships as an arena to recentralise a male subject into the role of father.[282] Indeed, women in a number of Korean macho films are largely represented as merely inhabiting the same space as men, as if simple accessories and parts belonging to them. The women just protect men who are mostly trouble makers, as if they had ego, self-reflection, and subjectivity. But in a sense, the portrayal of women portraits in macho films might reflect the unconsciousness of the viewer.

Even after Korea overcame the economic crisis, simple and ignorant men appear as leads in Korean cinema. And they are usually violent and rough. Such examples of films are *Double Enemy* (2003), *Bittersweet Life* (2005), *Crying Fist* (2005), *Typhoon* (2005), *Art of Fighting* (2006), *Bloody Tie* (2006), and *The Beast* (2011). As can be seen from the simple, clear titles, these films generally put dots alongside the expression of strong masculinity. When a serious matter pops up, they, who rush without thinking of the consequences, respond to their heartbeat more agilely than to their reason, and are violent like a beast. *Bloody Tie* romanticises a cruel and violent male image. The images of two men shown in *Bloody Tie* do not differ at all from the ones that we have expected from them, Sergeant Do in a drug offender arresting team and Lee Dogyeong, a drug wholesaler, are a burly man who lies at the central of the world where the stronger prey on the weaker, that is the world of drug traffickers in Busan. Their Busan dialect of using coarse words and their Busan gestures explicitly show that they are what we called macho. The fact that they are a macho can be easily inferred from the attitude of treating women in the films. They acted as mother who pitifully watches the game that men play. Or they emerge as a scapegoat to men and come to collapse.

Meanwhile, throughout 2014 and 2015, there have been a relatively higher number of films focused on male characters in all film genres. In terms of the box-office during the period, films such as *Roaring Currents* (2014), *The Pirates* (2014), *The Attorney* (2014), *Miss Granny* (2014), *KUNDO: Age of the Rampant* (2014), *Ode to My Father* (2014), *Detective K: Secret of the Lost Island* (2015), *Gangnam Blues* (2015) take up as

[282] Joo Youshin, "Tears and Violence: The Male Identity and Body in Male-Centred Melodramas and Action Films," *Image and Film Studies*, Vol.8, 2006, pp. 62-63.

the top ranking films for the number of the spectators. Amongst these films, it is hard to find female characters in the films beside *Miss Granny*. Even if there are female actresses introduced in the films, their roles were obviously relatively minor compared to the male characters. Regarding the top 50 Korean box-office hit films, there are no female films which have female actresses as the main characters or significant roles besides *Miss Granny*, *Sunny* (2011), and *200 Pounds Beauty* (2006).[283]

Finally, throughout all of the chapters within this thesis, I should conclude that the dynamics of this traumatic masculinity throughout this thesis begins with an understanding of the definition of trauma, and the unique situation of social contexts that has surrounded films since the late 1990s. For the purposes of this study, I have limited the discussion to films since that period. I argued that contemporary Korean cinema focuses on masculinity, especially traumatic masculinity. So I demonstrated that the traumatic male subjects caused by excess of masculinity, distorted pleasure, and representation of memory through the filmic texts.

The studies, which have been mentioned so far in the chapters, explain masculinity in Korean films by linking this to the history of Korean politics. However, this thesis not only explained the political situation but also explored the change of masculinity from an economic point of view. Generally speaking, capitalism is important in the process of constructing masculinity. Especially, the economic capabilities of men are extremely important in the Korean family system or society. This means economic strength corresponds to the intensity of masculinity. This Korean masculinity faced a trauma due to the economic crisis in 1997. As stated above, there has been an absence of studies on the traumas of men connected to the economic perspective. Therefore, this thesis addresses a significant gap in scholarship by psychoanalytically examining the change of masculinity in Korean films after 1997 by linking this to the traumas, and verified why male characters have been dominant in Korean films, based on this approach.

[283] See the [Table 7] Top 50 Korean box-office Hit Films.

Then, what are the reasons behind the disappearance of females from Korean films. In fact, they have different roles, or less significant ones, rather than entirely disappearing. Also the question can be a future research topic. Until now, this research was conducted on masculinity that was displayed in Korean cinema, but femininity was excluded as much as possible. This thesis centered on approaches on masculinity so there are plans to further execute additional studies about women. In particular, I am greatly interested in the changes of femininity that appeared in Korean films. The aspect of how femininity changed over the history of Korean films can be explored and the image of women suggested in various periods can be described. Just as it was also mentioned in this thesis, women are recently disappearing from Korean films but despite this fact, some female characters are often suggested with masculine characteristics. This shows a great difference in the image of women that appeared during the 1970s and the 1980s. If a further research about femininity is conducted in addition to the masculinity displayed in Korean films that was already revealed in this thesis, then it will make way for clear comparison in the changes of masculinity and femininity displayed in Korean films.

This thesis has sought to identify Korean masculinity in contemporary Korean cinema since the 1997. My analysis of the films of Jung Jiwoo, Kim Kiduk, and Lee Changdong has provided original insight into masculinity in Korean cinema. I examined the historical contexts of Korean masculinity and cinema focusing on patterns of male dominance, and pre and post-1997 Korean cinema rather than simply examining these films in terms of their aesthetics. In addition, I wanted to ensure that my thesis explored the films closely in terms of what they might tell us about the context in which they were produced. The subject of my thesis has arisen from the premise that the 1997 Korean economic crisis revealed not only economic complexities but also structural problems in Korean society. It is an essential aspect in comprehending the background of how masculinity figures in contemporary Korean cinema since the 1997. I hope my detailed analysis of the films of Jung Jiwoo, Kim Kiduk, and Lee Changdong allows for a wider appreciation of the traumatic Korean masculinity and comes as part of an original and significant contribution to film studies in Korea by empowering male subjects, texts and contexts.

Appendices

[Table 1] Population per Cinema Screen, 1996-2007

	Population	Cinema Screen	Population per Cinema Screen
2007	49,268,928	1,975	24,946
2006	48,991,779	1,880	26,059
2005	48,782,274	1,648	29,601
2004	48,583,805	1,451	33,483
2003	48,386,823	1,132	42,745
2002	48,021,550	986	48,703
2001	47,342,828	818	57,876
2000	47,274,543	720	65,659
1999	46,858,463	588	79,691
1998	46,429,817	507	91,578
1997	45,953,580	497	92,462
1996	45,524,681	511	89,089

Source: Online Statistical Yearbook by Korean Film Council [http://www.kofic.or.kr]

[Table 2] The Average Film Budget and Box Office Share, 1996-2007

	Production Budget	**Prints and Advertising Budget**	**Average Film Budget**	**Total Annual Budget**	**Box Office Share of Korean films (%)**
2007	25.5	11.7	37.2	4,612.80	50.0
2006	25.8	14.4	40.2	4,422.00	63.8
2005	27.3	12.6	39.9	3,471.30	58.7
2004	28	13.6	41.6	3,411.20	59.3
2003	28.4	13.2	41.6	3,328.00	53.5
2002	24.5	12.7	37.2	2,901.60	48.3
2001	16.2	9.3	25.5	1,657.50	50.1
2000	15	6.5	21.5	1,268.50	35.1
1999	14	5	19	931	39.7
1998	12	3	15	645	
1997	11	2	13	767	
1996	9	1	10	650	23.1

* Unit: Ten million won (5,000 GBP)

Source: Online Statistical Yearbook by Korean Film Council [http://www.kofic.or.kr]

[Table 3] Admissions, 2000-2007

	Korean Film		Foreign Film		Total Admission	Total Admission per Person
	Admission	Admission per Person	Admission	Admission per Person		
2007	7,939	1.61	7,938	1.61	15,877	3.22
2006	9,791	2	5,549	1.13	15,340	3.13
2005	8,544	1.75	6,008	1.23	14,552	2.98
2004	8,018	1.65	5,497	1.13	13,515	2.78
2003	6,391	1.32	5,556	1.15	11,947	2.47
2002	5,082	1.06	5,431	1.13	10,513	2.19
2001	4,481	0.95	4,455	0.94	8,936	1.89
2000	2,271	0.48	4,190	0.89	6,461	1.37

*Unit: Ten thousand people

Source: Online Statistical Yearbook by Korean Film Council [http://www.kofic.or.kr]

[Table 4] Top 20 Korean Films Released in Korea, 1998-2007

	Film	Admission		Director
		Seoul	Nationwide	
1	*The Host* (2006)	3,571,254	13,019,740	Bong Joonho
2	*King and the Clown* (2005)	3,660,842	12,302,831	Lee Joonik
3	*Taegukgi* (2004)	3,509,563	11,746,135	Kang Jekyu
4	*Silmido* (2003)	3,264,000	11,081,000	Kang Woosuk
5	*D-War* (2007)	2,098,438	8,426,973	Shim Hyungrae
6	*Friend* (2001)	2,678,846	8,181,377	Kwak Kyungtaek
7	*Welcome to Dongmakgol* (2005)	2,435,088	8,008,622	Park Kwanghyun
8	*May 18* (2007)	2,009,666	7,307,993	Kim Jihoon
9	*Tazza: The High Rollers* (2006)	2,091,058	6,847,777	Choi Donghoon
10	*200 Pound Beauty* (2006)	1,934,910	6,619,498	Kim Yonghwa
11	*Shiri* (1999)	2,448,399	6,209,898	Kang Jekyu
12	*My Boss, My Teacher* (2006)	1,502,821	6,105,431	Kim Dongwon
13	*Joint Security Area* (2000)	2,513,540	5,830,228	Park Chanwook
14	*Marrying the Mafia 2* (2005)	1,451,468	5,635,266	Jung Yongki
15	*Memories of Murder* (2003)	1,912,725	5,255,376	Bong Joonho
16	*My Wife is a Gangster* (2001)	1,466,400	5,180,900	Cho Jinkyu
17	*Marathon* (2005)	1,552,548	5,148,022	Jung Yoonchul
18	*Marrying the Mafia* (2002)	1,605,775	5,021,001	Jung Heungsoon
19	*My Tutor Friend* (2003)	1,587,975	4,937,573	Kim Kyunghyung
20	*My Sassy Girl* (2001)	1,735,692	4,852,845	Kwak Jeayong

Source: Online Statistical Yearbook by Korean Film Council [http://www.kofic.or.kr]

[Table 5] Top 20 Korean films released in Korea, 1987-1997

	Korean Films	**Admissions (Seoul)**	**Director**
1	*Sopyonje* (1993)	1,035,741	Im Kwontaek
2	*Two Cops* (1993)	860,433	Kang Woosuk
3	*The letter* (1997)	724,474	Lee Jungkuk
4	*The contact* (1997)	674,933	Jang Yoonhyun
5	*Son of a General* (1990)	678,946	Im Kwontaek
6	*Tow Cops 2* (1996)	636,047	Kang Woosuk
7	*Marriage Story* (1992)	526,052	Kim Euiseok
8	*The Gingko Bed* (1996)	452,580	Kang Jekyu
9	*Prostitute* (1988)	432,609	Yu Jinsun
10	*Downfall* (1997)	411,591	Im Kwontaek
11	*To You From Me* (1994)	381,578	Jang Sunwoo
12	*Dr. Bong* (1995)	376,443	Lee Kwanghoon
13	*Son of a General 2* (1991)	357,697	Im Kwontaek
14	*Beat* (1997)	349,781	Kim Sungsoo
15	*How to Top My Wife* (1994)	344,900	Kang Woosuk
16	*Partisans of South Korea* (1990)	324,169	Jung Jiyoung
17	*Terrorist* (1994)	320,919	Kim Youngbin
18	*That Which Falls Has Wings* (1990)	320,000*	Jang Kilsu
19	*Hallelujah* (1997)	310,920	Shin Seungsoo
20	*No. 3* (1997)	297,617	Song Neunghan

* Estimated number

Source: Online Statistical Yearbook by Korean Film Council [http://www.kofic.or.kr]

[Table 6] Number of Film Releases in Korea, 1987-2007

Year	Korean		Foreign		Total
	Films Produced	Films Released	Films Imported	Films Released	
2007	124	112	404	281	393
2006	110	108	243	237	345
2005	87	83	253	215	298
2004	82	74	285	194	268
2003	80	65	271	175	240
2002	78	82	262	192	274
2001	65	52	339	228	280
2000	59	62	427	277	339
1999	49	42	348	233	275
1998	43	43	296	244	287
1997	59	60	431	271	331
1996	65	55	483	320	375
1995	64	62	378	307	369
1994	65	52	381	238	290
1993	63	51	420	215	266
1992	96	68	360	201	269
1991	121	86	309	176	262
1990	111	N/A	309	N/A	N/A
1989	110	N/A	321	N/A	N/A
1988	87	N/A	248	N/A	N/A
1987	89	N/A	100	N/A	N/A

Source: Online Statistical Yearbook by Korean Film Council [http://www.kofic.or.kr]

[Table 7] Top 50 Korean box-office Hit Films

Rank	Title	Released	Gross (Won)	Audience
1	*Roaring Currents*	2014	135,721,087,910	17,611,849
2	*Ode to My Father*	2014	110,347,114,130	14,179,205
3	*The Host*	2006	NA	13,019,740
4	*The Thieves*	2012	93,665,568,500	12,983,330
5	*Miracle in Cell No.7*	2013	91,431,914,670	12,811,206
6	*Masquerade*	2012	88,900,208,769	12,319,542
7	*King And The Clown*	2005	NA	12,302,831
8	*TaeGukGi: Brotherhood Of War*	2004	NA	11,746,135
9	*Haeundae*	2009	81,934,638,201	11,453,338
10	*The Attorney*	2013	82,880,698,300	11,375,944
11	*Silmido*	2003	NA	11,081,000
12	*Snowpiercer*	2013	67,010,077,500	9,349,991
13	*The Face Reader*	2013	66,005,451,500	9,134,586
14	*The Pirates*	2014	66,364,656,706	8,665,652
15	*Miss Granny*	2014	62,696,751,249	8,656,417
16	*Take Off*	2009	60,896,633,308	8,487,894
17	*D-War*	2007	NA	8,426,973
18	*Scandal Makers*	2008	53,940,101,534	8,245,523
19	*Welcome To Dongmakgol*	2005	NA	8,008,622
20	*War of the Arrows*	2011	55,827,861,500	7,470,633
21	*Sunny*	2011	54,034,235,100	7,362,467
22	*May 18*	2007	NA	7,307,993
23	*The Berlin File*	2013	52,354,931,637	7,166,199
24	*Secretly Greatly*	2013	48,700,887,413	6,959,083
25	*Tazza: The High Rollers*	2006	NA	6,847,777
26	*The Good, The Bad, And The Weird*	2008	43,768,628,939	6,686,912
27	*A Werewolf Boy*	2012	46,593,107,500	6,654,837
28	*200 Pounds Beauty*	2006	NA	6,619,498

29	*The Man From Nowhere*	2010	47,870,792,359	6,282,774
30	*Woochi*	2009	44,605,437,017	6,136,928
31	*My Boss, My Teacher*	2006	NA	6,105,431
32	*Swiri*	1999	NA	5,820,000
33	*Marrying the Mafia 2: Enemy-in-Law*	2005	NA	5,635,266
34	*Hide and Seek*	2013	39,602,987,500	5,604,104
35	*The Terror, LIVE*	2013	39,866,712,881	5,583,596
36	*Cold Eyes*	2013	39,380,162,179	5,508,017
37	*Secret Reunion*	2010	40,800,867,602	5,507,106
38	*Punch*	2011	38,530,503,500	5,310,510
39	*Memories Of Murder*	2003	NA	5,255,376
40	*The Tower*	2012	37,654,858,000	5,181,014
41	*Marathon*	2005	NA	5,148,022
42	*The Chaser*	2008	33,943,278,500	5,071,619
43	*My Tutor Friend*	2003	NA	4,937,573
44	*The Grand Heist*	2012	34,614,661,161	4,909,937
45	*My Love, Don't Cross That River*	2014	37,342,396,379	4,796,893
46	*DETECTIVE K : Secret of Virtuous Widow*	2011	35,841,769,500	4,786,259
47	*KUNDO : Age of the Rampant*	2014	36,984,686,999	4,774,715
48	*Nameless Gangster : Rules of the Time*	2012	36,538,823,500	4,719,872
49	*New World*	2013	34,881,330,905	4,682,492
50	*Silenced*	2011	35,566,854,800	4,662,822

Source: Online Statistical Yearbook by Korean Film Council [http://www.kofic.or.kr]

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