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Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Film Studies

Shi-Gol: The Rural Palimpsest and Historical Trauma in the Contemporary Korean Horror Film.

DOI

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2024

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Abstract

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This thesis examines portrayals of rural landscapes and villages in contemporary Korean horror cinema, using them as a backdrop to explore deep-seated societal and cultural upheavals and historical scars. By employing the rural setting as a thematic lens, this thesis uncovers the unsettling horrors of the past that continue to shape Korean cinema's horrific imagination. It further advances the concept of rurality as a spatiotemporal palimpsest, a layered amalgamation of collective and individual memory and subjective and objective history. Drawing on an interdisciplinary theoretic framework of memory and spatial studies to augment the Korean horror genre's lack of substantive scholarship regarding space, my thesis analyzes three primary case studies from contemporary South Korean horror cinema to examine the countryside as a symbol of a neglected past, regression, and obsolescence, challenging the sensibilities of modern Korea and unearthing what's best left forgotten by time. *Bedevilled* (*Kim Bok-Nam Salinsageonui Jeonmal,* Jang Cheol-Soo, 2010), *Moss* (*Iggi,* Kang Woo-Suk, 2010), and *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* (*Svaha, Chang Chae-Hyon,* 2019) each feature rural environments that employ varied and evolving techniques to critique the malleability of historical and cultural narratives, exposing a contemporary unease with rurality as a conduit for a past layered within the permeable present. The argument put forth here is that the palimpsestic countryside, as a premodern Other, exposes modern Korea as a divided dystopia rather than a utopia of totality and constant progress. It highlights the coexistence of elements such as modernity and regression, pleasure and trauma, and materialism and spirituality, in each case inseparable and mirroring one another. In this regard, the thesis emphasizes the local and culturally specific dimensions of contemporary South Korean cinematic horrors as singularly important to the genre despite Korean cinema's growing internationalization.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Thomas Michael Humpal

Title of thesis: Shi-Gol: The Rural Palimpsest and Historical Trauma in the Contemporary Korean Horror Film.

I 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.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as:-

Humpal, Thomas. “Modernization, Authoritarianism, and Space in Korean Shamanic Exorcism Cinema.” Journal of Korean and Asian Arts Vol. 3, 2021.11, pp. 7-30

Signature: .....Date: October 17th, 2023

Author's Note

In this thesis I use American English. I generally follow revised romanization of Korean for translation or transliteration. However, the titles and direct quotations in this thesis follow the linguistic conventions of their source material. For instance, the maps used in image 4-3 uses a variation of city names, the most notable being Gwangju spelled as Kwangju. Other such variations are inevitable given the changes used in translation and romanization methodology across source material.

Also, to avoid confusion, Korean names (such as for academics, authors, and directors) follow Korean name order—family name followed by surnames. This includes character names in films, the names of directors, and other instances where deviating from the Korean name order would create confusion in discussion of the films. I also capitalize each syllable in surnames and separate each syllable of surnames with a hyphen.

This is the case unless the name used in published material (i.e. articles, books, or online references), which may or may not following the same guidelines, differs. For example, Hyangjin Lee does not publish in English under Lee Hyangjin, or Lee Hyang-Jin. As a rule when referencing, I adhere to the name as it appears in the cited published material. Again, this is to avoid confusion when revisiting sources.

With this difference in mind, I have also opted to bend the traditional MLA citation rules regarding authors with identical family names for purposes of clarity. For example, Kyung-Hyun Kim and Kirsteen Kim will be differentiated in text as their names appear here. This is necessary because of the repeated use of common Korean family names such as Kim, Lee, Park, Jang, etc.

As a rule, I use film titles in English while providing the romanization of the Korean title in its first usage in each chapter.

And finally, for ease of cross-cultural referencing, original Korean titles of films are noted in the filmography.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisors, Dr. Louis Bayman and Professor Tim Bergfelder, for their unwavering patience, consistency, continued interest, and invaluable guidance throughout the composition of this thesis. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the faculty who provided differing insights and new perspectives to my research during the drafting and review process, particularly Dr. Sofia Bull, and Dr. Aude Campmas. I would also like to express my thanks to Dr. Daniel Martin of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, Professor Michael Williams of University of Southampton, and Professor Kevin Donnelly of University of Southampton for their graciousness, invaluable insights, and recommendations during the review and defence of this thesis. Of course, on the long road to the completion of this thesis and Phd came far too many generous professors and staff to name them all individually, but who each invested their time and energy into this older student who took a circuitous route to his academic career. Dr. Kathleen Newman and Professor Jeffrey Williams of Carnegie Mellon University, as well as Dr. Ting Chang at the University of Nottingham each contributed more to my scholarship and research interests than I can possibly express. My love for film could never have become the center of my life without Dr. Elena Del Rio of the University of Alberta, Professor Mark Berrettini of Portland State University, and Professor David Caldwell of the University of Northern Colorado who each mentored and influenced me as an unmotivated and directionless undergraduate student. They allowed me the opportunity to grow and seek out my passion both in the classroom and within the broader film community. I am eternally grateful for the compelling and inspirational classes all my professors have taught during my time at university. Most importantly, thank you to my family and friends for forgiving my cancelled plans, lending me tuition help when things were tight, and most of all for your belief in me, which all contributed to this thesis and who I am today. I dedicate this thesis to my mother and father who helped me to not become the criminal my second-grade guidance counsellor warned I would become.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

My dissertation examines representations of the countryside in contemporary Korean Horror cinema. The terrors depicted in villages and landscapes reveal more than just a contemporary metropolitan uneasiness with rural spaces as they exist today, but rather what they represent. Beyond mere geographical location, the villages and landscapes that compose Korean cinema's countryside are at once simple, traditional, and familiar. However, Korean cinema's horrific countryside harkens to a darker history that continues to influence cinema as an imaginative resource to represent the traumas of the past; colonization, war, a divided Korean peninsula, authoritarianism, forced modernization, industrial catastrophe, and financial collapse. For this study, the countryside is primarily a lens through which contemporary cinematic horrors become unnerving representations of this history. The films analysed in this dissertation instantiate the rural as an affective landscape that embodies feelings of disquiet, uncanniness, revulsion, and terror. And often it is the interactivity of the countryside and the city, as popular cultural tropes, that composes much of the spatial tension in contemporary Korean horror films. These tensions unsettle the repressed or obscured historical anxieties that problematize Korea's collective memories of the past and their relationship to the present.

Urban Seoul as depicted in contemporary Korean cinema is the primary site of Korea's blossoming cultural influence on the world's stage. Contemporarily set Korean television dramas and films for domestic and international audiences portray a bustling, modernized, and international Seoul. As a cinematic city with its skyline of high-rise buildings, Seoul is an international hub for contemporary fashion and the cutting edge of aesthetic trends. As such, Seoul has come to reflect the phenomenon of Hallyu, the popular novelty of Korea's cultural and creative economy. Indicative of the wholesome if not homogenized culture factory, the images sell Hallyu culture and media as the visage of a wholly developed South Korea. As a result of the spatial implications of modernity, these representations of the contemporary city epitomize economic and cultural modernization. The product of transforming a war-torn former colony into an emerging, if not dominant regional power, urban Seoul is the pinnacle of Korea's economic and cultural evolution. Even as the backdrop for ugly or violent deeds, its symbolism and promise cannot be denied. However, this dissertation is not about the center of progress but the periphery. Outside the cinematic city is a space where progress is in view but always seems just beyond grasp. If the city embodies present-day Korea and how far it has come, it is reasonable that the countryside, in turn, typifies a past left behind or neglected by progress. As a symbol of a bygone era, regression, and the obsolete, the horrific countryside is a register for that which doesn't quite fit within the sensibilities of modern Korea and what is perhaps best left buried by time.

The impetus of this research came in 2016 when I experienced these spatial tensions first-hand. I moved from the second-largest city in Korea, Busan, to a quiet country village in a neighboring province. At the foot of a misty mountain, my home is idyllic, picturesque even, and as I would come to find out, a rather scary and unfamiliar environment for visitors. The traditional design of wood and hwangto (red clay brick) is distinct from the minimalist white and concrete of contemporary apartments and home structures. As one friend remarked, “It’s like stepping back in time.” On the outskirts of a village with less than a dozen inhabitants, where the small plots of farmland meet the edge of the dense forest, the quiet isolation is disconcerting to most city dwellers. Seemingly unchanged by time and many modern day conveniences, its static state is an uncanny reminder of the past in a country and landscape so rapidly transformed by the modernizing effects of industrialization and profound urbanization during the past 60 years. The countryside is a place where the past and present intermingle; where the ancient and the contemporary occupy the same space and often overlap. At dusk most days, and always on lunar calendar holidays, drumming and chanting can be heard echoing from the temple around the side of the valley. Burial mounds decorate the mountainside and elderly neighbors leave food outside their gates at night to feed the wandering ghosts of hungry ancestors. The feelings of incongruity and dissociation between the rural villages and the urban sprawl are palpable. Commuting to work in the city, I can’t help but experience the tension of time and space on a daily basis. It is precisely these tensions that underlie the horrors of Korea’s cinematic countryside as a premodern shadow of Korea’s contemporary cities.

By way of showing how my analysis will address such questions in cinema, I turn to Na Hong Jin’s widely analyzed and reviewed film *The Wailing* (Gokseong,2015) as emblematic of several central concepts of my thesis. On the surface, The Wailing offers a collection of conventions common to Korean horror cinema both present and past. The film depicts an exorcism, a vengeful female ghost, native Korean shamanism and Catholicism at odds, historical trauma and generational regret, a mysterious stranger, a zombie-like illness, a befuddled police officer whose case becomes too personal, all within a sleepy village cut off from the spiritual scepticism of more urbane city-folk. Initially, a pervasive hush and lingering stillness hangs over the village of Gokseong (hence the Korean title of the film). A misty, dream-like quality common to many Korean horror films pervades the small groupings of *hanoks* (traditional Korean houses) and wall-lined alleyways. The village in Na’s film, Gokseong in southern Gyeonggi province, represents a stereotypically parochial backwater. However, when the horrors of the film begin, their ties to the temporally arrested village manifest through historical symbolism and memory. Without warning, symbols from the unsettled past overrun the village, the traditional and the contemporary clash, and the picturesque mountain scenery itself engenders horror. A small-pox-like affliction leads to a family murder. A seemingly demonic Japanese fisherman inhabits an isolated hanok. Ghosts roam the streets in broad daylight. The priest of a local church is a symbol of the pervasive influence of Christianity in modern Korea who competes with shamans and their elaborate exorcism ceremonies for the souls of the villagers. These horrors are an amalgam of images symbolic of the historical traumas of Japanese colonialism, the smallpox

epidemic, and the clash of religions experienced during the country's modernization. The tension created by the confluence of images of the traumatic past with the rural present underscores a vital thread running through this dissertation; how the horrific countryside is the site of interaction with lingering social, cultural, and historical images and tropes layered by time and transformation.

South Korea is a nation that has experienced profound social, cultural, and political changes throughout the twentieth century, each threatening to reshape the very essence of Korean-ness. In the process, these changes have unequivocally influenced and complicated the Korean people's and nation's conceptualization of and relationship with the past. The inception of modernity and the formation of the modern Korean subject began under Japanese colonial control and an attempted systematic eradication of the Korean language and culture that decimated Korea's historical record. Then came two world wars, the latter of which was in no small part carried out on the backs of Korean slave labor and manufactured with Korea's natural resources. A domestic war was the first major clash of the Cold War with Korea as the potential first domino in the series of eastern hemisphere nations under communist threat. After the Korean War came an influx of foreign money and industry under the subsequent authoritarian military states that forcefully facilitated cultural and industrial reforms and reshaped Korea's identity along with its economy. A divided peninsula, rapid transformation, and a history rewritten by each new presidential administration has created what has been termed by Kim Mi-Kyoung and Barry Schwarz in their study of northeast Asia's relationship with the layering of history as a "memory problem" (Kim and Schwartz 2).

Kim and Schwartz assert that the defining characteristic of northeast Asia's "memory problem" is that it "involves a surfeit rather than a deficit of memory, and this excess is negative: unforgettable traumas prevent nations from coming to terms with the problems of the present" (2). Robin Wood similarly draws from these excesses of history and memory, reading through the lens of horror cinema. Wood argues that the repressed represents the surplus in society but had not been allowed to exist openly, left lingering under one's bed or hidden in the closet. It is never dealt with and instead festers underneath and bubbles to the surface in the forms and characteristics of the monsters that populate our collective societal fears. He terms this relationship "the return of the repressed" (Wood 57). In Korean culture, this concept is most directly embodied by the virgin ghost (*cheonyeo-gwishin*), unable to fulfil her life's sole purpose to marry and have children, inevitably returns to haunt newlyweds or pubescent girls. Her death and afterlife are shaped by unfulfilled justice and the compounding of generational trauma that are distinctive cultural traits of Korean culture and the foundational motifs of Korean horror. The undeveloped countryside, with its superstitions, excess of history, and a seeming incompatibility with the advances that form the backbone of the contemporary Korean economy and lifestyle, is a lurking shadow whose very existence calls into question the means of progress and threatens to unmake modern Korea.

1.2 Research questions and methodology

Despite the multiplicity of cinematic horrors emanating from Korea's cinematic countryside, it is the similarities of these depictions that lead to the fundamental questions I address in my thesis. What do the settings of horror films reveal about the ties of location to collective cultural memory? What are Korea's contemporary urban anxieties concerning the retrogressive aspects of rurality? How are they expressed through national and cultural constructs of space? How do the spatial and temporal qualities of Korea's rural palimpsest contribute to formulating a cinematic countryside so haunted, violent, and grotesque? And most importantly: How do representations of the urban/rural divide in recent Korean horror cinema reflect the traumas of history?

The interdisciplinary nature of this thesis means it draws from a broad range of research methodologies and theories. First, because the primary focus of this thesis concerns the often tenuously mediated relationship between the present and the past, the methods and analyses are closely connected to historical examination; in others, to film/media studies, sociology, and cultural geography. Therefore, within this thesis I rely on language that is contextually appropriate for each case study. My approach does not view cinematic nor scholarly texts as isolated aesthetic entities but regards them as integral components of a broader cultural landscape. Consequently, the primary methodology employed here is rooted in the realm of historical cultural studies.

While the films analyzed in this thesis may lack some of the formal complexities typically integral to films worthy of a deep reading, this project undertakes a meticulous and critical examination of the films as cultural artifacts, indicative of broader societal mores and shifting sensibilities over time. Although the historical milieu in which these representations exist sheds light on the 'context' of the 'text', the objective is not merely to uncover the distinctive portrayals as mere reproductions of historical trauma. Rather, I aim to elucidate the underlying, and one might argue archetypal traits, of the historical traumas that have spawned these contemporary renditions refracted through Korea's cinematic countryside for modern audiences who may lack first-hand experiences of the history in question.

This necessitates not only embedding the text and its language within its distant historical milieu, but also placing each of the films within contemporary debates as a means of extracting possible reasons for the recent resurgence in films backdropped by the horrific countryside. This includes reconciling competing societal and historical perspectives surrounding the films themselves and sometimes broader sociological and cultural debates that parallel the crux of my analysis in each chapter. Where possible, I have tried to integrate my examination of cinematic texts with critical appraisals, interviews with filmmakers, and discussions surrounding their releases, thus placing the cinematic text as an object of cultural mediation.

My research contributes to a relatively broad range of disciplines and studies on the representation of trauma, memory, horror, rurality and Korean cinema in general. While historical trauma and Korean

cinema has a long torturous association, my specific focus of spatial studies and my envisioning of rurality as a contemporary articulation of competing renderings of histories is a fresh contribution to the fields of cultural geography and memory studies in cinema. The reasons that this thesis will appeal to different areas of study are twofold. First, because this thesis brings non-horror texts into dialogue with their horror counterparts, it targets scholarship in the field of Korean cinema as a whole. However, the main scholarship this thesis aims to contribute to is the horror genre within Korean Cinema. Second, this thesis will be particularly relevant to those interested in interdisciplinary fields such as memory and trauma studies, and how these fields might be further applied in the scholarship of Korean language and culture, sociology, and cultural geographical studies.

My goal is to address the gaps in current research of Korean horror cinema and underscore the significance of the domestically focused horror genre and generic modes as a crucial imaginative resource that merits continued, in-depth analysis and research. This is particularly important now, as Korean cinema and Hallyu culture are becoming increasingly globalized and adaptive to blockbuster conventions, and perhaps prone to losing some of their unique local characteristics due to international success. In this regard, this thesis addresses the emerging trend of conducting cross-national analyses of cinematic pieces. This approach is built upon the idea that by returning to locality as a meaningful lens of analysis, and by identifying formal and thematic similarities among films, it becomes feasible to illustrate the presence of a common approach to rural horror in Korean cinema that layers the events of past and present spatially.

This thesis constitutes an original contribution and is distinguished from similar works because of the innovative methodology, the paralleling of contemporary historical issues with those of the past, and the re-examination of the spatial and temporal dimensions as play in cultural memory and geography. In the following subsections, I will provide an overview of theories that inform and/or are otherwise employed in later chapters.

1.3 Previous Research:

1.3.1 Space

In my thesis, space is first and foremost a conceptual tool that allows access, consciously or unconsciously, to the latent political, social, and cultural ideologies as projected from and upon the cinematic realm. In his work "Signatures of the Visible”, Frederic Jameson suggests that within the raw materials available to filmmakers, there lies an inherent political content of daily life, forming the foundation for a political narrative. He posits that this political narrative emerges in various spaces and settings depicted in films, going beyond mere mise-en-scène. Importantly, he asserts that these cinematic spaces reveal significant contradictions, and these contradictions become evident in the real-world spaces and locations that the films reference (38). My focus lies in examining how recent

popular horror cinema incorporates diverse ideologies into the physicality of the spaces and environments depicted. These settings are composed of layers of contradictions of culture and collective memory, trauma and nostalgia, old and new, and the modern and traditional.

My thesis is based on the idea that the spatial dimension should not be regarded as a mere stage upon which history unfolds nor as a mere backdrop or setting for narrative. Instead, I see it as constitutive of meanings that can be made readable through the various forms of analysis. As theories of space are increasingly influenced by its interaction with experiences and histories, it proves far more relative, and elastic than once thought. As space is continually re-situated within the personal, social, historical, and political experience and representation, it is acted upon by an "unstable process of mediation" (Dehaene and De Cauter 94). Through mediation, it becomes something of "a mental and representational category" (Jansson 306) of those mediating it. From this, we can draw discursive readings of spaces once thought to be unchanging and unshakable. Space contains and accumulates several layers of memories proceeding from different historical times, and the experiences that subjects have of space and how they activate those different memories are never linear (Lefebvre 50-58).

According to Henri Lefebvre, space is constructed through the interplay of a conceptual triad. First is perceived space, what Lefebvre refers to as spatial practice, constructed by the physical organization of space by experiences like daily routines and activities. Second is conceived space, or representations of space, which is created and imagined by urban planners, architects, and other professionals. Third is lived space, or representational space, which is made up of subjective experiences of space, shaped by symbols, images, and personal emotions (Lefebvre 50-58). This assertion is expanded on by Doreen Massey and her work *For Space*. According to Massey, three key concepts of space reflect recent developments in critical human geography and social theory. The first is the concept of space as a product, according to which space is seen as produced by social, economic, and political forces rather than existing naturally; similar to Henri Lefebvre's "production of space," which occurs at different scales, from the globe to the body, from cosmos to hearth (Lefebvre 2). The second is the concept of space as a process, according to which space is conceived as multiple, concurrent, and relational. This space inevitably engages ideas like place and locality and moves and shifts based on history. The third concept is space as being productive, according to which space becomes a dynamic force that generates changes, shapes experiences, and demands narratives as a means of creating meanings. This space constitutes what Massey calls "a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (9) as a discursive mechanism that accounts for all that has occurred in a particular space that is narrativized by human experience.

As the operating space for the films in this thesis, rurality is a construct of collective national sensibilities and subjectivity. The maintained and cultivated collective memory of an idealized rural past is an important aspect to how it is experienced in South Korea, while not a uniquely Korean perspective. Indeed, studies from the cultures of other nations will be vital to my analysis, namely

studies of literary culture in Britain and film culture in the USA. In *The Country and the City* (1973), Raymond Williams traces the literary fragments which have sustained the myth in Britain of an Arcadian Golden Age – a primitive and happier past that is timeless and ordered. These fabled and folkloric renderings of rural space are drawn upon by David Bell and Brian Short in their respective examinations of the rural idyll. Succinctly, the rural idyll is a symbolic landscape into which various meanings of rurality are condensed. For Bell the rural idyll is always just out of reach as "rural life reflects at one and the same time the boundlessness of the imagined landscape and community and the restrictiveness of access to the material and cultural conditions which permit the imagined to be lived out other than in the imagination" (Bell, "Variations" 171). In "Idyllic Ruralities," Brian Short traces the origins and meanings of the term from its archaic and classical origins through the modern day by diametrically setting it against its antithesis "the un-idyllic" (Short 133). In doing so Short similarly articulates the spatial and temporal Othering at work when a place or space is so intricately connected to the idea of a golden age long since passed. In Korea, a country of 50 million people where 81.7% of the population lives in roughly 15% of the landmass (Statista), it is easy to understand that this idealization, and typically so, is as much a symptom of urbanization as it is a product of the urban imagination. Both Williams and Bell articulate this idyll as the source of nostalgic yearnings for an imagined community, remembered as purer, simpler, natural, and stable. It can provide an escape from city life and the problems that manifest it, leading to a sense of belonging. Rural space presents as a space of bucolic tranquillity and communion with nature – an authentic place of retreat from the pace of city life (Bell, "Variations" 152).

The cinematic countryside is as much a product of cultural and geographical representation, as it is a product of metaphoric dimensions of conscious and unconscious symptoms of memory and history. As stated by Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner in their introduction of *Film Landscapes*, "Cinematic landscapes can therefore be landscapes of the mind, offering displaced representations of desires and values, so that these can be expressed by the filmmakers and shared by audiences" (Harper and Rayner 21). This mixture of subjectivities allows for my readings of the cinematic place as a heterogeneous site of cultural, political, and historical remembrance that blurs the lines of representation and reality.

In *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, M. Christine Boyer contrasts two diverging views of space: those of Maurice Halbwachs and Walter Benjamin. Halbwachs and Benjamin coalesce on the point that collective memory always is embedded in a spatial framework. Boyer states that for Halbwachs, it is cities that remain and endure as unchanging placeholders even in the face of war and cultural collapse: the city is the space we occupy, traverse, have continual access to, or can at any time reconstruct in thought and imagination, that we focus our attention upon. It is a sort of bank of memory for us to focus on if we hope for remembrances to reappear (18).

Benjamin's conclusions differ, for he argues that the spatial structures which aided memory are continuously under threat and are ultimately destroyed by the forces of progress. The advent of the

photographic image abetted such gradual decay, which simultaneously recorded each detail to precision and relegated the past to a pile of rubble waiting to be appropriated and recorded (Boyer). History as the buried remains of people and long-forgotten buildings exemplify Benjamin's idea that in the ruin, temporality is inseparable from spatiality. Benjamin states that "in the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history shrivel up and become absorbed in the setting" (30). While Benjamin writes of the significance of the ruin in a European context, Korea's abrupt and compressed modernization reflects similar motifs of a neglected, covered, and re-purposed space that accentuates the human relationship to a given location. In Korea's rural towns where, decaying architectural styles can be glimpsed in their traditional splendor surrounded by a predominantly elderly rural population, the spatial implications of an unsettled past exist at the margins, away from the glass and steel structures of modern cities.

The rural setting in Korean Horror cinema composed of dilapidated, old houses engulfed by the surrounding vegetation, and *hanoks* (traditional Korean homes) in disrepair, are neglected artifacts of simpler antiquity. They offer a space untouched by progress. Rurality in Korean horror cinema straddles the divide between Halbwachs' and Benjamin's two concepts of the space-memory relationship. As such, it relies on cinematic space's capacity to depict the rich narrative and temporal qualities of these transitory spatial frameworks. The spectral nature of the traumas inflicted in the horrific countryside is both a recall of the past and a permeating hauntological presence on the contemporary countryside. The countryside is indeed haunted, if not spiritually, by a history that never seems to altogether fade away.

1.3.2 Space in Korean Cinema

My approach to space in Korean cinema offers a differing focus from much of the contemporary work which theorize from the fundamental relationship between Korea's urban transformation and cinema as a tool of modernity's reconfiguration of subjectivity. Most scholarship concerning Korea's cinematic space is as a production of modernity, memory, and subjectivity that highlights Korea's urban landscapes, particularly Seoul, as "a social, historical and political microcosm - a canvas upon which the wider movements, transitions and developments of a national society can be unveiled and better understood (Ballard 10). In her book *Urban Landscapes and National Visions in Post-Millennial South Korean Cinema: From Seoul to Soul*, Gemma Ballard takes this perspective in her utilization of Seoul as "an investigative tool (cinematically or otherwise)" that is "indicative of the domestic desire to further explore and ultimately take control of the dominant image of South Korean identity" (10). While her emphasis on the cinematic city differs from my focus on rurality as a site for negotiating and contesting contemporary Korean identity, we are both interested in the cinematic medium as a vehicle for collective perception brought about by its capacity to layer or "annihilate space and time" (Ballard 11) as necessary. Jinhee Choi similarly observes that "such physical

transformation of urban space and spatial disorientation are important concerns for contemporary South Korean film" (Jinhee Choi 220). Although Seoul "embodies the modern and the contemporary" (Ballard 11), its hybridity and freedom of expression means it is in a constant state of flux, whereas the past is slowly buried beneath the palimpsestic layers of rubble underneath the newest department store or misrepresented in a new nostalgic television drama.

Furthering contributing to my analysis of the deep-seated connections between the feelings, subjectivities (both personal and collective), and the importance of place in contemporary Korean cinema, Youngmin Choe's *Tourist Distractions* examines recent Hallyu cinema through the themes of travel and movement, which serve as quintessential aspects of the Korean Wave. For Choe, a crucial dynamic in Hallyu cinema emerges where capital, commercial goods, and cultural products intersect under the overarching concept of "Asianization." This concept, as defined by Choe, embodies the collective emotional experience of forging East Asian networks. Choe expounds on how cinematic portrayals within Hallyu cinema, and their geopolitical/consumer driven associated connotations extend beyond the confines of their narrative worlds through the lenses of travel and movement amidst the rapidly evolving landscapes and the enduring influences of Hallyu's own material presence in East Asia. Hallyu cinema, therefore, is not solely a pivotal hub of transnational trade where the film industry and tourism converge; it also constitutes a transformative environment that shifts Korea's position from a postcolonial context to a transnational one. Choe highlights the evolution of Hallyu discourses, demonstrating the evolving emotions, tensions, and gestures that resonate from early transnational self-reflections to the manifestations she terms *tourist distractions*. By considering Hallyu as an affective medium that circulates through cultural and virtual commodities, Choe's framing of "tourist distraction" is more than a reflection of cinematic spectatorship. It also encompasses the representations of travel and tourist mobility in connection with images and locations themselves, as well as the collective emotional influence that consistently interrupts, disrupts, and recontextualizes contemporary Korean society and culture.

Where Choe's primary focus is on the transnational, for the purposes of my thesis, it is Choe's final section, titled "Remembrance," that resonates with my localized analysis regarding places inextricably connected to historical moments and their role in communicating experiences and sensations trans generationally. In chapter 5, "Border Crossing," Choe shifts her focus from the sensations of mobility to the exact opposite. For her, the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone separating South and North Korea) serves as a recurring setting in films such as *J.S.A.: Joint Security Area* (*Gongdong Gyeongbiguyeok JSA,* Park Chan-Wook, 2000), *Yesterday* (*Yesteoday*, Jeong Yoon Soo, 2002), and *2009: Lost Memories* (*2009 Lost Memories,* Li Si-Myung, 2002), each embodying varying degrees of engagement. These films depict post-memory border crossing and a discourse surrounding unification and division that wasn't personally experienced but has become profoundly significant to future generations. Through their references to the Korean War and the DMZ, a significant space emerges for the simultaneous exploration of historical redress and the re-evaluation of history and subjectivity in the age of Hallyu. The DMZ, therefore, takes on a performative quality as a site of contention

involving states, individuals, emotions, and constitutional matters. In a similar regard, her analysis of *Taegukgi* (*Taegukgi Hwinallimyeo,* Kang Je-Gyu, 2004) in Chapter 6 suggests that the film transforms into a virtual experience of real history that undergoes alterations in the ever-shifting realm of memory and the mobility of Hallyu cinema. Choe, therefore, draws attention to the inherent challenges in commemorating historical events through commercial film sets, particularly when a single historical incident is represented differently in various filmic texts consumed by different generations. She warns that the drive to mend and address historical trauma through "cooperative optimism" and the transnational appeal of Hallyu cinema might inadvertently lead to "historical amnesia in potentially perilous ways" (Youngmin Choe 196).

Another text that emphasizes the Korean landscape as a site of subjective and historical redress is Ahn Sejung's doctoral thesis *Colonial Sublime: Infrastructure, Landscape, and Traveling Cinemas in Korea, 1898-1926*. In her study, Ahn investigates the connection between Korea's technological advancement and its early cinematic history, viewing it through the lens of the sublime aesthetic. Cinema made its way into Korea alongside the expansion of infrastructures during a period of direct and indirect colonial rule. It promptly served as a tool for national and imperial governance, shaping new political subjects during a period of significant social transformation. Ahn's research concentrates on the primitive representations of film technology, the aesthetic conventions of travel film genres, the early forms of state-sponsored films, the production of national landscapes within chain dramas, and the impact of colonial urban planning on the development of cinematic networks. In analyzing the colonial interaction between cinematic technology, nation, and landscape, Ahn invokes the concept of the sublime, as an aesthetic category, to refer to the emotions of shock and terror experienced by the viewer. It provides a valuable framework for understanding the peculiar, almost masochistic spectatorship of early cinema, where sensation and astonishment played pivotal roles in the aestheticization of colonial politics and the politics of aesthetics. Despite Ahn's focus on the cinematic technology for shaping public opinion and colonial policy, her study is an important influence on my conceptualization of Korea's cinematic countryside as a shaped and cultivated space for organizing a collective experience of the past.

A similar sentiment is echoed in a very short section in Kyung-Hyun Kim's and David E. James' *Im Kwon Taek: Korean Cinema and Buddhism* in which James uses the concept of the un-idyllic as a constitutive element of the rural idyll, thus offering a starting point for examining the other side of the coin. In this section James notes that "the idealization of the Korean landscape is for the domestic spectator overdetermined by the industrialization and urbanization that (as at the inception of industrialization and modern landscape art in England at the end of the eighteenth century) cause the rural world to appear as the location, not of agrarian labor or deprivation but recreation and spiritual renewal" (James 57). As not to belabor the disproportionate scholarship dedicated to the Korean countryside as positive, spiritually reaffirming, and sublime space for the audiences past and present, here I shift toward a more complex reading that problematizes Korea's cinematic landscapes as

complicated by historical, political, and cultural
forces.

In Kyung-Hyun Kim's book *Virtual Hallyu* (2011), there is a section on what he dubs the "virtual landscapes" of Korea which he elucidates via Karatani's concept of "defamiliarization of the familiar." (28). Fundamental to my thesis is the idea that the defamiliarization of cinematic landscapes in Korean cinema produces "sensations, affects, and feelings that have very little to do with the actual vanishing of the rural landscapes" (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Hallyu* 26). While Kim is interested in the "powerful melodramatic reactions" produced as a product of postmodern pleasures induced by nostalgia, the sites themselves are by in large settings for Korean New Wave and Art House films as torchbearers that represent "Korea's unique crisis at the height of its transition to a late-capitalist economy" (namely *Sopyonje*/Rural*, The Power of Gangwon Province*/Tourist*,* and *The Host*/Urban) (28). By juxtaposing the cinema of Im Kwon-Taek (Kim's emblematic example of realist cinema in Korea) with that of Hong Sang-Soo (whom Kim describes as the modernist) along with the films of Bong Joon Ho (the postmodernist) he emphasizes that the landscape serves as a key chronotope, or spatiotemporal matrix, through which new cinematic subjecthood is both discovered and demystified, "setting up a prerequisite for a new paradigm of modern subjectivity" (25-40). This new subjectivity includes a virtual representation of both the unrepresentable fictional space of a premodern Korea and the transforming of Korea's "pristine landscape" into a "cinematic tour" for contemporary urban audiences (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Hallyu* 39). Of particular import to my thesis is the section pertaining to Bong Joon-Ho. Kim discusses the deterioration of the countryside as a post-industrial landscape overrun by weekenders and golf courses (39-40). It is this mention of a "grotesque perversion" of the landscape in the films of Bong Joon Ho, and briefly, its use as a "generic ingredient" (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Hallyu* 40) in what are essentially genre films. However, he stops short of discussing the implications of this virtual space as a site of contestation for trauma, memory, history, psychology, and horror, the last of which is of obvious importance in my analysis.

1.3.3 Korea's Cinematic Countryside

Before delving into the lineage of Korea's cinematic countryside, it is important to draw clear distinctions between rural cinema, as the focus of this thesis, from heritage cinema, often referred to as *Sageuk* dramas and period films. In their introduction to *Representing the Rural*, Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield suggest that while both rural and heritage cinema "utilize the rural milieu and its inhabitants as models for a wider national identity, and both attempt to represent (or to recreate) archaic customs and rituals practiced within the rural milieu" (5), their differences are primarily temporal. They go on to assert that "heritage cinema is always set in the nation's past, and the return to the rural can be seen as an expression of venerability, going back to some kind of 'authentic roots'" (5). This differs from rural cinema, which in contrast, is generally set in the present, or a postmodern rendering of the past, and may involve flashbacks (another hallmark of Korean cinema's relationship to the the past and particularly historical trauma). In rural cinema the return to the rural "tends to be

less an expression of venerability than of vulnerability: the rural inhabitants, who occupy the lowest rung on the socioeconomic ladder of the surrounding nation, are not always regarded with esteem or respect by outsiders. Nor is there necessarily pride in lineage" (Fowler and Helfield 5).

In Korean film and television, the distinction between heritage and rural cinema is not always so clear. However, for the purposes of this thesis, Korea's rural cinema emphasizes the critical eye and often uses the countryside as a vehicle for critiquing traditional culture out-of-step with modernity, i.e. rural social systems, familial power structures, and gender dynamics. That is not to say that rural films do not positively depict the countryside, rather even glowing representations of rural life are often set up around the tension between modern and rural life. In such cases, these critiques in Korean rural cinema begin as a feeling of rejuvenation and venerability for the characters interacting within the rural milieu eventually becomes complicated by the very nature of a culturally arrested countryside.

In order to engage with my analysis of Korea's horrific countryside, it is first necessary to briefly examine how Korea's cinematic tradition and generic adaptability around cinematic rurality has produced a complex imaginative register. These representations of rurality began during the inception of the cinematic arts on the peninsula and have continued through every period, genre and mode: from Korea's earliest productions like *The Story of Chunhyang* (C*hunhyangjeon*, Lee Pil-Woo, 1935) and *Arirang* (*Arirang*, Na Woon-Gyu, 1926); to golden age melodramas like *The Seaside Village* (Gaetmaeul, Kim Soo-Yong, 1965), to Korean New Wave and National Cinema films like *Black Republic* (*Geudeuldo uri-cheoreom*, Park Kwang-Su, 1990) and *Lovers of Woomuk-Baemi* (*Woomukbaemi-eui Sarang*, Jang Sun-woo, 1990). The countryside features in more contemporary comedies like *Mission Sex Control* (*Jal Salabose*, Ahn Jin-Woo, 2006) and *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (*Welcome to Dongmakgol*, Park Gwang-Hyun, 2005) to crime films like *Righteous Ties* (*Georukhan Gyebo*, Jang Jin, 2007) and *Mapodo* (*Mapodo*, Choo Chung-Min, 2005), and melodramas like *Secret Sunshine* (*Miryang*, Lee Chang-Dong, 2007), and *Little Forest* (*Liteul Poleseuteu*, Yim Soon-Rye, 2018). Though the characteristics of representations vary across time and genre, there are some generalities that can be made in how rurality represents more than just a quaint setting for story.

In Robert Fish's introductory chapter to *Cinematic Countrysides*, he delineates a number of overlapping criteria each emphasizing the "different thematic concerns and approaches to the idea of cinematic countrysides" (Fish 7). While primarily privileging Western representations of rurality, his delineation proves a useful model for understanding most, if not all, renderings of rurality created by modernized societies. This is the case, even more so, for a nation like South Korean which developed so profoundly in such a short period of time. For the purposes of introducing the Korean countryside's representational genealogy in cinema, the landscape as reflected in cinema is closely tied to its relationship to modernity (Kyung-Hyun Kim, Virtual 17). In the previous section, I examined how Kyung-Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe have explored representations of the landscape, rural and urban, within a framework regarding commodification. Chungmoo Choi offers a differing critique of representations of the countryside not for what they depict, but rather what they omit in their

representations in order to reinforce nostalgia. In his analysis of Im Kwon-Taek's *Sopyonje* (*Sopyonje*, 1992), he reads Im's spectacularization of Korean rural life based as depicting nostalgic anachronisms like rural traditional marketplaces that would later be decimated by industrialization, and a countryside without modern technological innovations like automobiles and trains. These omissions underpin Im's nostalgic rural milieu through what Choi describes as "rediscovering" it as "the sacred, un-contaminated, … [and] undeveloped virgin land" (Chungmoo Choi, "Politics" 115-116). In doing so it "masks the intensely developed industrial country that lies outside the camera frame" (Chungmoo Choi, "Nationalism" 9-31). This results in depictions of the city and the countryside that are unable to reconcile their spatio-temporal coexistence and instead remain premodern and modern polarities.

The most general and unifying statement that can be made about how the various depictions of Korea's cinematic countryside is they critique how ideas of the nation are formed and expressed in their framing of "the occupancy and experience of border zones: those rural environments that bring the relationship between state, subject and cultural identity into sharp relief" (Fish 8). Both Kyung-Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe refer to this instantiating quality of the Korean landscape, particularly the countryside, as affective. Such sites "are not so much particular destinations as they are emblems of suspended time" (Youngmin Choe, *Tourist* 60) that unite character and audience and "transform signs… familiar to all Koreans" (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Virtual* 98). Oscillating between a spiritually charged site of rejuvenation, connection, and tradition that roots characters in an ever-complicated modernizing world, and creating conflict because it is a site of individually suffocating cultural traditions and conservative social structures, the countryside is consistently a setting that relies on the tensions between representing what *was* and what *is*.

The countryside in *Mist* (*Angae*, Kim Soo-Yong, 1967) is a prototypical example of an affective rural landscape, representing the impact of the shifting cultural mores associated with modernization, and an example that will feature in later chapters of this thesis for its epitomic qualities related to the border zones and the liminality of memory. The story follows Yun Gi-jun, a rich married businessman based in Seoul. Alienated and stressed by his job position, the protagonist decides to return to his hometown, Mujin, to visit the grave of his mother. There, he encounters the music teacher, Ha In-suk, and the two immediately engage in a profound interplay of memories, reminiscence, flashbacks, and unfaithfulness. Right from the outset, the remote village of Mujin establishes itself as the absolute protagonist of the narrative, depicted by Yun as a place of "scorching sun, cloying mist, and people disfigured by poverty", where a permanent fog envelops the lives of the inhabitants as if it were the "most potent narcotic in the world".

Often as a result of the blurring between the individual and the nation, as well as reality and idealization of memory, the countryside functions as a seamless and prototypical landscape of nationalism; the spatial imagery behind the 'inculcation of political ideology'. Through this ideological reinforcing of coherent ideas of nationhood there are often critiques of nationhood as well. This is particularly salient when considering the tropes commonly found in Korean rural cinema involving the

revelation of family secrets or buried histories. The countryside then provides the perfect backdrop as "a literal and metaphoric terrain for conjuring up [these] buried histories, identities and narratives that have been, or are imagined to be, suppressed by 'civilisation' and the dominant order" (Fish 8).

The second broader statement that can be made about Korea's cinematic countryside is that it also has a long tradition as a place to express questions of Identity, particularly those involving the nebulous tensions of difference and otherness that are a product of modernization. In this way, the production of rural space relates to the social identities of those occupying, embodying and moving through them. This is often represented through portrayals of societal shifts dealing with gender, class, and age. Men and women experience the cinematic Korean countryside differently. For men, it is often a place of nostalgia, where traditional Confucian patriarchal values reign. For women, repressed under such a traditional cultural system, they often find themselves the victims of same.

The Houseguest and My Mother (*Sarangbang Sonnimgwa Eomeoni*, Shin Sang-Ok, 1961) highlights two key markers of social identity and difference, childhood and masculinity, as examples of how embodied identities come to inflect, and be inflected by, the idea of rural space. In the film, an artist from Seoul visits the widow of a deceased friend in the countryside. The relationship between the friend's wife, her mother and the artist is largely told through the perspective of a young child, Ok-hee. Ok-Hee acts as a secretive matchmaker between her widowed mother and the visiting artist. Being a child, she is unaware how such a pairing would contradict the societal expectations around how widows should act in Korean society.

This background of non-horrific rurality in Korean cinema is an important element in my analysis because, as you will later recognize in my case studies, the horrific depictions often revolve around the positive, even idyllic qualities of Korean cinematic rurality being exaggerated to uncomfortable excess; masculinity becomes misogyny, tradition becomes tyranny, and the spirits of the past become hauntings of the present. Also, help illustrate one of the important themes of this thesis, that being the growing gap between the otherness of premodern cultural structures and modernized, globalized, urban contemporary Korea.

1.3.4 Horrific and Gothic Intermingling.

The films I analyze in this thesis fit into some broader definitions of horror while failing to meet the criteria of other more specific ones. I use the term horror as an umbrella term for a certain classification of films that, in simplest terms, seek to be "expressly repulsive" (Carroll 34). The films I analyze are perhaps repulsive to the extreme as they each represent a particularly abrasive sub-genre of horror intended to attack the more sensitive aspects of life; rape-revenge, backwoods horror, and the religious/exorcism film, which will each be more clearly define in their respective chapters.

Debates surrounding genre in contemporary Korean cinema have established Hallyu's reputation as a cinema that often eschews audiences and critics' preconceived notions of genre, blending and

manipulating generic conventions to create unexpected and novel narratives. In his article, "Sliding through Genres: The Slippery Structure in South Korean Films," Pablo Utin observes the unique narrative tendency of contemporary Korean cinema to mix genres often through opposing and even contradictory conventions, tones, and styles, from horror to comedy or from melodrama to slapstick. Without entering into debates about the strict genre classifications of the films in this dissertation, it is necessary to contextualize my use of the term *horror*. The events and settings of these films utilize the generally accepted elements of the horrific, the haunted, the uncanny, the abject, the monstrous, the gory, psychopathic, and most the most important to the framework of this thesis, the Gothic.

As opposed to the unchanging depictions of the idyll and its place in the collective urban imagination, Fred Botting notes the Gothic mode, and by extension horror, draws heavily on themes of transforming a once amicable space into one defamiliarized (12). The Gothic character is often one moving from the city to the country, their act of travel is itself a passing from one space to another. Things become unstable, uncanny, and not what they seem. The Gothic concepts of time, space, and the uncanny intermingle in a defamiliarizing way. The Gothic film is a "medium through which things are allowed to pass, from the past into the present, from death to life, from the beyond to hear and back again" (Kavka 236). Gothic film works through the iconography of the visual tied to the presence of the otherworldly in a way that sets the viewer's "nerves on edge" (236). This kind of *liminality* collapses the present into the past, lifting the veil between the natural and supernatural, the real and fantastical elements in East Asian cinema. The dissolution of once secure barriers like those mentioned above invariably involves the crossing over or leaving of residue when breached. Analyzing *Village of Eight Gravestones* (*Yatsu Haka-Mura*, Yoshitarō Nomura, 1977), Chiho Nakagawa defines the Gothic "as a mode of writing that refers to the past in negotiation with the present and/or that which emerges out of the changing social structure in the modern era" (32). Bliss Cua Lim takes this one step further in her critique of the clash between the traditional and the modern. Lim observes that the coexistence between the real and the fantastical elements in East Asian cinema articulates "symbolic excess through which the active force of the supernatural provides a mechanism of critiquing capitalist enhancements" (135).

While Asian Gothic shares some commonalities with western conceptions of the Gothic, Stein and Browning differentiate Asian Gothic as utilizing a "complex multiplicity... of merging and interrelated cultural, political, and social resonances… [which] has to do with an intermixing of Taoism (animism in nature), Confucianism (politics, the ethical and the social), and Buddhism (spiritual and psychological)" (211). The intermixing of different ancient and contemporary traditions is significant to the liminality of the Gothic. Here I return to Bliss Cua Lim who emphasizes this in her description of the temporal and fantastical blending in Asian Gothic who suggests that "the supernatural and the natural [are] not oppositions but… [rather] co-constitutive" (108). This temporal intermingling is an essential component to my analytical framework for the Korean gothic as a mode in which the supernatural and the natural function as two sides of the same coin rather than oppositional forces. However, equally essential, this indicates dissolution of the boundaries typically associated with

western concepts of the horror and gothic modes by blending elements of fiction, reality, and memory as material from which to draw meaning. The Gothic mode therefore forms much of the linking undercurrent throughout this dissertation as the films analyzed rely on recognizably traditional Gothic tropes and themes, like the urban traveler visiting the hinterlands, shadowy cult religions, and powerful men committing acts of sexual violence.

The films analyzed in my thesis also feature rurality and gothic landscapes, which heighten the sense of terror and reveal the setting as substantive to the genre. The tendency toward spatiality as essential and multi-layered to the horror film experience has obvious precedent in horror film criticism from as early as 1965 in Robin Wood's analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Wood suggested how horror cinema may enable us to understand the spatio-temporal and inter-cultural legacy of traumatic events as illustrated in his Freudian analysis of the film as building from the shock, imagery, and psychology of the Holocaust (Wood 141). Building on Wood, my thesis will examine how horror film criticism enables a shift in emphasis of historical trauma criticism away from high-modernist cultural artifacts like national cinema. Korean horror, with its preoccupation with how the past is never really dead and buried, similarly expresses our greatest fears concerning where we come from and how we got to where we are now.

Many horror subgenres are often delineated by their locations. Examples include the haunted house film on a cursed estate (*The Amityville Horror*, Stuart Rosenberg, 1979), the backwoods horror film (*The Hills Have Eyes*, Wes Craven 1977), space horror film on an isolated outpost or ship (*Alien*, Ridley Scott, 1979) each demonstrating the translatability of horror in different environments. Noel Carroll notes that the geography of horror mobilizes "the notion that what horrifies is that which lies outside cultural categories and is, perforce, unknown" (35). This strategy is most commonly deployed in horror films that introduce a central threat that may originate from outside the past as we understand it, or the present as it is readily observed. This hybridity is the looming danger experienced when the protagonist ventures outside the safety of their recognizable environs, or when the evils of the past return in the form of a curse, a spiritual possession, or even haunting or repressed childhood memories. Discussing the connection between place and horror films requires a close interrogation of the coding of locations as indicating particular and unique cultural sites upon which the horrors of history have been entrenched.

1.3.5 Korean Cinema's Horrific Spaces

While Korea's bucolic rurality reflects the nostalgic and traditional traits associated with a previous golden age through a nostalgia or nationalism, they are important to my thesis insofar as they help define, through contrast, the ever-present ever-decaying past, which preoccupies representations of Korean cinema's horrific rurality. As a distorted and defamiliarized doppelganger of the countryside, the horrific rural is as much about how the past is remembered and cinematically manifested as the idyllic depictions previously discussed. In the films analyzed in this thesis, the defamiliarized and

grotesque threaten to pollute that which is familiar and cherished. In much the same way Emanuel Levy charts the shifts in representations and iconography of small-town America in movies away from positive, romantic images of rural communities towards images of fragmentation and backwardness, I endeavor to balance out the overwhelming surfeit of positive depictions of the countryside.

The countryside has always loomed large in Korean horror cinema as the perfect backdrop for a particular brand of terror. This terror is a distorted and dark reflection of the progress of modernization. Especially since the Post-Korean War period and the onset of self-directed modernization, the countryside has served as the eerie or backward-looking setting for all sub-genres of horror films. The supernatural melodrama, *Ssal* (*Ssal*, Shin Sang-Ok, 1963), portrays a shaman's attempts to stop an irrigation development plan by sowing fear of retribution by the mountain spirits. Other Shamanic horror films, like *Oyster Village* (*Gulli Maeul,* Jeong Jin-Woo, 1972), *Iodo* (*Iodo*, Kim Ki-Yong, 1977), *The Early Years* (*Eorin Nalui Mannam*, Lee Doo-Yong, 1977), and *The Divine Bow* (*Sin-ui Hwasal,* Im Kwon-Taek, 1979), are films in which rurality is the setting of supernatural conflicts with modernization. Films about vengeful spirits, like *The Public Cemetery Under the Moon* (*Wolhaui gongdongmyoji*, Kwon Cheol-hwi, 1967), *Woman Chasing the Butterfly of Death* (*Jugeum-ui Nabireul Jjonneun Yeoja,* Kim Ki-Yong, 1978), *A Tale of Two Sisters* (*Janghwa, Hongryeon,* Kim Jee-Woon, 2003), and *Arang* (*Arang,* Ahn Sang-hoon, 2006) are stories about rural women who meet an untimely demise and return for retribution. Gruesome Murder/Revenge films like *Memories of a Murder* (*Salinui Chueok,* Bong Joon-Ho, 2005), *Blood Rain* (*Hyeolui Nu,* Kim Dae-Seung, 2005), *I Saw the Devil* (*Akmareul Boatta,* Kim Jee-Woon, 2010), and *Missing* (*Missing: Sarajin Yeoja,* Kim Sung-Hong, 2009) use the rural as a place for terrible people to do unspeakable, evil acts. Films like *Hansel and Gretel* (*Henjelgwa Geuretel,* Yim Pil-Sung, 2007), *The Mimic* (*Jangsanbeom,* Huh Jung, 2017) use the countryside as a labyrinth where children become disoriented and lost. The horrors found in depictions of rurality are as varied as they are numerous. However, scholarship on horrific spaces has more often focused on the complication of urban spaces as sites of rapid transformation, both spatial and cultural, rather than the countryside as the dark reflection of progress.

The progress of urban modernization at odds with traditional rurality are a foundational theme in the early melodrama-influenced Korean horror cinema of the 1960s. Still relevant today, these tropes that developed during Korea's compressed modernization in the post Korean War period continue to reflect contemporaneous sentiments regarding extreme social and cultural changes. The ghosts and monsters that populate Korean horror are often projections of these changes; rooted in the past while seeking spiritual recompense for the wrongs visited upon them in life. However, by the 1980s and 1990s, when 괴기영화 (*gwigi young-hwa*) and 공포영화 (*gongpo young-hwa*) (both early names for supernatural horror films) returned to Korean cinema in the late 1990s as 호러영화 (*horeo young-hwa*) (contemporary horror films) Baek Moon-Im notes how the change in name was accompanied by significant shifts in the genre itself stemming in part from the IMF crisis, the dissolution of the nuclear family, and the desire of women to economically contribute to society in the workplace. Born from the

shifting tides around family and gender, Baek notes that the female demon or ghost once depicted as an amorphous and fetishized commodity, shifted toward possessed women under the control of malevolent spirits, and victims merely repeating the trauma of generations of women they never knew (267). This also marked a shift for horror from the melodramatic conflicts that dominated much of early twentieth-century Korean horror cinema. Despite changes to its melodramatic origins, contemporary Korean horror continues to build from the melodramatic generational conflicts of previous periods, however now more clearly reflected spatially in the clash between tradition and modernization. The city and countryside that once clashed during modernization now represent the uncanniness of both existing coevally. Where modernization once threatened tradition, now on the periphery a familiar premodern Other threatens to undo, or at the very least expose the underbelly of Korea's economic and social prosperity. I intend to show how Korea's urbanoid and inverted frontier mythology often depicts a fear not of that which is wholly Other, beyond the reaches of modern society, but rather the darkest and most shocking elements that have been incorporated within contemporary Korean society via the countryside.

For Korean horror films, which often complicate notions of a singular national culture at any given point in history through the overlapping and influencing of disparate ways of being, like the coeval existence of the traditional and the modern, is itself a critique of modernization's unifying mirage of progress. The blending of traditionalism and modernization in Korean horror films reflects underlying tensions of traditional national character at odds with post-colonial identity. While the spatial component of Korean Horror is an area lacking substantive scholarship, there have been some recent contributions that have helped shape how space is read in this thesis. Whereas the main focus of the first works concerning trauma in Korean horror cinema originate from spatial permeability; i.e the Japanese colonial period and later the division of the peninsula brought about by the Korean War, current research expands the area of analysis to the cultural and spatial memory of other atrocities – personal as well as collective ones represented in cinema – including, but not limited to: Hyeon Seon Park's work on the comfort women issue, Luisa Koo's examination of The Sewol Ferry Tragedy, and Keith B. Wagner's study of the collapse of the Sampoong Department Store.

Nikki J.Y Lee argues in "Apartment Horror: Sorum and Possessed" that Korea's most common living space, the apartment complex, is porous and permeable (102). Apartments function "as material and ideological machines for economic growth while mobilizing the public by exhibiting visible material reward and distributing wealth exclusively to the middle and upper-middle classes" (Nikki J.Y Lee 103). The apartment provides a concrete and tangible reference point from which to experience horror. The suburban apartment has become a material embodiment of the horrors buried underneath the development Korea experienced during modernization under authoritarianism. The films Lee discusses expose the interconnectedness of physical structures like shared walls and hallways to evoke horror through the use of the apartment as a historical and socio-economic construction of class. Though my thesis also focuses on the connections of history and socioeconomics to space, the traumas

read through rural space feature historical imprints upon space rather than space expressing the cultural impacts of capitalist materiality.

In Luisa Koo's chapter "National Cinema, Trauma, and Melodrama in the Korean Zombie Film *Train to Busan* (2016)", in *Spaces and Places of Horror,* which examines horror geography's transitional nature, she draws connections between the Sewol Ferry Disaster of 2014 and the manipulation of time expressed in horror cinema. Koo describes the Sewol Ferry disaster as "one of the many side effects of Korea's rapidly accelerating economy" (166). Her chapter parallels Korea's recent social and political history with the melodramatic components of what would otherwise be a visually impressive if non-descript zombie film. In doing so, she relates the policies that have closely tied Korea's economic success to national identity. Korean melodrama reveals the ties, "which symbolizes the shared victimization resulting from compressed modernity" (Koo 168). The term "compressed modernity," as a term used at multiple points in my thesis, was first used by Kyung-Sup Chang and refers to the "rapid modernization that occurred in Korea—achieving over a mere few decades what took Westerners two or three centuries" (Chang, "Compressed Modernity and its Discontents" 31). However, the unsustainability of compressed modernity became a source of anxiety in Korea. For Koo, the familial melodrama of the apocalyptic zombie film *Train to Busan* (2016) reflects the unsustainability of compressed modernity as "[a] highly collapse-prone economic, political and social system" (31) based around the familial sacrifices of hyper-competition. Koo's analysis builds upon the same existing literature as my thesis and is a comparable, if brief, exploration of a similar topic. Beyond the specific insights of Koo's chapter, the book additionally offered me new ways of understanding the complex nature of trauma and horror's relationship to place. How the various films and film cultures analyzed in the volume "appropriate similar diegetic structures as a means to confront the audience with the partaking in a feeling of powerlessness against a force that cannot be decoded by or measured against any familiar parameters" (Pascuzzi and Waters xvi) asserts an essential recurring motif in my thesis. This motif concerns the uncanniness of horror as the familiar made unfamiliar, which Kyung-Hyun Kim uses as the basis of another critical argument that informs my thesis.

Much of the Western concept of the Gothic or horror genre is predicated on the tension between civilization in the modern urban sense and the retrogressive hinterlands. These films begin with an intrusion into the uncivilized and primordial spheres of ancient evils and mysterious lands predating modern Christian sensibilities or as encroaching darkness threatens to overtake the light of reason and our conceptions of a world without the outdated superstitions of our ancestors. While similarly touched upon by Bell (1997) and others, this concept is nowhere better explained than in Carol Clover's *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*: *Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992).

> An enormous proportion of horror takes as its starting point the visit or move of (sub) urban people to the country [. . .]. The situation, of course, rests squarely on what may be a

> universal archetype. Going from city to country in the horror film is, in any case, like going from village to the deep, dark forest in traditional fairy tales. (27)

Clover's observation that the rural wilderness setting is where the rules of civilization do not normally apply will be expanded upon throughout my thesis. However, as a fundamental theory to my thesis, the concept of *urbanoia* is vital in answering how the rural continues to be a site of horrific cinematic encounters. In the following section I outline how my thesis employs a distinctly coded form of Korean *urbanoia* to address the country's contemporary urban/rural anxieties.

1.3.6 Korean Urbanoia and Alienation

Carol Clover established the concept of *urbanoia* to describe a specific spatial and psychological relationship expressed in horror cinema when an urban character ventures from the city to the country and encounters an under-developed landscape populated by regressive, sinister figures, marked by poverty and incest (Clover 124). For Clover, the shift from city to country articulates the tensions of progress and the spatial limits of civilization, law, and gender. She states that "the point is that rural Connecticut (or wherever), like the deep forest of Central Europe, is a place where the rules of civilization do not obtain," and is clearly depicted in social difference, i.e. "people from the city are like us," and "people from the country… not like us" (Clover 124). The inhabitants of this backward, frightening, and violent world stand as primitive counterparts to the urban dweller who unwittingly traverses into the terrible spaces that exist outside the safety and comforts of modern society. As a typical occurrence in horror cinema in general, the marginalized, whether economically or culturally, are portrayed as hideous, genetically deficient, or even monstrous, as a visual representation of extreme difference. This deformity is an extension of his lack of access to the civilizing forces of contemporary, polite society. Clover describes the monstrous Other in horror when she states that "the man who does not care of his teeth is obviously a man who can, and by the end of the movie will, plunder, rape, murder, beat his wife and children, kill within his kin, commit incest, and/or eat human flesh (not to speak of dog- and horsemeat, lizards, and insects), and so on" (126). The threat of taboo and brutal incivilities threatens the lives of the civilized and reflects the classism of horror. One of Clover's most important points concerning the use of class and economics in horror is that at its very core, the collision that occurs along the city/country axis is social class – the confrontation between haves and have-nots (126).

Central to Clover's definition is the "economic confrontation" present in these films is the "almost Darwinian" confrontation of the poverty of rural primitives and the "civilized urbanites" who "are separated from the system of support that silently keeps their privilege intact" (131). This economic confrontation is not primarily based on money but rather that the urbanites' "city comforts are costing country people their ancestral home." She goes on to reveal that "the real motor of the city- revenge or urbanoia film… is economic guilt" (Clover 134). In economic terms, the urban-rural dichotomy reflects the idea that modernization and economic privilege are created at the expense of the rural.

Christopher Sharrett, in his analysis of the economic manifestations of urbanoia in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* echoes Wood's and Clover's observations about the marginalization of country people by the onward march of capitalism. For Christopher Sharrett, the film portrays "the violent disruption of the security and stability of rural and suburban life" (263). For Bell, this abrupt dismemberment of the illusion of security plays on "inverted frontier myths, notions of a hopelessly corrupt and festering society, questions of civilisation and its discontents" ("Anti-Idyll" 97). Under the surface of such horrors lie the precarious economic and societal stability made possible at the expense of exploiting the natural environment, simple people, or traditional culture, which are unable to reintegrate into contemporary capitalist society. The ensuing violence from the repressed and exploited, embodied by the rural inhabitants as much if not more-so than the environment itself, is then revisited upon the urbanite transgressors.

While fundamentally concerning Western modes of horror, the *urbanoid* individual is also very much a part of Korean cinematic horror but with some crucial differences. First, in the specific Korean iteration of *urbanoia,* the trip to the country of urban outsiders who suffer at the hands of unrelenting and monstrous country-folk is typically replaced by a return home or a familiar rendering of the past. This return sets up the fundamental conflicts of the narrative, which directly and indirectly address ideologies constructed around binaries of traditional spaces and modern spaces. For modern Korean audiences at home in the urban environments of major cities in Korea, representations of rurality are a reminder of the disappearance of tradition in favor of the development promised by late capitalism. The inequalities evident in the rural past and the progress of the urban-present showcase a stark divide that mobilizes the traditional and modern as symptoms of Kyung-Sup Chang's concept of compressed modernization (Chang, "Political Economy" 16), colonial modernity (Shin and Robinson 11), and the policies created under authoritarianism intended to reshape Korea's economy, culture, and gender. These symptoms of *urbanoia* feature heavily in my thesis and will, chapter by chapter, reveal the constructions of modernization rhetoric through the creation of the rural *Other*, which shares many parallels with Clover's conception of urbanoia.

The rural citizenry of the Korean *urbanoid* landscape is often male, uneducated, with incestual or otherwise strange familial attachments (Clover 125), and lacking access to modernity. However, the paradox of modernity under colonization in Korea is nowhere better exemplified than in the female colonial subject. Under colonial modernity, some women gained access to higher education and more participation in the public sphere, but for a select group who by nature of their existence created a double structure of oppression for other women (Jeong 26). The women who lacked access to the tools of emancipation were often the inheritors of poverty and a loss of class position. This introduction of a new form of female agency redrew the lines of social status by access to education which essentially helped create a new *Other* within Korea's colonial modernity. Kelly Jeong notes:

> In the interregnum of *kwadogi* that is colonial Korea, new "others" and a new periphery were created. The society reconstructed the old hierarchical relationships of power based on

> people's access to modernity, primarily through one's access to new education associated with Japan (or the West filtered through Japan) which is clearly distinguished from the old, Sinocentric education (26).

It is precisely this access to modernity and internationalization that colors the experiences of the characters of Korean rural horror films, as they move from the egalitarian and cosmopolitan environs of Korea's cities into the peripheries where traditional roles and expectations are often enforced with deadly consequences. This is particularly true for the women of rural horror films whose positions within Korean society are often condensed by an objectifying post-war nationalist discourse. The tension between the multiplicity of female subjectivities permitted under the guise of modernity and the traditional ideal characteristics of Korean femininity is often represented spatially. This usually occurs through the disparate images of the modern Korean state and the traditional spaces found in the films. The conflicting ideologies represented by the traditional rural and the globalizing urban are also often equally frightening. The traditional rural exposes the cracks remaining from Korea's compressed modernity, and the globalized cityscape accentuates the strains of progress on the Korean environment, family, and culture. The outside threatens the familiar. The familiar threatens progress. These are related red threads running through my thesis, particularly with the female subjectivities portrayed and their relations to the modern/traditional chasm foregrounded in Korean horror cinema.

Although *urbanoia* is a familiar and flexible term we can use to begin the analysis of the rural horrific in Korean cinema, the contradictory nature of the tenuous relationship between the urban and rural fails to adequately address Korea's complex spatial relationships. The same spatial dynamics outlined by Clover are made more complex in Korea where the internationalization and westernization celebrated as progress are often seen as threatening as the horror of being left behind. This push and pull between modernization/westernization and traditionalism in Korean horror is contrary to what is a typical melodramatic conflict during Korean cinema's golden age, in which films like *Madame Freedom* (Jayubu-in, Han Hyeong-Mo, 1956), and Kim Ki-Young's *A Woman's War* (*Yeoseong JeonSeon*, 1957) epitomize the conservative and highly gendered critique of importing American individualism, consumerism, and capitalism, modern developments that violently clashed with traditional Korean customs, culture, and values. While a counterpoint to horror cinema, it proves an interesting counterpoint to the often problematic and unique mixture of memory, heritage, and tradition. This also further disturbs and problematizes the rural past that is defamiliarized when rendered uncanny or horrific.

1.3.7 Historical and Individual Memory

Much of recent discussions regarding the role of historical trauma in Korean cinema regards the politics of forgetting can be found in Chung Hye-Sung and David S. Diffrient's work, and Choe Youngmin's scholarship, respectively. However, for this thesis, memory is a uniquely imperfect and contradictory tool through which history and collective subjectivity can be refracted and even reflected

in the environment. In an attempt to move past purely allegorical readings of Korea's traumatic history, my analysis emphasizes both the material and the memorial remnants of the past as constitutive of Korea's horrific cinematic countryside.

In *The Parameters of Disavowal: Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema,* Jinsoo An introduces an essential tool for my analysis of time/space compartmentalization. Korea's colonial period is still a taboo topic in Korean films and television dramas, harboring the resentment still held by many Koreans for the time of national shame and exploitation. As An summarizes, "As if following an unwritten general rule, most South Korean films do not resort to the use of flashback or backward-looking viewpoints to organize stories of the colonial past. Even though South Korea has produced many films since 1945 that relate to the subject of colonialism, there is a dearth of cinematic texts that mobilize the historical investigation of the colonial problem from the present viewpoint" (An, *Parameters* 109). The compartmentalization of the colonial period as represented in Korean cinema is notable because the period is an assumed disruption of the "continuity" of the nation's "linear and teleological trajectory of progress," and also the compartmentalization "is an effective way to set aside the ramifications of the colonial legacy and its effects without negating them entirely." A typical but "efficient" way to manage this dilemma is to portray the colonial period as "a time of total injustice, subjugation, and suffering, which is addressed by collective resistance and struggle" (109). However, the notion of suffering and injustice invoked in this context is allegorical, as it fundamentally is subsumed by the hegemonic discourse of the nation. "The individual's hardship is invoked only to underscore the tenacious survival of the national collective" (109). It is the post-colonial subject who suffers from spectral haunting or trauma of coloniality who "elucidates how the temporal divide between the colonial and postcolonial is deeply problematic" (109). In this way, the wholly contemporary rural can stand in for a traumatic colonial past. Unresolved traumas inflicted upon that past can be allegorically encountered in the present, allowing the past to remain a nostalgic remembrance of tradition.

In order to negotiate the complicated spatiotemporal interaction between the persistence of the past in the present, I need a model that allows me to analyze the present as more than a here-and-now, and once again more as an accumulation or "a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (Massey 9). Layers of time over space that produce a multitude of meanings drawing from a similar historical/cultural milieu of horror and trauma; something transmissible from one generation to the next.

One such model I employ in my analysis is in Max Silverman's *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* in which he uses "the poetics of palimpsestic memory" as a "basis of a new politics of memory" (27) grounded in existing theories, most crucially Michael Rothberg's non-essentialist and dynamic memory in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization.* For Silverman, memory is best envisioned as a palimpsest because it is non-linear (one memory does not lead back to, or even screen, an earlier memory), and is instead structured through transformation, substitution, and overlapping palimpsests

that work temporally, by disrupting chronology, and spatially, by creating unstable and shifting points of connection and of difference between individual and collective. The effect is an intersection of what he terms as '"objective" (universal) history' and the '"personal" (relative) memory" (Silverman 28), without resolving the tensions that it raises. This interaction of personal and collective memory with history informs my analysis of *Bedevilled* (Jang Cheol-Soo, 2010) in particular.

In his second chapter, Silverman introduces the idea of "Concentrationary Memory" (11). The term "concentrationary" is derived from concentration camps and encompasses not only the physical sites of internment but also the broader social, political, and psychological aspects associated with such institutions. As a political aesthetic of defamiliarization, concentrationary memory is "indicative of a society in which thought is deadened, action is programmed, and there is no vigilant anxiety about or active resistance to the absolute corrosion of human singularity and human rights" (Pollock and Silverman 3). This concept is particularly useful in my analysis of *Moss* (*Iggi*, Kang Woo-suk, 2010), as a film does not simply recall one specific historical episode (the authoritarian development period of Park Chung-Hee), rather is self-consciously foregrounds the ways in which this history is inextricably bound up in subsequent inscriptions of power, violence and guilt and their links to deeper cultural mechanisms of control like Confucianism.

Because this thesis is not concerned only with memory and history through personal experience alone, I turn to Silverman's final chapter, which further develops the political dimensions and possibilities of palimpsestic memory in line with Marianne Hirsch's notion of post-memory, examines the possibility of discontinuity between memory and direct personal experience. Hirsch's theoretical notion of postmemory also underwrites my argument. She describes postmemory in its simplest terms as "the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch 103). This often occurs through the blurring of the division between lived and vicarious memory and includes the appropriation of others' traumatic experiences. Like Silverman, my analysis is an attempt to move away from polarized binary oppositions between memory and history, or the relative and the universal, in order to understand how they both differ and overlap. And for the purposes of this thesis, I emphasize the spatial congruences through the projection of personal and historical experience as, at least in part, constitutive of the palimpsestic nature of memory transmission in cinema.

A vital focus of this thesis is how the horrific countryside can function as an externalized representation of interior anxieties, memories, and history. Although many significant scholars and academics have written extensively about how historical trauma and collective memory coalesce in horror cinema, my dissertation is mainly indebted to *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* by Adam Lowenstein, *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma, and National Identity* by Linnie Blake, and *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* by E. Ann Kaplan, which each argue for the importance of

film as a method of revealing national trauma through re-experience, return, and re-examination. While all three scholars discuss trauma concerning world wars, gender, class, and modernization, they primarily focus on the traditionally significant and influential film cultures of Japan, Europe, and North America. However, their work does not extend to historically minor regional cinematic cultures, nor the decolonizing projects of the nations with heavily censored cinema. And while their perspectives are foundational to this thesis, their work does not address the intersection between horror films and national trauma in Korean cinema.

Where horror and traumatic memory coalesce, there are a few other western oriented texts that I have drawn inspiration from and/or are otherwise influential to the overall approach and feel of this thesis. In Lowenstein's *Shocking Representations: Historical Trauma, National Cinema and the Modern Horror Film*, he makes conceptual recourse to Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Lowenstein draws from them what he terms the "allegorical moment" in horror cinema is undoubtedly a crucial aspect of my study: described as being that which conforms "to neither the naive verisimilitude of realism, nor to the self-conscious distanciation of modernism" but invites us "to unite shocking cinematic representation with the need to shock the very concept of representation in regard to historical trauma" (4). Lowenstein addresses a similar collection of historical traumas articulated across European, North American, and Japanese horror cinemas. However, his analyses share little interrelation, as they are varied in nature and location. Lowenstein addresses historical trauma as "wounds in the fabric of culture and history that bled through conventional confines of time and space" (1). He argues that although a particularly tragic event occurred in the past, its trauma transcends time and space. It becomes embedded in national identity and culture in the way ruins stand long after the people have gone. According to Lowenstein, horror films depict lingering and unrepresentable trauma. These films invite us "to recognize our connection to historical trauma across the axes of text, context, and spectatorship" (9). Horror films do not alleviate historical trauma but recognize that the unspoken and unresolved trauma is still relevant. Lowenstein explains the often occulted and diffuse re-articulation of trauma through engaging with Lyotard's conceptualization of the *differend* as the means of finding new idioms for expressing the unspoken by the victim of trauma (silenced by the conflicting idioms of those who speak of that trauma otherwise). Despite their obvious differences in terminology and interpretative criteria, at their core, both Lowenstein's and my study strive to explain how horror cinema side-steps an often-self-defeating tendency in trauma studies which respectfully silences the victims' testimonies of trauma deemed so horrific as to be unspeakable. In doing so, horror cinema shows that which cannot otherwise be shown and speaks that which cannot otherwise be spoken.

In very much the same vein, Blake argues that horror cinema represents the will to rethink trauma as a means to question the social order imposed upon the traumatized by the dominant ideology. In *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma, and National Identity,* Blake examines how the disturbing conventions of international horror cinema engage audiences with the traumatic legacy of the past. In doing so, she conceives serious implications for how we understand ourselves both as

gendered individuals and as members of a particular nation-state. Blake asserts that trauma is constantly bound or hidden in an attempt to maintain a cohesive national identity. Blake breaks from Lowenstein by suggesting that the purpose of "binding up the nation's wounds" is not to heal but to conceal and forget; eschew trauma rather than face it, which requires rethinking and open discussions; social forces strive to hide the trauma (2). Those who cannot forget trauma are ostracized. Horror films, Blake argues, expose audiences to representations of trauma, thereby providing a space for audiences to reconsider and engage with trauma safely on screen. In her analysis of films which range from 1970s American body horror to the avant-garde proclivities of German Reunification horror, Japanese chillers, and their translation into American remakes, the post-Thatcherite masculinity horror of the UK, and the chapter most influential to this project concerning the resurgence of "hillbilly" horror in the period following 9/11 USA. By examining the relationship between the individual and the collective, both Blake and I argue that horror cinema forces us to look again at the wounds inflicted on individuals, families, communities, and nations by the traumatic events of genocide, war, terrorism, political shifts, etc., which are often concealed beneath ideologically expedient discourses of national cohesion.

Finally, In *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, film and cultural studies theorist E. Ann Kaplan explores the broader cultural impact of trauma as communicated through the individual. By exploring the effects of trauma on individuals and collectives affected by generational traumas, like the indigenous peoples of Australia, as well as groups abruptly formed in the aftermath of trauma, like the survivors of 9/11, she examines the artistic, literary, and cinematic forms that create bridges between individual and collective experience. Her investigation and approach to trauma are influenced by the late and sometimes contradictory writings of Freud, neuroscience, and the textual/visual humanities. Her analysis raises important questions about what victims have suffered and about the opportunities and responsibilities of witnessing. In doing so, she advocates for the responsible sharing and translating of catastrophe, highlighting the visual media as an example of the difficulties and possibilities of translating trauma across the gaps that define its existence. For my thesis, it is equally essential to note Kaplan's assertion that within the experience of trauma are the broader political and cultural contexts in which a catastrophe occurs. These contexts are paramount to the management of catastrophes by institutional forces, including the media, which dictates how an individual within that culture or society-at-large processes their place within the collective experience.

While Japanese and American cinema both feature prominently in Lowenstein, Blake, and Kaplan's work, my thesis too deals with Japanese and American historical traumas but from a very different perspective. Whereas inflicted traumas like the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and American consumer culture as symptomatic of a 1970s apocalyptic mindset articulate certain international and geo-political relationships, my thesis is much more invested in the ways Japanese imperialism and American capitalism contributed to formulating national trauma in Korea. While my study draws from the same scholarly tradition as the texts previously listed, it also addresses

how horror and historical trauma are often organized and re-expressed spatially. This thesis deals heavily in unearthing various and often-times competing representations of critical geographies in cinema. I hope to demonstrate how these competing elements function in Korean horror cinema and how depictions of rural spaces express the horrors of history.

1.4 National Character and Trauma - Han

As a means of contextualizing the historical traumas addressed in the subsequent chapters, I offer brief general working definition of trauma as well as descriptions of the traumas here. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the term trauma in cinema as a way of articulating a topic generally but not exclusively dealt with in Korean national cinema, that being the coming to terms with a "humiliating past" by "confronting the task of self-reflexively engaging a history that resists both remembrance and representation" (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Post-Trauma* 96). The historical traumas that manifest themselves in my film analyses vary significantly across time, subject matter, and cause. However, they are united in several ways. The most important of which is that they are, by and large, unresolved. The national traumas which compose the historical context of my readings of the films in this dissertation are **[1]** the comfort women issue, **[2]** The Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo) Dispute **[3]** compressed modernization under authoritarianism (The *Saemaul Undong* or New Village Movement) **[4]** Syncretism and the religious and cultural reforms of the development state. These traumas compose only a portion of the traumas enveloped in the broader, yet distinctly Korean concept of national suffering called *Han*. As incorporated within Korean national identity, suffering is part of how Koreans understand their place within history. The accumulation of *Han* is an emotion or malaise that Michael D. Shin roughly translates as "the complex of emotions that result from the traumatic loss of collective identity" (Shin 4). Accordingly, this feeling "captures something of the modern experience of Koreans" who are in a "modern search for national essences in the wake of colonialism, and in the midst of authoritarian capitalist development and national division" (Pilzer 171). *Han*, while accumulated through suffering, is also understood as a defining aspect of the national character. In the face of a complex 20th century, born of war, economic collapse, and finally rejuvenation, the string of national traumas to be found in my thesis share some affinities which create further subtextual interconnectedness.

First and foremost, my thesis is a reading of specific films that articulate larger cultural and political forces. Their inconclusive nature primes them for representation because trauma does not have a 1:1 correlation or a clearly defined symbolism in realism, modernism, or otherwise. In what Adam Lowenstein contends is the "collision of film, spectator, and history where registers of bodily space and historical time are disrupted, confronted, and intertwined" (2), the fact that the traumas addressed in this thesis have never been fully represented in a narrative film speaks to the idea that they are unrepresentable by traditional cinematic means. As a result, the "film's horrific images, sounds, and narrative combine with visceral spectator affect (terror, disgust, sympathy, sadness) to embody issues that characterize the historical trauma" (3) in unexpected and indeed unintended ways.

1.4.1 The Comfort Women Issue

The comfort women issue remains one of the most traumatic reminders of Korea's coloniality under the Japanese Empire. In the early stages of the war, girls and women throughout the Japanese Empire were recruited for the various comfort women systems through deceptive practices such as offering lucrative jobs in factories abroad or as nurses in military hospitals. Others were forcibly mobilized by the government, recruiters, or even sold or traded by family members to the occupying Japanese military force for distribution within the confines of the Empire (Yoshimi 116). As the war progressed, the number of Korean women recruited as sexual labor at the comfort stations (where they were held captive) also increased. The victims were tasked with satisfying the sexual needs of soldiers deployed to various jurisdictions during Japanese expansion in the Pacific arena (Sarah H. Soh 137). The lives and deaths of these women varied depending on the location of the *comfort station* and whether or not they were catering to high-ranking officers or lower-ranking soldiers. Regardless of where they were taken and whom they were enlisted to serve, many, if not all, comfort women were victims of a highly regulated and intricate web of human trafficking. They were casualties of inherently violent and racially motivated controlled sexual labor, which serviced personnel of the Imperial Japanese army.

The comfort women, many of whom began their ordeal between the ages of 12 to 16, experienced sexual slavery, colonial and gendered violence, and for those who survived, the pain of secrecy after returning home. Chronicled decades later in the 1993, 1997, 1999, and 2001 reports of The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, their collected testimonies tell tragic stories of suffering that share many similarities. Gay McDougall, the Special Rapporteur to the UN Sub commission on Human Rights, called the comfort women system a "systematic rape, sexual slavery, and slavery-like practices during armed conflict" (1). Patricia Sellers, who was the special prosecutor of the 2000 Women's International War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo in 2001, was charged with examining Japan's military sex slavery. Sellers described the actions of the comfort women system as "crimes against humanity" and said that the comfort women suffered from "spiritual death" (Shim Young-Hee 252). At the end of the war, the Japanese military abandoned or brutally murdered many of these women to efface all traces of their crimes. And while at the end of the war, some surviving comfort women found their way back to Korea, many others chose to live in the land they were brought to, often "as second-class citizens" (Tanaka 59). The relatively few women who returned home faced scorn, prejudice and were forever tainted by their experiences in the system.

Despite—or perhaps because of—the horrific nature of the policy, discussions of comfort women remained conspicuously absent from public purview until the late 1980s. At that time, the burgeoning testimonies were considered best left unheard. Immediately following WWII, Japan set out to destroy all records and documents that would confirm the program's existence. The prevailing international political climate at the end of WWII concealed their crimes. Japan held strategic value as a proxy buffer for the anti-communist foreign policy of the United States and other allied nations. Japan was protected from prosecution for its human rights abuses and sexual slavery despite international

knowledge of the nature, if not magnitude, of Imperial transgressions (Kim SoYoung 197). These offenses were never adjudicated via international courts and therefore remained an unresolved injustice politically and culturally. The women remained shrouded in shame and silence even after Korea normalized the once-closed diplomatic relationship with Japan in 1965. It was then the two nations signed a treaty (known as the One Day Basic or the One Day Agreement), to resolve the rift created through colonial oppression and normalize their diplomatic relationship.

The comfort women issue officially remains unaddressed and unsettled, ostensibly acquitting Japan of wrong-doing despite the festering psycho-sexual wounds of an emasculating national public trauma that was left unresolved and even not fully acknowledged. As the comfort women remained excluded from official history, Yang Hyun-Ah states, “the public memory in regard to comfort women was ‘produced’ through a dynamic political and diplomatic decision” (199). While an issue of gender and exploitation, the comfort woman issue has been constructed around a very particular set of nationalist narratives related to colonial victimization. The comfort women issue is a part of the nationalist rhetoric concerning the violated national body. In the symbology of nationalist rhetoric, the violated female body and violated national sovereignty are symbolically linked and make up the parallel traumas explored in this thesis in tandem: the Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo) territorial dispute.

1.4.2 The Liancourt Rocks Dispute (Dokdo)

The Liancourt Rocks dispute, more commonly referred to as the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, represents a seemingly minor but symbolically vital problem in bilateral conflicts between the Republic of Korea and Japan. For both countries, it is also one of many active territorial conflicts utilized by nationalists in their respective countries as rallying cries tied to both the concepts of nationhood as territory and the nation as a gendered body. Yet this particular issue is not merely a part of Japan’s colonial legacy. For Koreans, it symbolizes Korea’s reassertion of economic and political sovereignty in the face of continued Japanese contention and the most prominent of numerous ongoing clashes between a former colonial power and its historical colony.

The history of Korea’s relationship with Japan is salient to understanding the territorial dispute. The modern basis of the argument for Korean ownership is that Dokdo was the first Korean territory to be annexed by Meiji Japan, which erroneously incorporated the islets in 1905 on the premise that they were *terra nullius* or land belonging to no one. Records show that the Japanese Navy originally misidentified Dokdo as a different archipelago called Ulleungdo, fifty miles northwest. Renamed "Takeshima" or "Bamboo Island," in 1905, Dokdo was absorbed into Shimane Prefecture along with Korea's general annexation (B. Lee 8). That same year, Korea became a protectorate of Japan, and in 1910 officially became a Japanese colony. Korean historical remembrance of this colonial-era (1910–1945), a time of exploitation and national humiliation, is at the crux of efforts to reclaim the islands as Korean territory. According to then-President Roh Mu-Hyun in 2006, Dokdo is “a symbol of the complete recovery of sovereignty bringing to a close a painful chapter in Korea’s history”

(Presidential Archives, 2006). While the economic value of the islets can be disputed based on fishing and natural gas drilling rights, their immediate political value is unquestionable. For Koreans, the Dokdo issue is rooted in the public sphere and collective memory as a demarcation line for the encroachment of Japanese colonialism and influence upon Korean sovereignty. While the symbolic and territorial violation of the gendered Korean nation are an example of post-colonial trauma and loss of singular identity, the traumas examined within this dissertation are equally the products of domestic politics and cultural as they are associated with coloniality.

1.4.3 The SaeMaul Undong (The New Village Movement)

The third trauma read through the films of my thesis is the result of self-inflicted reforms. *The SaeMaul Undong* (The New Village Movement) under Park Chung-Hee (president 1961 to 1979) transformed the countryside and those who inhabited it as part of a larger modernization project. The project was necessary for the economic and social development of the nation. Many prominent Korean historians and scholars have reinterpreted Park's repressive authoritarian state and its policies as a type of collective authoritarian rule acutely connected to Koreas distinct sociocultural collectivity. Lee Namhee characterizes Park's regime as a "Mass Dictatorship" (45) in which a dictator maintains popular support stemming from the cultural sphere and the masses, rather than one supported through institutional structures. Lee contends the diffuse state power in the public sphere of the individual relied heavily on rhetoric linking Korean identity to development which "[made] it possible for the state to construct the image of a people with unitary will and action and to have them behave according to this image" (Lee 45). Lee notes that the culturalist rhetoric played an essential role in merging public opinion with government agenda. In creating a unified front of culture and policy, Park invoked nationalist sentiments in his description of the modernization efforts in the 1962 Treatise following his seizure of power: He states, "The revolution…was a new, mature national debut of spirit….it is to revive our people, reconstruct our nation and reform us. This is a revolution of national reform" (Park Chung-Hee 22-23). Among the itemized list of transformations resulting from this national reform included dramatic changes to the nation's infrastructure, industrial organization, and culture due to urbanization.

In his revolutionary rhetoric of restoring national pride following the preceding seventy years of shame, Park derided Korea's emasculated state by citing an old Korean folk song. It tells of a cuckolded husband who, upon finding his wife with another man, simply moans, "'What Am I to do? What Am I to do?'" If he were a Western man, Park retorted, he would shoot them with a pistol! Alas, Park sighed, "how good and gentle (i.e., passive) are our forefathers!" (Park Chung-Hee 95). Park's avenging pistol came in the form of hyper masculinized economic development. He rallied society to vindicate Korea's subjugation within a Hobbesian world of economic competition: "Let's Fight and Construct!", "Export is the Only Way to Survive," "Exports as Total War," and "Trade as War!" The Park regime referred to workers as industrial or export "soldiers" (Han and Ling 64). By putting out the call to all men and women in Korea to join in the elevation of Korea at home and abroad, Park was

not only resurrecting Korea's perceived loss of masculinity but doing so by resonating with traditional notions of Confucian manhood. Morality, strictness, "face," and responsibility for household prosperity were preached (Lee Namhee 45). The Confucian emphasis on moral leadership, therefore, justified the state's political control over economic development. The state's sometimes violent suppression of dissent was viewed as a virtue of manly strictness, saving 'face' by enacting a control and responsibility to the family. The father-husband states had the critical duty to maintain and preserve the dignity of those under their aegis. A foreign concept for many outside of Korea, the bonds between superiors to subordinates under Confucian governance upholds that superiors "enjoy all the rights and privileges that accrue to their station if and only if they can ensure their subordinates welfare" (Han and Ling 64). For the father-husband-like authoritarian government in Korea, this means protecting and feeding the people while being afforded the license to pursue economic development at all costs.

1.4.4 Religious Reforms and Syncretism

The final trauma examined in this dissertation is the process of religious modernization and transformation in Korea. It focuses on the complex relationship between Park Chung-Hee and his authoritarian development plans aimed at modernizing rural areas, which were lagging behind the rapidly developing cities. It's noteworthy that Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity, played consistent and influential roles in shaping modern Korean history, even though religion itself is not typically associated with Korea's economic success. Park Chung-Hee's policies for economic and rural development heavily leaned on reshaping the Korean mindset by adopting masculine Western Christian models of economic conquest. However, this approach, when coupled with Buddhist and Confucian traditions, raised tensions due to the devotion required by authoritarianism and what some scholars like Andrew Eungi Kim and Daniel Connolly have referred to as "Korean civil religion" which they describe as the "country's beliefs, symbols, and rituals that bolster national unity and strengthen its citizens' sense of identity and belonging" (Kim and Connolly 1-3). This eventually led to a clash between the church and Park Chung-Hee's economic and social policies, posing a threat to the burgeoning Korean national identity of the 1960s and 1970s. Korea's Protestants initially support the hardline, anti-Communist stance of the Park Regime, as they:

> …accepted repressive security laws and kept silent as center-left elements in society were suppressed, censored, purged, and even executed. The symbiosis of church and state was clear in the participation by leading Protestant clergy in presidential "prayer breakfasts," invoking divine guidance (and favor) for General-turned-President Park Chung-Hee and the country's ruling military apparatus (Clark 196).

Park Chung-Hee, himself a Christian, later transformed and limited the church's power. When the influential ministers and priests voiced opposition to many of his economic and social policies, Park

quelled Christian protests, often violently, despite previously uniting Korea's religious modernization with economic modernization as a means of garnering consensus.

Korea's modern religious history is further problematized by the Park's aforementioned *Saemaul Undong* (The New Village Movement). In addition to development of the farming practices and improve living standards of the countryside, the plan included other cultural aims to forcibly eliminate all mental and cultural aspects of Korean society that were seen as impediments to capitalism and the development of a modern economic state, targeting everything from social ills like gambling and alcohol consumption to everyday work attire. Park vehemently defended his program by invoking an idea similar to that of *civil religion*. Park himself wrote of a pervading monolithic Korean "essence" claiming that, for centuries, Koreans "were never enterprising," and were also quite "defeatist" (Park Chung-Hee,"To Build" 27) in effect denying the very real socio-political circumstances surrounding decades of colonial subjugation under Japan. In his efforts to reshape the hearts and minds of Koreans, Park decimated local religious traditions with his *Misin Tapa Undong* (The Movement to Overthrow Superstition). Made enemies of Park's modernizing machine, shamans were victimized by local authorities who "interrupted rituals and threatened shamans with arrest, local zealots burned down shrines, and urban development schemes caused other shrines to either relocate or disappear completely" (Marcos 96), government agents removed and, in some cases, incinerated village shrines and "fined or imprisoned" shamans (Kendall 10). The government-issued 'Standard Rules for Family Ceremonies' severely altered or completely nullified the practice of important family rituals which were deemed "wasteful and extravagant" (Sorensen 27). Government agents even altered or removed the "totem pole-like guardians that were central to communal rites" (Walraven 14). According to Clark Sorensen, the literal and metaphorical bulldozing of these traditions and practices led to "the rapid demise of traditional village ceremonies that…created village solidarity", paving the way for the individualistic, anti-communal mindset that "capitalism both requires and fosters" (Ogle 27). This diametrically oppositional staging of tradition with progress is at the heart of much of the discourse surrounding the role of religion in Korean society, particularly in modernization. Like Shamanism, Syncretism has similarly been *Othered*, white-washed from the historical record of Korea's modernization despite it being a deeply ingrained piece of Korea's religious tapestry. This rendition of religious history reflects an authoritarian cultural narrative and historical record which persists to this day.

A generation later in March 2017, then-president Park Geun-Hye, Park Chung-Hee's daughter, was officially ousted following an investigation into her almost forty-year involvement with a syncretic shaman and a cult with whom she shared state secrets, accepted bribes from Korea's most powerful corporations, and abused state power. She was the country's first democratically elected president to be forced from office in its long and tumultuous history of presidents who later found themselves imprisoned upon exiting the presidency. The scandal of her involvement with a New Religious Movement has taken a dramatic turn for the worse and one that has shaken public opinion regarding politicians and syncretic religious organizations alike. In his book *Park Chung-Hee and Modern*

Korea: The Roots of Militarism, 1866–1945 Carter Eckert discusses Park Geun-Hye's 2016 corruption scandal in the context of the despotic rule of her father. Much of the discourse surrounding syncretism and shamanism is built around the colonialist discourse, put into action by Park Chung-Hee. The colonialist discourse, in delineating between modern and premodern spaces and ways of existence, sheds light on the intricate dynamics at play. The scandal surrounding Park Geun-Hye's administration notably unveiled the underlying "asymmetries in space" (Merose Hwang 139) pertaining to economic, industrial, and cultural power based on access to modernity. As evident by the string of recent political scandals involving shamans and NRMs, the enduring aftermath of this historical transformation continues to shape the urban-rural divide in South Korea, evoking a persistent anxiety among the urban elite regarding their space as the epicenter of the ongoing struggle between modernity and tradition.

1.5 Thesis Structure

Though the transnational flow of Korean cinema has been the subject of much academic attention in recent years, it has often been to the detriment of regional and localized identities. My thesis hopes to fill the gaps in critical readings of Korean cinema's politicized, historicized, and culturally significant settings and landscapes. But, because the land is bound up in the dialectic tension between projected notions like progress and regression, cultural identity and globalization, past and present, it elucidates varied tensions and diverse anxieties. Representations of rurality remain ambivalent, oscillating between nostalgia and horror. And because rural spaces are so ingrained in the cultural identity of Koreans in everything from dialect to cuisine, places of worship, political affiliation, etc., they are intimately linked to struggles of representing collective identity. As a representational model, rurality differs between generations, genders, regions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Critical geography can unearth vast variations of interpretive meanings and layers of accumulated memories and meanings. As a construct, rurality has largely been misrepresented or entirely overlooked as a distinctive element in Korean cinema. I will shed light on the layers of memory and history that contribute to the heterotopia of space in Korean horror as layers of generational residue and accumulated cultural capital.

In my first chapter, "Gendered Territory: Rape-Revenge and the National Body in *Bedevilled* (2010)", I argue that Jang Cheol-Soo's rape-revenge thriller allegorically addresses gendered representations of the national body through the use of imagery related to colonial sexual violence. In doing so, the film utilizes the conventions of the rape-revenge genre as a means of offering a critique of how nationalist imagery of the female body has been assimilated into Korea's cinematic history. I suggest the nondescript island location of the film is both a real space (Dokdo the symbol of Korea's continued physical and symbolic site of violation) and an imaginary repository of nationalist imagery related to gendered depictions of colonial violation, of which the comfort women issue stands paramount. I argue that *Bedevilled* (*Kim Bok-nam Salinsageonui Jeonmal, Jang, Cheol-Soo, 2010)* is a failed reclamation of the female body attempted through the evocation of anti-colonial symbolism linked to

the cinema of the Japanese colonial period. *Bedevilled* offers representations of the symbolic rape of national sovereignty initiated by the Japanese annexation of Dokdo, the very real rape and imprisonment of female citizenry abducted or coerced into service as “Comfort Women”, and the representational popularization of the rape motif in the colonial cinematic masterpiece *Arirang* (Na Woon-Gyu, 1926). I link the films’ feminist critique to a specific geographically and spatially oriented nationalist narrative. In doing so, I will reveal the film's use of the female body as a physical female form, a territory of the nation, and a representational cinematic device that remains steadfastly and simultaneously real and symbolic.

In the second chapter, “*Moss* (2010): Modernization and the Spatial Manifestations of Korean Authoritarianism,” I read the landscape as a projection of power, representing the authoritarian past through a rural space that is charged with an *urbanoid* and oppressive “patriarchy run amok” (Clover 125). Through the lens of enduring social and political scars stemming from Korea's authoritarian developmental era (1961-1988). I draw on insights from the previous chapter, to further examine the nexus of gender, landscape, and economy to analyze the isolated rural community of Majae-ri, once rooted in traditional Korean culture, communalism, village structure, and socio-political hierarchy, reshaped due to the influence of western masculine capitalism and Confucian androcentric governance during the authoritarian era. My analysis of *Moss* (*Iggi*, Kang Woo-Suk, 2010) emphasizes the interplay of spatial and thematic elements present in the village's surroundings, architecture, and layout, which collectively reflect the hetero-temporal nature of Korean cinema's portrayal of the countryside. It examines how memories of the authoritarian era shape the representation of rural communities it aimed to transform and how Korean rural horror films contribute to the broader dialogue on the cultural and political legacies of Korea's authoritarian past and their relevance in contemporary society. In contrast to the Japanese colonial period, the authoritarian developmental era is associated with a complex array of cultural memories. Despite its oppressive environment, there exists a form of modern nostalgia for the economic boom and democratic challenges during the two decades of Park Chung-Hee's dictatorship, referred to as "Park Chung-Hee Syndrome" (Kang 2). The developmental mindset and gendered hierarchical identities of this period continue to exert influence, especially among the rural elderly. Contemporarily, there has been a resurgence of political conservatism, nationalistic ideals, and developmentalism, akin to the 1960s. This resurgence underscores the importance of critically re-evaluating the Park Chung-Hee regime, exploring its memory and representation, and examining its transformative impact on how the countryside is perceived.

In the final chapter of the thesis, “Svaha: The Sixth Finger (2019): Syncretic Horror and the Liminality of Transportation Infrastructure,” I examine the film as a syncretic religious horror film addressing contemporary concerns about New Religious Movements (NRMs). The film's portrayal of the dangers associated with NRMs draws from the Korean Horror Cinema’s subgenre of Shamanic Exorcism films, which feature narratives constructed around Korea’s native and ancient, shamanic religious practices. The focus of these films is the long-standing depiction of rural areas as threats to

modernization and contemporary religious practices. This narrative contributes to a broader discourse on the creation of modernization's central and peripheral regions. *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* (*Svaha*, Chang Chae-Hyon, 2019) presents the clash between developed and undeveloped spaces, representing the tension between modern and pre-modern Korea. The film's blending of urban and rural elements challenges the singular narrative of religious modernization in Korea, revealing the fractures in the nation's economic and religious modernization narrative. In *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, the highways and roads linking urban and rural spaces play dual roles. They initially serve as infrastructure projects designed to expand Park Chung-Hee's authority, while also operating as conduits for central religious authority in the film. These roads are also portrayed as liminal spaces where traditional and modern elements coexist and expose discursive histories of religious modernization. The coexistence between traditional and modern elements underscores the symptoms of Korea's compressed modernity as an interplay between urban and rural spaces in Korean horror, emphasizing bidirectional spatio-temporal interactions rather than a unidirectional historical recollection.

Each chapter will aid in addressing how Korean horror cinema portrays rurality as a locus for socio-cultural transformation and historical trauma. Through the use of film settings, Korean cinema continues to employ nationally distinctive and ever-mutating generic strategies to comment on the manipulability of historical and cultural narratives. The continued internal cultural negotiations of national trauma in Korea can best be understood as an interplay between memory, time, and space. The growing disparity between urban and rural environments further accentuates many of the historically traumatic events in contemporary South Korea by illustrating the insecurities of development that remain. These insecurities are best described by Choi Jong-Chul in his article “Park Chan-Kyong’s Asian Gothic as ‘The Most Sublime Hysteria’ in Its Return.” Choi states that contemporary Korea “after a series of dialectical processions in the earlier century, was not a ‘modern/international’ utopia anchored in totality and eternal progress, but a self-splitting dystopia where the modern and the barbaric, pleasure and trauma, the material and the spiritual, and South and North Korea, coexisted, making spectacular yet fatal mirror images of each other.” (6) This quote articulates the basic sentiment behind the chapters to follow. There are two Koreas, just not the two divided by the 38th parallel, rather, a Korea of history and another composed of memory.

Chapter 2 Rape-Revenge and the National Body in *Bedevilled* (2010)

2.1 Introduction

In 1905 Japan annexed a small group of uninhabited islands off the eastern coast of Korea called Dokdo. It was a precursor to the eventual August 1910 annexation of the Korean Peninsula with the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1910. After centuries of war, intimidation, and political machinations, Japan exercised control over its new protectorate by waging an all-out war on Korean culture. Schools and universities forbade the use of the Korean language and enforced manual labor and loyalty to the emperor. Public places adopted Japanese, too, and an edict to make films in Japanese soon followed. It also became a crime to teach history from non-approved texts while colonial authorities burned over 200,000 Korean historical documents with intent to wipe out the historical memory of Korea. Korean women and girls were trafficked as sex slaves to all corners of the Japanese empire. The violation, exploitation, and destruction of historical memory ended with the Japanese defeat in WWII. Since then, Dokdo has been administered by South Korea, although Japan still claims the island as its territory (under the name Takeshima) to the present day. The repercussions of Japan's 35-year colonial rule (1910-1945) color some of the more complex and understated traumatic depictions in Korea's cinematic history. So much so that contemporary Korean cinema's predilection to allegorical depictions of repressed psychotic men, sexual violence visited upon fallen women, and a preoccupation with revenge can, in part, be traced back to the inception of cinema on the Korean peninsula under Japanese rule and its lasting impact.

Despite its historical and cultural impact, the Japanese colonial period remains the "most under-represented subject in post-colonial South Korean cinema" (Kim Soyoung 195). According to Kim Soyoung, Choi Chungmoo, Elaine H. Kim, and Jinsoo An, who each approach representations of the colonial period from their respective theoretical frameworks, post-colonial representations of the colonial period are often truncated, contained and obscured. Their displacement from history and history's ramifications means that often these representations are obfuscated in two distinct ways. First, rather than setting films during the Japanese occupation, representations of colonial Korea are often transposed to locations that depict the aftermath or symptoms of colonialism rather than the period itself. Masked by checkered representations of life around American military installations and the "forlorn countryside," films about Japanese colonialism often depict the absent colonial space as one outside the "attention of state-governed modernization" (Kim Soyoung 195). The close association between more contemporary rural spaces and the horrors of colonialism is foundational to my reading of the film I will discuss in this chapter. The second displacement can be located in depictions of colonialism's psycho-sexual effects on the Korean subject. Because of the unresolved trauma of colonialism in Korea, characters often enact the "underlying perverse desires in the psyche

of the postcolonial Korean subject" (An, *Parameters* 124), namely extreme violence, reimposing broken patriarchy through domination, and rape as an allegory for the reclamation of masculinity and nationhood. Rather than confronting the legacy of colonialism, nationalist narratives also displace colonial settings in favor of those highlighting "Korean hyper-masculinity and vigilance about female chastity" (Choi and Kim 4) both of which are foundational to this chapter.

This chapter centers on the 2010 film *Bedevilled* (*Kim Bok-Nam Salinsageonui Jeonmal*, Jang Cheol-Soo). Set on an isolated, fictional island, the geography and sexual violence of the film draw from Korea's colonization by Imperial Japan and rearticulates two of the period's unresolved traumas that connect territorial and individual violation. The traumas in question that have profoundly shaped Korea's national psyche are the dispute over the island of Dokdo with its emblematic status as a violated national body, and the history of colonial sexual slavery of the comfort women. I have chosen *Bedevilled* as the case study for the first chapter of this thesis because, in addition to being chronologically first in terms of production, it also introduces several elements that will recur in later chapters: namely *urbanoia*, rural space acting as memory space, the return to one's hometown, and the gendering of urban and rural spaces. In addition, not only is *Bedevilled* the most horrific and visceral of the films analyzed in this thesis, but it also deals with the internationally best-known and most widely publicized of the historical traumas examined in this thesis. The comfort women issue has been the subject of a number of *New York Times* bestselling books and a topic of international controversy. Finally, because my reading of the film concerns the effects of colonialism as portrayed through the lens of rurality, it is significant that Korea's modernization began under Japanese colonialism. The juxtaposition of the contemporary urban environment and the most extreme rural environment clearly illustrates the temporal associations of space. Because of this, my reading of *Bedevilled* addresses key research questions concerning the friction between modernization and rurality as a vehicle for horror. These questions are, What do the settings of horror films reveal about the ties of location to collective cultural memory? And: how are they expressed through national and cultural constructs of space? In my analysis, I argue that *Bedevilled* pushes the discourses of horror to confront the effects of colonial trauma. *In Parameters of Disavowal: Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema*, Jinsoo An suggests that the horror genre draws on a "recurring structure of return through which past suffering and trauma are confronted" (107). The dissonance between films directly addressing the comfort women issue and *Bedevilled*, a film dealing with the unrepresentable trauma associated with it, is striking. In this regard, the film can be read as an attempt to fill the gaps in knowledge and memory, which leave Korea haunted by the traces of events that collectively can neither be fully remembered nor entirely forgotten.

2.2 *Bedevilled*: Rape Revenge and Collectivity

Bedevilled premiered as an official International Critics' Week selection at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival. It is the feature directorial debut of Jang Cheol-soo who previously worked in the Korean film industry as an assistant director to the controversial *auteur* Kim Ki-Duk, a director whose

notoriety hinges on his grotesque depictions of gendered violence, animal torture, and taboo subject matter. Kim is noted for exposing a darker underbelly of Korea which is antithetical to the image propagated by the instruments of Hallyu marketing and image building. Jang had previously been credited as an assistant director on Kim Ki-Duk films *Samaritan Girl* (*Samaria,* 2004) and *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (*Bom, Yeoreum, Gaeul, Geurigo Bom,* 2003) (Huh, *Korean Cinema Today*). International reviews of *Bedevilled* glossed over the film's depiction of rape, incest, and brutality as typical rape-revenge fodder. Not coincidentally, *Variety Magazine* mentioned Kim Ki-Duk's *The Isle* (*Seom*, 2000) as a reference point for the film's depictions of sexual depravity and barbarism (Ki 1). Despite controversial reviews stemming from the film's brutality, *Bedevilled* was a surprise hit in Korea with box-office returns far exceeding its ₩700 million (US$636,363) budget (Ki 1). The film earned a Best New Director Award for Jang Cheol-Soo at Korea's Grand Bell Awards, as well as a slew of Best Actress awards for Seo Young-Hee (Bok-Nam).

The plot of *Bedevilled* revolves around two women, Hae-won and Bok-Nam; former childhood friends who have since led very different lives. Hae-Won, an urbanite living in Seoul, receives and ignores a series of letters from Bok-Nam. At work, Hae-Won's impersonal and detached nature results in the rejection of a previously approved loan and outburst at the elderly loan applicant. When she returns from break to find her coworker has issued the loan in her absence, Hae-Won confronts her colleague verbally and then physically, resulting in Hae-Won's forced leave of absence. Hae-Won decides to visit Bok-Nam on their rural, island hometown not realizing that Bok-Nam's letters were a cry for help to save herself and her daughter Yeon-Hee whom Bok-Nam suspects is being groomed for a sexual relationship by her husband, Man-Jong. Bok-Nam suffers dehumanizing manual labor, constant abuse by the island elders, repeated rapes by her husband's brother, and psychological abuse by her husband. What begins for Hae-Won as a revisiting of fond memories and a simpler lifestyle gradually descends into the recalling of repressed memories of sexual violence and the horrors of Bok-Nam's reality at the hands of her abusive philandering husband, his mentally disturbed rapist brother Cheol-Jong, and his extended family of elderly women who dehumanize and torture Bok-Nam. After the murder of her daughter, and the subsequent cover-up by the mainland police, Bok-Nam is broken. Throughout Bok-Nam's ordeal, Hae-Won has remained a silent witness, unwilling to testify to Bok-Nam's suffering. Eventually, Bok-Nam snaps murdering all but one of the island's inhabitants. Hae-won's failure to stand up for her also incurs Bok-Nam's wrath. Her retributive violence spills from the sadistic microcosm of the island to the mainland where she tracks Hae-Won down to a police station. Hae-Won manages to lock herself in a jail cell. But when Bok-Nam unlocks the door, Hae-Won ends up murdering Bok-Nam in self-defense.

Rape-revenge films in their purest formulation portray the sexual violation of a female character, who then seeks revenge (or her revenge is sought by family) by transforming into an anti-hero/vigilante to engage a vicious plot to eliminate the perpetrator/rapist(s). These films often rely on the shock value of brutal rape scenes, followed by the even larger shock of the main character's sadistic revenge (Read 3-7). In her article "Beyond Vengeance: Landscapes of Violence in Jang Chul-Soo's *Bedevilled* (*Kim*

Pong-Nam Sarinsakon-ui Chonmal, 2010)", Michelle Cho places *Bedevilled* in a cycle of contemporary South Korean revenge films which pair poetic visuals and extreme violence. She argues for *Bedevilled*'s uniqueness as a work that "critiques the gender politics of transnational genre cinemas like the slasher-horror and rape-revenge film, and the Korean literary and film genres that also serve as its important intertexts" (Michelle Cho 137). My reading of *Bedevilled* is indebted to Cho's analysis of how the film expands the revenge trope beyond the personal toward a collective and politicized representation. For Cho, this is accomplished through the use of the slasher genre's complex gender dynamics and misogyny and the pervasive social disease of patriarchal oppression. Her analysis focuses on the film's ironic repetition of the visual and narrative tropes present in the film which are drawn from Kim Tong-in's fiction in which characters' fates are tied to their social backgrounds. Cho asserts that the genre framework of the anti-heroic conventions inherent to the revenge narrative reorient "the drive of social critique towards a collective identification." This collectivity refuses to shore up an "authoritarian, misogynist patriarchal order in the name of heroism, nationalism, or cultural essentialism" (161).

Bedevilled hybridizes Korean cinema's penchant for revenge films within the rape-revenge convention of *urbanoia*. Coined by Carol J. Clover in *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, the term *urbanoia* refers to the urban/rural relationship in which naive or purposefully destructive and disrespectful city dwellers, usually teenagers, venture out from the comforts of their modern, urban existence into an isolated or rural area only to be mercilessly hunted down and fall victim to insane homicidal locals. *Urbanoia* is largely a product of the history and culture from which it is created, for Clover this was created through an analysis of primarily American cinema. However, the adaptability of *urbanoia* across cultures implies other versions of the convention would be reflective of that country's history and culture. *Bedevilled*, while seemingly creating the same urbanoid dynamic theorized by Clover, is also contextualizing a different sort of oppositional forces that are typically found in Korean cinema. In a significant break from the urbanoid formula prevalent in horror cinema and more specifically the rape-revenge subgenre, *Bedevilled* eschews traditional and revisionist formulae that rely on *urbanoia* as the central tension. While Clover's concept of urbanoia and Cho's insights into collective identification inform my reading of *Bedevilled* as engaging with rurality to expose repressed colonial traumas, I add another dimension. I emphasize the film's placement of trauma and memory on an island. In a distinct difference from its adapted source, namely Kim Tong-in's fiction, the film changes its location from a small coastal village to an island. In my reading, the combination of the island setting, and rape-revenge iconography and genre conventions manifests the effects of colonial violence onscreen in complex ways.

2.3 Historical and Representational Contexts

Before I venture into an analysis of *Bedevilled*, I shall provide more historical context for the issues the film raises. The Dokdo dispute and the comfort women issue are disparate historical occurrences that have had a lasting influence on Korea's collective memory. Though not directly related to one

another from a purely causal, historical standpoint, they articulate representationally related and unresolved points of contention with Korea's past colonization by Japan. In her book *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan,* Marilyn Ivy exposes the anxieties underlying modernization in Japan and the Japanese Empire. She asserts that the truth of historical events is less important than how they work in historical memory and nostalgia. Ivy terms these kinds of events as "phantasmic" or "epistemological phenomena whose existence or absence cannot be reliably identified" (22). I argue that phantasmic events are an essential part of reading *Bedevilled* as a film that deals with how events and places are situated within representations of historical memory.

According to Heonik Kwon in his writings on the Korean/Japanese parallax views of the disputed islets, the Dokdo/Takeshima Island dispute exemplifies several important aspects of collective memory. Most important is their symbolic function in that, "the islets have little practical value makes them pure symbols or, in Pierre Nora's (1996) words, lieux de mémoire: their function is to condense and perpetuate memories that might otherwise diffuse and fade" (Heonik Kwon 232). Dokdo, as a national symbol of the Republic of Korea, is of vital national importance to the country and perhaps more so in symbolic capital and as a symbol of awareness of their suffering at the hands of the colonial Japanese government. As an increasingly important part of Korea's historical narrative and national psyche, Dokdo's increased presence in Korean society is a "manifestation of ethnic nationalism that draws heavily on historical resentment toward Japan for the injustices committed during the colonial era (1910–1945)" (Palmer 9). How the islands were incorporated into Japanese Imperial geography connects with centuries-old fears of foreign infringements on Korean sovereignty. Underlying this cultural phenomenon of Dokdo's place in Korea's "imagined community" (to borrow a term from Benedict Anderson) is the islets' location within cultural geography which, unlike definite geography, changes over time and corresponds to shifts in public memory. These shifts are often installed by growing nationalist sentiment which, over the past twenty-or-so years, has reshaped the borders of Korea's cultural identity to rely on Dokdo as a symbolic national space of independence and prosperity.

C. Sarah Soh and Bonnie B.C. Oh have both written extensively on the history of the comfort women. And while they emphasize different aspects of the comfort women's plight, they similarly define the comfort women system as the systematic cooperation of the Imperial Japanese military and its colonial government in Korea to procure mostly poor and working-class Korean girls and young women for the purposes of sexual slavery (Soh 1-6), (Oh 6-8). Though the exact number of comfort women is disputed, an estimated 200,000 women, some 80% of whom were Koreans, were drafted against their will and trafficked to 'comfort stations' beyond the Korean peninsula in countries such as China, Manchuria, Singapore, as well as Japan (Tongsuthi 415). Though most former comfort women have passed away, Korea and Japan continue to dispute culpability and blame. Much of the international discussion has been representational. Infamously, the labels of "sex worker" or "prostitute" ascribed to the women by Prof. J. Mark Ramseyer at Harvard University garnered international outrage for the implied complicity of the women in their slavery (Binkley). Though a recurring talking point in

Japanese-Korean relations, the comfort women issue was largely repressed until the early 1990s when a group of surviving victims broke decades of silence and filed a class-action lawsuit against the Japanese government. To this day the suffering of the surviving comfort women remains unvindicated and un-avenged. The underlying social and post-colonial dynamics of the comfort women issue are perhaps the most extreme example of a pervasive ethical dilemma concerning the place of comfort women within Korean memory. The resulting "postcolonial genealogy of womanhood stemmed from a colonial history that has not been reconciled or incorporated historically" (Kim Soyoung 197) continues to shape contemporary representations of post-colonial femininity.[1]

Beyond the specific legacies of the comfort women, the depiction of rape in Korean cinema has a long history, specifically as an allegorical or symbolic representation of historical trauma. In their analyses of depictions of the pervasive gendered violence in Korean cinema, theorists like Michelle Cho, Kyung-Hyun Kim, and Chungmoo Choi have described the male violence ubiquitous in many Korean films as an expressed symptom of Korea's ongoing struggle with modernity and a post-authoritarian identity.

Like Hyunah Yang's critique of the historical placement of the comfort women as an injustice of the past, this chapter calls into question the silencing of the comfort women as strictly a matter of the past" (*Re-membering* 123). Rather, through my analysis, I hope to demonstrate how events of the past can only be understood through "discursive constructions, which reconstitute that past in the present" (123). At a time that the life of the family/nation is portrayed as agonizing and nightmarish as a product of gender dynamics contorted under the violations of the nation and its people. The historical traumas and condensed cultural transformation the Korean people have suffered register dramatically in the depictions of gender relations predominantly in melodrama. And though depictions of rape in Korean cinema are constructed of complex historical and cultural registers, my analysis of *Bedevilled* begins with the island as a violated space that unites gender and territory.

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[1] Among the documentaries that have addressed the topic are the *Murmuring* Trilogy (*Soksagim Sambujak*, Byun Young-joo, 1995-1999), *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women* (Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, 1998), and *63 Years On* (*63 Nyeonjjae Mane*, Kim Dong-Won, 2008) , *My Heart is Not Over* (*Nae Maeum-eun Byeonhaji Anha*, Ahn Hae-Ryong, 2009), *The Big Picture* (*Geurimchatgi*, Kwon Hyo, 2012), *Shusenjo: The Main Battleground Of Comfort Women Issue* (Miki Dezaki, 2019), as well as *My Name is Kim Bok-Dong* (*Naeui Ireum-eun Kim Bok-dong*, Song Won-Geun, 2019). Fictional cinematic representations include *Snowy Road* (*Nun-gil*, Lee Na-Jeong, 2015), *The Last Comfort Women* (*Majimak Wianbu*, Lim Seon, 2015), *Spirits' Homecoming* (*Gwi-hyang*, Cho Jung-Rae, 2016), *I Can Speak* (*Ai Kaen Seupikeu*, Kim Hyun-Seok, 2017), and *Herstory* (*Heoseutori*, Kim Kyu-dong, 2018).

2.4 Violation: National Territory and the Female Body

The most explicit visual representation of the female body as the national body occurs at the very end of *Bedevilled*. The final dissolve transition from Hae-Won's reposed silhouette into the solitary rocky form of the island is the most direct visual representation of the island of Mudo as a gendered place and one representing a body beyond the mere visceral. (*See figure 2-1 on the following page*) The unifying imagery of Hae-Won's body with the landscape is a significant moment for reading the interchange of symbolism attached to feminine bodies and their import within nationalist geography. The island, as a space of gendered trauma and sexual violation merges-with or emerges-from Hae-Won's liberation from silence. The sequence highlights the island as both a dreamlike, symbolic location that entangles personal memory and national symbolism through the violations of the female physical body. The island and the female form are united as a single space upon which distress and violation scar the national landscape. The relationship between the female body and the island of Mudo in *Bedevilled is* merely a contemporary rendering of a larger body of symbolism tying the female form to the natural landscape, imbuing within it gendered meanings and motifs. *Bedevilled* builds from the "gender conservatism [that] has long characterized Korean nationalism" through which "women are frequently burdened with crushing body/nation/class metaphors and imaged as rape victims" (Chung and Diffrient, *Forgetting* 125) and women's sexuality is reified as property of the masculine nation (Yang *Re-membering* 130). The use of the island as both an extension of the female body and its violation is significant as any reading of colonial violence and violation is best embodied and physically memorialized in Korean collective memory through the reclamation of an actual island, Dokdo, as a symbol of Korea's post-war nationhood.

Figure 2-1: Hae-Won's body dissolves into that of the island.

As a violated territory tied to the colonial past, Dokdo represents precisely the same kind of gendered symbolism around which nationalist tropes are organized. *Bedevilled* identifies the island as a symbolic space of female geography in several ways. First, from a purely narrative standpoint, Mudo is an island of women. Of the three male inhabitants, the brothers Man-Jong and Cheol-Jong are the nephews of the maternal head of the island, and the third male is a largely mentally vacant elder leftover from the storm which wiped out the island. A familiar cultural allusion, the elderly women of Mudo subsist from their farming and spearfishing which conjures images of the matriarchy of the Jeju

Island Han-yeo (women divers). Aunty, the abusive matriarch of Mudo, talks of being brought to the island as a young woman, while the other women's talk of Seoul suggests they too are transplants from the mainland, brought to the island through marriage. Bok-Nam never leaves the island for any reason and is most representationally tied to the island space. Through her continued associations with agricultural labor, fertility (she birthed the only child on the island), and her function within the genre. Bok-Nam's transformation from victim to avenger is a trope associated with the slasher film that links the slasher figure with a natural or divine reckoning; a convention I will discuss later that parallels the use of revenge and *han* found throughout Korean horror cinema. Furthermore, the island's final depopulating decline coincides with Bok-Nam's journey from the island to the mainland during the film's climax.

If the violated nation is symbolically projected upon female bodies, the violated female can be symbolically projected upon the national body. As noted by Susan Hayward in her analysis of genders' use within the discourse of nation, the nation itself "pretends to be gender-neutral (in that it purports to dissolve difference) and yet the woman's body is closely aligned/identified with nationalist discourses" (91). Hayward asserts that the use of the female body, whether liberated or controlled, speaks to the way "nationalisms invent nations where they do not exist, national culture does not represent what is there, but rather asserts what is imagined or desired to be there as a hegemonic ideal culture" (91). Once expressed, it can then be repressed which is essential to female bodies within patriarchy. Therefore, to talk about the symbolic value of the female body is to play out national insecurities through symbolism which disguises real questions regarding gendered agency and power. This identification plays out through identifying our motherland, mother tongue, and the violation of nation as often referred to as *rape*. However, in *Scattered Hegemonies,* Mary Layoun points out that "the metaphoric equation of inviolable woman and inviolable motherland is as unsurprising as it is fearfully problematic" (65). Similarly problematic, the metaphoric equation of the degraded woman and the severed or degraded landscape is not merely a creation of gendered post-colonial symbolism, but rather feeds into the anxieties of division, modernization, and the dismantling of Confucian patriarchy under the strains of societal upheaval.

David E. James in his analysis of Korean painting and literature's influence on the visual metaphors common to Korean national cinema states that they share a tradition of mobilizing the "two privileged symbols on which the historical trauma of the nation is re-enacted: the body of the Korean landscape, especially its spectacular mountains, and the bodies of Korean women, especially those of the working class" (20). Originating from a patriarchal lens common to gendered representations of the nation, the ties between the female physical form and the land are depicted on multiple levels but generally oscillate between "parallel and complementary functions" (James 20). An example to be expanded upon later is Im Kwon-Taek, who in one instance, shows us an unviolated landscape foregrounded by a beautiful woman as an instance of equivalency or interchangeability. Though their interchangeability is a recurring motif they are not always in tandem within the same image. For example, a degraded landscape or modern cityscape might appear as the metaphorical equivalent of a desecrated woman's

body which is the antinome of the natural landscape. Sometimes the two tropes can displace one another when depicting the natural landscape in its "pristine pre-colonial state and the woman's ravaged body and its recent historical fate" (James 21). As the patriarch of Korean National Cinema, Im's use of these recurring visual tropes harkens to traditional Korean painting and parallel literary traditions which carry complex traditional undercurrents of gender's place within cultural and traditional national discourse.

Inherent to the organization of Korean society, David E. James suggests in his survey of the landscape/femininity motif utilized by film director Im Kwon-Taek that "landscape is the core of pre-colonial Korean painting, and the parallel literary traditions are informed by the rigid sexual codes of Confucian patriarchy." He offers the example of one of the most famous and often-reproduced of Korean paintings, *Women on Tano Day*, by Sin Yun-bok (1758-?) (*see figures 2-2 below and 2-3 on the following page*). Marjorie Williams describes the painting as combining "the motifs of both the female body and the landscape, while its depiction of furtive male spectators also foregrounds the voyeuristic transactions of patriarchal specularity" (10-13). James suggests that because of this genealogy "any contemporary use of the two motifs must be deeply ideological, inhabited by all the cultural structures of pre-colonial feudalism as well as by their adaptation to the requirements of colonial and neo-colonial capitalist development" (12).

Figure 2-2: *Women on Tano Day* by Sin Yun-bok (1758 - ?)

Figure 2-3: Bok-Nam and Hae-Won similarly bathe as objects of patriarchal specularity.

Locating the island of *Bedevilled* within politicized geography it is easy to draw comparisons between the sexual/gender/social inequality of Mudo and the common “language of imperialism” which perpetuates the “equation between a colonized landscape and the female body” (Loomba 16). Korea’s colonial past notwithstanding, the continued motif of a gendered nation “represents a false equivalency that causes considerable damage to both contemporary feminist and postcolonial discourses" (Loomba 16). Similarly, Korean feminists and film theorists have extensively analyzed the relations between Confucian patriarchal and contemporary capitalist exploitation of women and their roles in post-colonial literature and South Korean films. The central argument has generally been that the metaphorical use of women to represent the nation's violation by Japanese and U.S. aggressors is never merely metaphorical; it also renews the ideological conditions for the ongoing exploitation of women.

Korean horror cinema often uses and critiques “the female body as a metaphor for a nation that suffers from repressive expectations about gender, sexuality and the family” (Hyangjin Lee 33). The exploited female bodies of *Bedevilled* are a cross-section of female characters often depicted in Korean horror cinema which include “the devious mother-in-law, the stepmother, the housemaid or the husband’s mistress” all of whom can “be understood to represent the diverse voices of a suffering country” (Hyangjin Lee 33). Bok-Nam (the uneducated rural laborer), Hae-Won (the unmarried professional), Mi-Ran (the sex worker), and Yeon-Hee (the would-be child bride) are respectively positioned as marginal figures in Korea’s contemporary Confucian patriarchy. As female Others, they are also positioned at the lower rungs of a society depicted as “under threat from foreign influence” (Hyangjin Lee 33). In Chris Berry’s analysis of female figures in the films of Kim Ki-Young, he points out a class tensions underlying the intricate female hierarchies that compose the conflicts of Korean horror. In describing the station of working-class rural women, Berry describes how “the Korean word for “housemaid,” *hanyeo*, “translates literally as ‘the woman below,’ a position that places her parallel to the position in which the unconscious is usually imagined and from which the repressed is understood to sometimes return” (Berry 107). This relegation to symbolic status is important to understanding how womanhood, as a projection of nationalism and victimization, has been projected upon the landscape throughout pre-colonial and post-colonial Korean visual art.

At the same time, Bok-Nam and Hae-Won’s shifting representations and transformations follow in line with both the standard conventions of the rape-revenge genre and with Susan Hayward’s analysis of how the national cinema’s “shifting image of the woman” (14) oscillates between the maternal, violated, and liberated. Bok-Nam’s precarious position as mother, a victim of abuse and sexual assault which later transforms into an avenger, satisfies the tropes of femininity’s place within the nationalist lexicon while also satisfying the aforementioned shift from an exploited to a liberated body. This complexities of gendered space, violation of the sacred national body, and its relationship the inscribed female body are tropes that have featured throughout the history of Korean cinema. On notable and trans-generational example can be found in *The Story of Chunhyang* (*Chunhyangjeon*, Lee Pil-Woo and Lee Myeong-Woo, 1935) and its various remakes in 1955, 1961, 1971, 1980, and 2000. More

contemporarily in the horror mode, another example of a similar juxtaposition of the decaying feminine body and its connection to a violated landscape is in the opening scene of Bong Joon-Ho's *Memories of Murder* (*Salinui Chueok*, 2003) in which a meandering long shot moves through the decaying rural landscape that conceals the remains of a female murder victim.

In many ways, the island of Mudo in *Bedevilled* is the perfect geographical representation of colonial violation. It is a space that embodies ambiguous nationhood status while acting as the site of gendered violence inflicted by the male colonial subject's psycho-sexual neurosis. An island locale also satisfies the characteristic of *lack* so closely associated with the gendered symbolism of the nation. A part of the nation, but not the mainland, it is both a part of and separate from the territorial holdings of the nation. From an ideological and geopolitical standpoint, the same kind of *lack* ties the symbolism of the film to the ultimate symbol of Korea's territorial and symbolic violation, Dokdo which, along with the comfort women issue represents the unresolved colonial traumas of the Korean subject. The symbolic linkage of colonized women with colonized nationhood is two-fold in the case of Korea, where the colonial traumas expressed through gendered violation are both literal, in the case of the comfort women, and symbolic, in the case of Dokdo. Presented another way, colonial violation has occurred upon the bodies of women and the body of the nation. Inextricably linked, the comfort women issue and the debates surrounding Dokdo represent the melding of sexual violence with constructions of national subjectivity and loss.

However, where Bok-Nam's body reflects the confluence of femininity and national territory, Hae-Won's body is at odds with the same system. Hae-Won controls her physical body and her own sexuality outside of a domestic heterosexual relationship. Her implied non-heteronormative sexuality, or at the very least her desexualization differentiates her from Bok-Nam as operating outside the traditional Confucian male/female hierarchy. This is also supported in Hae-Won's flashbacks which reveal she merely witnessed sexual assaults as a child but was never herself a victim. Similarly, as an adult, the failure of her attempted sexual assault by Cheol-Jong via oral sex (an important delineation for its use of the mouth motif) further supports her outsider status and insinuates her sexual orientation. Hae-Won's inferred sexual difference further differentiates her from the heteronormative organization of traditionalism. When read within the gendered violence of the film, her ambiguous sexual preference and accompanying lack of sexualization function similarly to the androgynous final girl. Some have argued the final girl is an empowering figure (Trencansky 63-73) who survives in part due to her rejection of traditional female roles.

Like the final girl, her androgynous sexuality can be understood to be a component of her invulnerability to sexual assault. Hae-won's lack of clear sexual identification not only emphasizes her break from traditional female roles but also removes her connection to the violated national subject that has been so closely associated with the colonial past. This kind of overlap of the female body and national territory utilized by nationalist discourses refuses to acknowledge that female sexuality might exist independently. Masculine nationalism fails to recognize the female body outside of procreation

and the birth of new citizens, or that it could be used for prostitution when engaging with “invading” (Trencansky 66) agents. Ultimately, nationalist discourse fails to address the possibility of female sexual agency existing outside of its symbolic significance of purity or as a population machine. Rather, female sexual subjectivity is like the borders of a nation, to be monitored and patrolled by male defenders of the motherland. This gendered proscription of agency and power exists within the male-driven nationalist narrative and therefore comes to symbolize the life, death, and violation of the nation. Any penetration of the nation as territory is then also a violation of the national female body. The most egregious violation, rape, is not just an attack, but an occupation of the nation as constituted as the female body. While at the end of *Bedevilled* Hae-Won’s body remains unviolated, Bok-Nam’s suffering has altered Hae-Won's will to subjectivity. Hae-Won's experiences on the island have dislodged her repressed memories, but her reintegration into the gendered national body is singularly important to any reading of the final dissolve of her body into the island. No longer free from the once repressed violations of her past, the island dissolve offers no sense of closure, but rather an empathic reintegration.

2.5 A City Devoid of Memory

The amnesiac relationship of a character to their traumatic memories is a key motif in *Bedevilled* and one found throughout Korean films premised on the city dweller who voyages to the countryside. *Spider Forest* (*Geomui Sup*, Song Il-Gon, 2004), *Moss* (*Iggi*, Kang Woo-Suk, 2010), and *Bloody Aria* (*Guta Yubaljadeul*, Won Shin-Yun, 2006) are just a few of the urbanoid Korean films constructed around the return of characters to their hometown only to be confronted by forgotten or repressed memories which force them to re-examine their relationship with history. The alienation from and return to one's roots is a recurring narrative motif in Korean films set in the countryside, let alone most rural horror films. In these films, the would-be victim is called back to a rural hometown or region from where their family originates. Their urban lifestyle has distanced them, literally and figuratively, from their place in society, their culture, and/or their past connections to traditional Korean life. Upon their return, the alienated individual is forced to reconcile with their past. *Bedevilled* repeatedly reminds us that Hae-Won, though a city woman, is not an outsider infringing upon new territory as a tourist or ecological exploiter; rather, she is returning to her childhood home from the city. Seoul is portrayed as a place that has forgotten its relationship to its past as the production of internationalization and consumerism. This is reflected in the distancing of urban Seoul from the rural spaces representing the traditions and cultural purity untainted by progress.

The film opens from the POV of an unknown driver. During this brief sequence are shots of the Seoul locals intermingling with distinctly non-Korean people on the bustling streets of Itaewon (an area near a major US army base that is popular with foreigners). Two men are shown aggressively confronting a young woman dressed for a night at the club, who begins beating her in the middle of the street. Bystanders watch on and attempt to avoid this violent exchange. The victim runs to the car window and pleads for help, only to have the window rolled up in her face as she is dragged away pleading for

help. In the next scene, an elderly woman pleads for an apartment loan with the film's protagonist, Hae-Won, who politely and coldly explains that she can't loan the money required. As the exchange becomes more heated, Hae-Won unprofessionally and forcefully asserts her position by shouting and a hush falls over the busy lobby of the bank. Her coworkers, customers, and even the elderly cleaning lady are visibly uncomfortable with the tone the exchange has taken. Hae Won then receives a series of phone calls that only agitate her further. It is not until the second act it is evident that the voice on the phone is that of Bok-Nam, a childhood friend who has desperately been trying to contact her. Hae-Won dismisses the call, as well as the elderly woman at her desk. Hae-Won then excuses herself to visit the police station where she has been asked to identify the assailants of the young woman from the opening scene. At the police station, Hae-Won doesn't identify the men as the attackers. In the parking lot of the police station, the victim's father confronts the young men only to be shoved aside as he begs for Hae-Won to go back in and identify them. The victim's father is pulled aside by detectives and Hae-Won drives away, aware of her cowardice and failure. Upon returning to work, in short order, Hae-Won accuses her coworker of sleeping with the boss because the coworker approved the elderly woman's loan while Hae-Won was away, Hae-Won is locked in the toilet stall by the cleaning woman as retribution for mistreating the elderly woman, and then misidentifies the same coworker as the one who locked her in. This leads to Hae-Won slapping the colleague before recognizing her mistake and being placed on disciplinary leave by her manager. As the film progresses, Hae-Won's inaction, lack of empathy, and detachment are her defining traits and become more clearly associated with her disconnection from her own past.

Figure 2-4: A Starbucks in Itaewon backgrounds the beating of a young woman in the opening scene.

Figure 2-5: Hae-Won observes her attackers beat the father of the young victim.

The Seoul environment portrayed at the film's beginning is an international mix of identifiably non-Korean elements. The international brands adorning the night-time street of the first attack and the English-speaking attacker both suggest that the globalizing economic forces and the influence of outside culture and language have violently disrupted the traditional values and practices of the Korean people or are at least symptomatic of their disconnection them from their roots (see figure 2-4 on the previous page and figure 2-5 above). Hae-Won similarly embodies the cosmopolitan sensibilities of Seoul. She is an educated, gainfully employed woman, who is independent of male guidance. The "negative association between an emancipated female agency and a licentious Western culture pervades South Korean cinema from Han Hyong-mo's *Madame Freedom* (1956)... to *Happy End* (*Haepi endeu*, Jung Ji-Woo, 1999)" (Chung and Diffrient 126) and Hae-Won reflect a similar set of negative characteristics. Through the colonial lens of my reading of *Bedevilled*, she echoes the traits of a certain set of women reflective of the international lifestyle created under the influence of Japanese imposed modernity during the colonial period. Hae-Won is a contemporary version of the "modern girl" who, under modernization, achieved status as a radical image of an internationalizing Korea and one foregoing the ways of previous generations. Colonial-era modernist poet Kim Ki-rim described these women as "girls who stand before a show window of glamourous, new department stores, letting its phantasmagoria rob their soul." (Kim Jae-Yong, 645) He even goes so far as to describe the "modern girls" as "ghost[s] in daylight," and "mechanical people," who, like Hae-won, can no longer communicate with others for having sold their souls to the devil of modernity (Kim Jae-Yong, 141). Descriptions and images of these modern girls in colonial Korea reflected how Koreans of the time understood their place in society and the sensations evoked by the new spaces created under the project of modernity. Colonial-era writers wrote of a modernizing Seoul under foreign influence as evoking a kind of sophistication and "cosmopolitan ennui that registers only after people grow tired of modernity's breath-taking novelty" (Kelly Jeong 29-30). Hae-Won, so distanced from her past is imbued with this urban ennui, memories repressed, identity lost.

Hae-Won is shown in isolation following her dismissal. Her lifestyle is one of disconnection; eating in an Italian restaurant by herself, wandering the boutique-laden streets in several wide shots, and most clearly when she returns to her empty apartment. Her disconnection is so severe that she refuses to open her door to accept her mail. Empty, literally and figuratively, Hae-Won opens her refrigerator full of sparkling water and imported beer. She opens a can and drinks it in a single go. While a seemingly minor detail, her choice of food and drink indicates her distaste for Korean things. Her disconnection from her surroundings and traditions is so profound that she even subsists on non-native and non-natural food and drink expressing her very sustenance comes from outside her surroundings. Not limited to food and drink, but also her disregard for the Confucian reverence of elders and leadership of subordinates. Her internationalization mirrors that of the city itself, corrupted or tainted by the conveniences and luxuries of a metropolitan lifestyle without a sense of where she came from, or how it contributes to the deeper elements of her identity and being. When the emptiness of her idle days subsumes her, lost in the disconnectedness of her lifestyle, she re-engages with what is her

seemingly solitary connection to her past. She accepts an invitation from an old friend to visit her on the isolated, provincial island where they grew up. In the same vein as revisionist western urbanoid films, the sexual violence in *Bedevilled* is not necessarily predicated on the difference of urbanites from their rural counterparts. While on the surface, Hae-Won's position as an urban outsider adheres to the general framework of *urbanoia*, her status as an outsider is more clearly tied to history and memory both of which gradually crystalize on the island.

2.6 An Island Composed of Memory

Where the city has allowed Hae-Won to forget and disconnect, the island of Mudo is her connection to the past, both personal and collective. In contrast to her urban lifestyle in modernized Seoul, her memories of past experiences on the island, both repressed and overt, come flooding back. In a FarEastFilms interview, director Jang Cheol-Soo explains that Korean films have "dealt with characters who used to live a comfortable life in the city and then get badly ruined in a rural county or vice versa" (Mills, 2011). However, he goes on to stress that in *Bedevilled* "you can see both places are the same." He explains that the differences between the rural and urban locations are spatial projections of time, in that the film depicts the city as "blended between the present and future while the countryside is a mixture of the past and present" (Mills, 2011). Not only do Hae-Won's present and past coalesce on the island, but the shift from her individual memories of sexual violence become more deeply interwoven with the collective experiences and memories of Bok-Nam and her daughter within the present timeline, eventually fusing with colonial imagery.

In line with Jang Cheol-Soo's insights on the island being composed of the past and present, Hae-Won's boat trip back to Mudo manifests through a foggy dissolve, edited as if it is itself a flashback or a dream. The use of fog as a boundary between the past and present indicating a connection to memory is a repeated image both in this thesis and in Korean films dealing with the connections of memory to place in general. Kim Soo-Yong's 1967 film *Mist* (*Angae*) is the prototypical example of the countryside as a veiled environment separated from contemporary urban life and one that will feature in later case studies for its epitomic qualities related to the liminality of memory. The eponymous mist plays a crucial role in the delicate dialectical interchange between the past and the present, as it serves as the perfect embodiment of the nebulous nature of memories, in the process obfuscating history with the passage of years. Not only is this a dreamlike symbol shared between *Bedevilled* and *Mist*, but in both examples the mist functions as a tangible physical obstacle, separating the village/island from more "civilized" cities like Seoul, and concealing the illicit secrets from the contemporary outside world. In another parallel, both films also feature a rural character desperate to escape, and a jaded city dweller alienated by their experiences of urban ennui. Like Mudo, the island in *Bedevilled*, *Mist*'s remote village of Mujin similarly depicts the idyll disguising a dark rural wasteland. It is described by Yun, one of the lovers at the center of the story, as a place of "scorching sun, cloying mist, and people disfigured by poverty", where a permanent fog envelops the lives of the inhabitants as if it were the "most potent narcotic in the world".

This mist is a foundational image in *Bedevilled*. One moment, Hae-Won is sitting in her Seoul apartment and the camera drifts toward the foggy sky outside the window. A bell rings, and the camera drifts back down to Hae-Won's face on the boat. Reminiscent of hypnotic regression, the transition is notable as the first moment where memory and reality intersect spatially. Her trip back to the island where she spent her youth is presented as the instrument of her recollection. Gradually, throughout her time on the island, Hae-Won remembers bits and pieces of incidents she had repressed. The first such instance occurs as the boat approaches Mudo. In this first instance, the misty water fades into a memory of a young Hae-Won playing a white recorder on the rocky cliffs of the island. Crouched beside her sits a young Bok-Nam. The contrast between the two young girls is undeniable. Hae-Won in her seafoam green dress, hair bobbed, white skin, all markers of a child from a well-to-do family who merely spent summers on the island. Bok-Nam sits on the rocks; her baggy and boyish clothes only serve to confirm the poorer status made obvious by her sun-darkened skin. (*see figure 2-6 below*) The difference between the two girls highlights the economic tensions at the heart of the urban/rural dichotomy. This voyage from the comforts of the city to the craggy, remote island of Mudo is not a transgression of boundaries, rather, it is a return to her ancestral roots, childhood memories, and a connection to the traditional culture from which she has disconnected from entirely.

Figure 2-6: Images of Hae-Won's dream like trip through memory back to the island.

The island she returns to is equal parts geographical location and an intermingling of internal and external elements of the repressed past. Green, idyllic, and by all accounts traditional with the small grouping of traditional Korean homes (Hanok), Mudo is as backwater as one is likely to find in Korea. The island location only intensifies the sense of isolation and a population that time forgot. They grow and subsist on potatoes and corn they can farm, and drink from a spring that provides all the freshwater for the island. The women, in particular, are influenced by old wives' tales of the purity of Seoul water as a skin whitening agent and the supposed sophistication of the metropolitan heart of

Korea. At once a familiar place of memory, and yet a grotesque rendering and exaggeration of a time and place aging out of existence, where the only remaining men are savage oversimplifications of psychotic masculinity, and the established matriarchy of the island embodies the worst stereotypes of agist Confucian oppression; a fantasy of rural nostalgia turned nightmare. This kind of physical projection of the mind is described by Kyung-Hyun Kim in *Virtual Hallyu*, in his description of how Korea as a postcolonial, postmodern, and industrialized first-world nation "defamiliarize[s] the familiar" landscape (26). The landscapes become a site of inverted consciousness upon which audiences "produce sensations, affects, and feelings that have very little to do with the actual vanishing of the rural landscape but instead have to do with the post-modern pleasures induced by nostalgia that stimulates one of the most powerful melodramatic reactions" (Kim. 2011, 26). The landscapes of *Bedevilled* too serve as "a modern subjecthood of interiority" (Kim 2011, 26), which while recognizably rural and metropolitan respectively, are uncanny blendings of physical space and psychological projection.

The key visual representation of Mudo as at least partially an interior or memory space is the use of the flashback which is singularly associated with the island. For Max Silverman, author of *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*, this palimpsestic compounding or blending of memory and repetition of action upon space "not only merges the present and past… but also unsettles the boundaries between the individual and the collective" (Max Silverman 54). The implications of a palimpsestic island memory space in the film have been more specifically applied to Asian cinema by Bliss Cua Lim. According to Lim, the effect of layering the present on top of the past through flashbacks with the contemporary anachronistic environment of the island asserts a form of heterotemporality common to fantastical and horrific narratives in Asian cinema. In her analysis of the temporal critique prevalent in Asian cinema, Lim argues that this kind of layering of chronology exposes that "homogeneous time translates disparate, non-coinciding temporalities into its own secular code because the persistence of supernaturalism often insinuates the limits of disenchanted chronology" (Lim 13). She refers to traces of untranslatable temporal otherness in fantastical, and supernatural horror films as "immiscible times" (Lim 13). For Lim, these multiple times never quite merge into the code of modern time consciousness, and therefore never quite dissolve or "attain homogeneity" (Lim 13) with the uniform chronological present. In *Bedevilled* we see the inability to reconcile these disparate temporalities into a single chronologically through the gradual revelation of the events of the present timeline as related to those from the past. Hae-Won's personal history, as a child, of witnessing rape is revealed through the use of flashbacks that parallel the sexual violence occuring in the present timeline.

This intermingling of disparate times and returning memories establishes the rural island as a conduit for the blending or recovery of individual and collective memories. On the individual level, Hae-Won's flashbacks intermingle with the symbols of collective colonial traumas of violation. Hae-won's amnesiac state unravels as she interacts with the island and village that backdrop her repressed childhood memories. On the collective level, Mudo is a memory-scape that merges the individual

memories of sexual violence within a larger nationalist discourse surrounding colonial sexual violation, both literal and symbolic. Here I build on Michelle Cho's analysis in which she surmises the location of Mudo as a wholly imagined designation composed of “generic codes” and “symbolic conventions” for “both positive and negative forms of idealization” (M. Cho 145). She highlights Mudo’s “non-island” status in another register: “Mudo’s continuity with the mainland, in the legitimation of misogyny and patriarchal oppression, renders it not an island, but a sustaining node of a broader apparatus of cultural reproduction” (M. Cho 145). In my reading, the cultural reproduction of a shared violent past of rape and the parallel of sexual violence experienced by the woman in the opening scene, and later Bok-Nam, the sex worker Mi-Ran, and Hae-Won render deeper connections between individual experience and collective experience. This connection more deeply speaks to the film's island space as a memory-scape that recreates and superimposes both collective and individual traumas from the past to the present. As such, it is part of a larger cultural repository of repressed memories of colonial oppression which characterize the psychology of the colonial subject.

Hae-won's absence or repression of memory reflects a propensity of modernization toward historical and cultural amnesia. Her defining character trait is “want” or “lack”; lacking not only the components which otherwise make up identity, like memory, but also the means to express or assert herself. Their absence at the beginning of the film paired with the symbolic equivalency of the female body and national territory has been posited by Susan Hayward as symptomatic of the psychology of colonialism. Susan Hayward suggests that the “symbolic use of the female body is enough to tell us that nationalist discourses are invested in producing a national identity that is dialectically based in the principle of “lack”, and that national culture has as its “starting (but disguised/absent) point: denial, deficiency/lacking and repression” (Hayward 91). In “Against Metaphor; Gender, Violence, and Decolonization in Korean Nationalist Literature” You Me Park similarly writes about the “lack” of agency signified in representations of the colonial subject. While *Bedevilled* is read, in this instance, as a film contemporizing the plight of those affected by colonial violence, Hae-Won, as a contemporary figure unknowingly damaged by the repressed and forgotten traumas of her past, embodies the essence of the “lack” that both Hayward and Park insist comprises the colonial subject. In building from the previous section concerning the alignment of the violated country with violated femininity, Susan Hayward asserts this takes place not only in a corporeal way but also in a symbolic way. Colonized women are often relegated to objects which signify lost nationhood.

At this nexus of memory, gender, and lost nationhood is where the island as a memory space becomes a space of gendered national violation. The memories of Hae-Won as an individual begin to reflect those of Bok-Nam and Yeon-Hee, and beyond. There is a shift from the personal to the collective, where memories and reality become collective symbols of the colonial subject. It is within this symbolism of the island as a violated female body and the island space of *Bedevilled* echo post-colonial sentiments of territorial repossession and the reclamation of the colonial era victims of the comfort system. Bedevilled’s use of the images and iconography of the colonial subject echo those found in the iconic film of Korea’s colonial cinema.

2.7 The Subversion of Colonial Iconography in *Arirang* (1926)

In line with the predominance of "truncated" depictions of the colonial period as a self-contained era disconnected from the geopolitical complexities of the post-colonial present (An, *Parameters* 9), the island in *Bedevilled*, Mudo, exists in a state of arrested development outside of the influence of cultural and technological modernization. This kind of disconnection commonly found in Korean horror is described by JinSoo An in his analysis of colonial representations of horror in Korean cinema. According to An, the "demonization of the past" in representations of colonial horror suggests how the prior years are rendered "out of joint" with the "linear, abstract, progressive notion of time in the modern era" and represents that "the dilapidated past insists on living on as a monstrous figure and even makes a triumphant return to tell the story of spectral horror" (An, *Parameters* 109). *Bedevilled* is a film that tells the story of a repressed past that simply will not fade, and instead violently erupts during the moment of Bok-Nam's transformation from victim to avenger.

It is at this moment that the gendered violence and its links to coloniality merge with Bok-Nam, who becomes more closely aligned with the horrific spectral figure that "traverses historical divides" (An, *Parameters* 109) of temporal compartmentalization of colonial horror. In her shift from victim to avenger within the standard rape-revenge story arc, Bok-Nam comes to embody a figure more familiar to the Korean revenge and horror cannon, the *wonhon*. Daniel Martin describes the Korean *wonhon* as "a young woman whose death was brought about by familial treachery or sexual assault, whose spirit lingers to seek justice and punish the evildoers responsible for her murder" (Martin, *Korean Horror* 426). As a parallel, narrative text to the traditional rape-revenge cycle's use of brutal gendered violence, the *wonhon*'s "many 'victims' are tormented at the hands of the ghost, it is in these cases the killer who engages the sympathies of the audience, and those she kills on her quest for righteous revenge deserve their fates" (426). At the core of the revenge is a purging of *han*, "a sense of agonizing grief at great injustice, of continual and undeserved suffering" (426) which is a deeply rooted undercurrent of the gendered violence suffered by the comfort women. In their thorough respective tracings of the history of Korean horror, Hyangjin Lee and Daniel Martin each emphasize the importance of the *wonhon* as a cultural symbol. Popularized in Korean Horror cinema of the 1960s, the revenge-minded female spirit is an expression of frustration at the "hypocritical social order" for female "victims of patriarchy" (Hyangjin Lee 33). And like Bok-Nam who reclaims agency through her revenge, the "return of the *wonhon* points to a potential loss of patriarchal power and the symbolic castration of masculinity" (33). In this way, *Bedevilled* similarly builds from previous generations of Korean Horror and depictions of the *wonhon* to depict the temporary dissolution of patriarchal law and contrasts this with a strong female subjectivity expressed by the collective voices of victims (the *wonhon* and her enemies) (33). It is through *Bedevilled*'s use of the rurality as a nationalist backdrop for the oppression and violence of the colonial period that these once repressed or forgotten subjectivities re-emerge.

Bok-Nam's transformation sequence is rife with nationalist imagery and recycled iconography of the anti-colonial cinematic tradition exemplified by Na Woon-Gyu's 1926 film *Arirang* (*Arirang*). Though no prints exist today, *Arirang* is the first and perhaps most powerful anti-colonial film in Korean history and one which is essential to my reading of how the iconography of rape-revenge cinema is employed as a usurpation of the symbolism so closely associated with nationalist representational tropes regarding rape on screen. The film also remains a national symbol of anti-colonial art and an important film as a blueprint for many of the ingrained cinematic conventions related to Korea's impressive oeuvre of revenge films and those utilizing the allegory of rape. *Arirang*, despite being a staunchly nationalist film, draws from the popular Japanese genre of *Shinpa* melodrama which was a melodramatic form that "interspersed stage plays with filmed scenes" (Lee Soon-Jin 37) and were imported from Japan. Paradoxically, this blending of *Shinpa* with anti-colonial sentiment has been described as "the first nationalistic film which shed the light on the path for Korean national film," and "the film that exhibited the possibility to use the medium for [the] struggle against the Japanese Occupation" (Hong 291), firmly solidified within the vein of Korean nationalism which defines itself against a Japanese Other. The film is perhaps as famous as the lore associated with its director as the content itself. Na Woon-Gyu, the director and actor of *Arirang*, saw the film as an extension of the independence movement with which he had been involved. Na was jailed for two years on charges of involvement in the independence movement against the Japanese before he started filmmaking (Lee Young-Shik 59-60). The themes used to mobilize growing nationalist sentiment in the face of colonial tyranny were similarly explored in Na's later films like *Oknyo* (*Oknyo*, 1928) and *Omongnyo* (*Omangnyo*, 1937) which relied heavily on female brutalization, immoral love triangles, and incest as allegories depicting the colonial exploitation of Korea by the Japanese Empire.

The non-linear plot of *Arirang* differs slightly from source to source. However, the film involves a philosophy student Yeong-Jin who has become mentally ill after being imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese for his involvement in the March 1st, 1919, protest against the Japanese occupation of Korea. After his release, he returns home to live with his father and sister, Yeong-Hee, in their village home. The film opens with Yeong-Jin wielding a sickle, running toward the village where he meets a Japanese policeman, slaps his face, and threatens him with the sickle. After coming to his senses, the rest of the film explains that Oh Gi-Ho, a collaborator with the Japanese colonial authority of the village, attempted to rape Young-Hee. Her would-be suitor Hyeon-gu fought Gi-Ho, while Yeong-Jin watched, laughing meaninglessly. Yeong-Jin is enraged by a hallucination and raises his sickle, killing Gi-Ho who falls to the ground covered in blood. Upon seeing the blood, Yeong-Jin regains his senses at this murderous moment and the plot ends with the Japanese police taking Yeong-Jin to prison while the villagers weep (Lee Se-Gi, 17).

In many ways, *Arirang* illustrates the workings of a gendered pattern of the nationalist imaginary par excellence. As a product of coding to appease contemporary sensors, the symbolic use of a madman character as a murderer of an imperial sympathizer, the rape of an innocent girl by a pro-Japanese male, and the killing of the rapist have been critically praised, in retrospect, as "ingenious" ways to

express a national spirit that encouraged both anti-Japanese feelings and a sense of pride in revolt against Japanese oppression and rule. (Lee Young-Shik 44). The antagonist Gi-Ho's sexual assault on Yeong-Hee, which subsequently triggers the violent retaliatory response of the protagonist, Yeong-Jin, is almost universally understood as an allegory of the nation according to which the nation's subjugation to colonial rule takes a distinctively gendered, that is, feminized, form.

In *Bedevilled* and *Arirang* respectively, we are confronted with both an iconographic gendering of a nation under colonial oppression as well as the instruments/symbols of liberation. Within the shared iconography of the rape-revenge genre and gendered nationalism are the underpinnings of what Kaja Silverman's terms the crisis of masculinity which founds subjectivity on a void; by the castration crisis; by sexual, economic, and racial oppression; and by the traumatically unassimilable nature of certain historical events (Silverman 2-19). However, where most cinematic representations of the crisis of masculinity are constructed around male characters, in true rape-revenge fashion, *Bedevilled* focuses on post-colonial representations of the failed project of female liberation. Similarly, in "The Imperialism of Patriarchy" bell hooks argues that women of a colonized nation are doubly colonized by the colonizers and men of the same nation. Drawing from her experiences as a black feminist, Hooks asserts that colonized males adopt the stance of the colonizer as a way of recuperating their masculinity. In that process of mimicry, colonized Korean men not only deny feminine subjectivity but oppress Korean women, to shed their emasculated and infantilized image and prove their masculinity to a degree of exaggeration that may include violence against women. Thus, colonized men and the colonizers (Japanese Imperialism, or at the very least, the symbols of such) unite against the colonized women. Undeniably, the rape allegory in the post-colonial Korean context shares many similarities to the generic western conventions of the rape-revenge genre particularly related to the iconography and psycho-sexual acts of violation. However, it is the most pivotal scene in the film which best illustrates the overlap of anti-colonial nationalist iconography and the iconography of the rape-revenge genre.

During *Bedevilled*'s climax, following the events after Yeon-Hee's death and its aftermath, the elder women of the island gather on a platform to take a break from digging up potatoes to complain about not having any men around and to have a drink of *makgeolli* (fermented rice wine) and lunch. Bok-Nam continues to work, as the women comment on how it is good for her to stay busy considering the circumstances. Auntie leaves to go get some fish for everyone to eat for lunch. Bok-Nam continues to dig, feverishly she pulls potatoes from the ground and bags them. To foreshadow the coming yet unexpected massacre, are shots of Auntie pulling a fish from a clay pot, knife in hand. She cuts a fin from the fish and slices her finger, only to complain about Bok-Nam. Suddenly, Bok-Nam's frantic digging stops for a moment, as if she heard the insult, and after a brief moment, she continues to dig. The remaining elders start to sing. Bok Nam continues to dig, harder, and gather more and more potatoes as the song continues. They begin to dance, and Bok-Nam continues to work like a woman possessed as if the fervor of the song is endowing her with a renewed but malevolent spirit.

The elder stops dancing when she sees Bok-Nam abruptly stop harvesting potatoes. In the low-angle shot, Bok-Nam is engulfed in the sun (s*ee figure 2-7 on the following page*). She drops her tool and gazes into the unbearable brightness of the sun, before cutting to a shot of just the sun. A close-up of Bok-Nam's face reveals her tears and indicates some kind of communication taking place between her and the sun. The sun becomes even brighter as she stares into it. Then, it dims and fades slightly behind the clouds of a coming storm. Perhaps a storm not unlike the previous storm of decades past that had wiped out all but one man on the island. Her mood changes, her desperation fades, and she calmly walks to the group of elders and grabs a water bottle out of a nearby basket full of tools. The elders stare as she takes a large drink from the bottle and turns to talk to them. "I stared at the sun for a long time, and it spoke to me." The elder women laugh. Bok-Nam replaces the water bottle and pulls a sickle from the same basket and with a single blow to the neck dispatches one of the women. At this moment her transformation from victim to avenger occurs. This marks not only the transformation of Bok-Nam but does so using identifiable iconography from Korea's cinematic history which draws heavily from folk and anti-colonial imagery and song. At this powerful moment of the film three very strong emblems of anti-colonial sentiment boil up from the excessive gender traumas and injustices. They are the sun, the song, and the sickle.

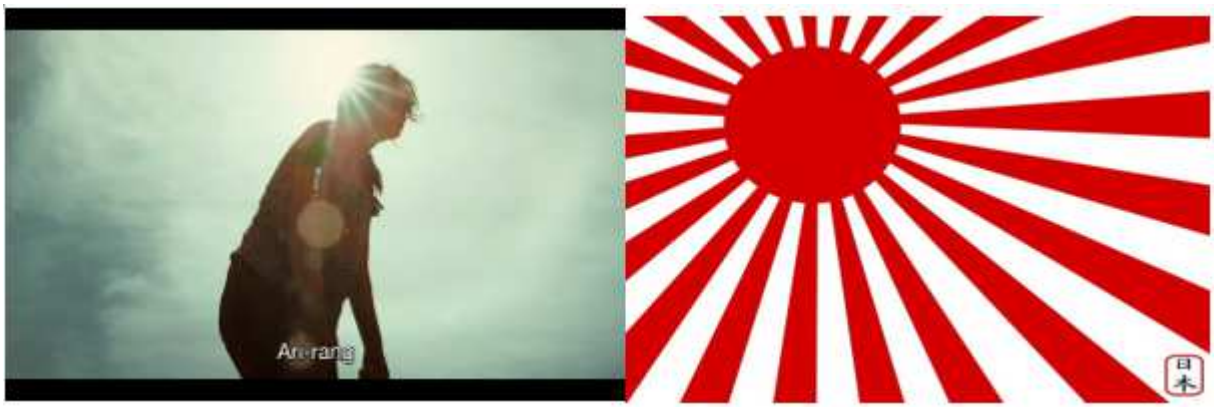

Figure 2-7: Bok-Nam is overtaken by the images of Japanese Colonialism. In this instance, the lens flare's similarity to the rising sun flag signals a shift from victim to avenger.

The sun is perhaps the most elusive of the allusions in the scene, but certainly, one which carries certain connotations in Korea that it might not carry elsewhere. (*see figure 2-7 above*) A relic from the Japanese Meiji Imperial period, recognized as the first half of the imperial period of Japan; The rising sun symbol (A red ball with 16 red rays) is, to this day, sometimes used by companies in advertisements, yet it is technically a military flag used from 1870 until the end of the second world war. It was imperial Japan's war flag. In the first half of the 20th century, the Korean Peninsula as a colony of Japan suffered countless brutalizations, murders, and enslavement. That period is a living memory for elderly Koreans and continues to be a highly emotive subject in both North and South Korea. Since 1954, a renewed version of the rising sun has been the banner of the Japanese navy, known as the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force. The symbolism of the oppressive sun is not lost in the film. Despite her long conversation with the sun, common ground could not be found, nor understanding of her plight from the island elders. The ties of the sun image to oppression are perhaps

only obvious when viewed through the Korean lens. However, from the Korean standpoint, the rising sun symbol has been the subject of ongoing Olympic and diplomatic protests which were largely fueled by right-wing Japanese conservative outcry over a 2012 visit by then-president Lee Myung-Bak to the disputed islands of Dokdo. Taken in tandem with the adopted anti-colonial melody “Arirang” in the background audio track of the scorching sun on Bok-Nam’s face, the ties only strengthen.

The traditional folk song “Arirang” sung during Bok-Nam’s transformation from victim to avenger does not originate from the film *Arirang*. It was, however, popularized as an anthem of colonial resistance upon the film's release because of its use in the film's emotional and patriotic ending. The film *Arirang* concludes with an in-theater voice actor reading a series of lines that conclude with “Ladies and Gentlemen, please don't cry. I was born in this country. That's why I've become mad and killed a man. I'm not going to die but I'm going to be born again. Ladies and Gentlemen Please stop crying” (Lee Young-Shik 44). As the voice actor spoke these lines, the screen showed Yeong-Jin singing the traditional folk song, ‘Arirang’ being pulled by the Japanese police down the other side of the hill (Lee Young-Shik 42). It is noted in numerous sources that the final song of “Arirang” inspired a frustrated colonial Korean audience to sing along with Yeong-Jin, and played a role in building the morale of the independence movement. This is a crucial moment, a conversion of mood that turns the audience from spectators to participants. I argue that a similar moment occurs in *Bedevilled* during Bok-Nam’s transformation in which the rape-revenge convention of transferring audience identification from masochistic victim to sadistic avenger occurs.

The traditional folk song “Arirang” has many different regional versions tied to both pre-colonial peasant hood and colonial resistance. It is also considered the unofficial national song of Korea. According to Youn-gap Kim, the executive director of the Arirang Association (Arirang Yonhap Hoe), Koreans sang “Arirang” during an uprising in 1919 to protest Japan’s military rule, in what became known as the March 1 Movement. Kim states they sang from distributed sheet music in a 1914 anthology of “vulgar songs” (sok-kok) adapted from Hulbert’s 1896 transcription. However, Korean revolutionary Kim San (Chang Chi-rak, 1905- 1939?) explicitly linked the “Arirangs” that he sang while fighting the Japanese to an ancient, pre-colonial heritage of artistic resistance to injustice and oppression. Both as a symbol of proletariat heritage and a resistance anthem during the colonial period, the song features heavily in the 1926 film of the same name. In fact, Yeong-Jin sings the song while being pulled down the hill after his arrest, a moment that inspired audiences of the time to sing along, many of whom did so with tears in their eyes. The film catapulted the unofficial national anthem into the popular imagination of Koreans who considered the song a musical icon of the struggle against colonizers. The lyrics of the particular version of ‘Arirang’ sung in the film serve as the metaphor for the colonized; "lover who abandoned me" was the mother country and "Arirang hill" was “the historical crisis in which hope for liberation and despair of the time intersect” (Y. Lee 130-134). In other words, “Arirang” became the unofficial national anthem of the as yet unrealized and "imagined" mother country that longed for liberation. This further incorporated the song within the nationalist discourse through the exercise of recreating a cultural canon by collapsing and conflating

previous traditions. Following the film's release, the various iterations of “Arirang” have been deeply integrated into the 'imagined canon' of the creation of national Korean culture and stand as a symbol of the anti-colonial movement.

The final symbol which completes Bok-Nam’s transformation from victim to avenger is the sickle. The initial tool of Bok-Nam’s revenge connotes important symbolism related to her position as a woman, her class as a laborer, and her rape-revenge transformation to castrice. The sickle is traditionally used for the culling of the harvest, but as the tool of revenge, it doubles as a phallus adopted by the slasher genre’s heroine upon her re-gendering. As a stand-in for the phallus, the sickle is significant because it has previously been used as an instrument of Yeong-Jin’s revenge and remasculinization in the film *Arirang.* In a general sense, the sickle represents both a violent succession of power and the cycles of life, death, and regeneration and is evident in its functional use as a reaping tool for crops. However, beyond that, are the specific ties in various religions to the sickle as a symbol of death. In Christianity, the sheaves and the harvest are equated with the human souls that the Harvester, i.e. the Lord, will gather after the end of the world. Bok-Nam as a harbinger of death is particularly tied to the rape-revenge and slasher genres in the ways the enacts a sort of divine punishment, in line with the masked killers of the early days of the slasher genre (i.e. Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers). The masked killer in many conventional analyses dishes out a conservative-style, old testament punishment for the transgressors of morality. She also returns the gaze of the killer, brandishing a sharp weapon such as a knife, sledgehammer, chainsaw, or a metal coat hanger, to combat him on his own terms. Based on all these phallic symbols, Clover refers to the “shared masculinity” of the killer and the Final Girl, and their “shared femininity”, for the killer suffers castration at her hands (94). As an implement of gendered violence in Korean cinema, the sickle is imbued with a significant lineage of symbolism tied to its use as a tool of remasculinization and labor.

Figure 2-8: Bok-Nam is a visual reference to Yeong-Jin’s revenge for Yeong-Hui’s attempted rape in *Arirang*.

In Kyung-Hyun Kim’s postcolonial reading of the film *Arirang,* Yeong-Jin’s use of the sickle can be read as an object of “rural, physical labor” from which the colonized subject can reconstitute his masculinity because “only violence can mend a spirit whose voice has been silenced and whose body has been castrated” (63). When wielded by a man demasculinized under the conditions of coloniality,

the tools of his labor are used for his liberation. When the doubly colonized woman wields the same tool, it becomes more than an instrument of liberation. It is a castrating instrument of anti-colonial resistance and a reclamation tool of female subjectivity from domestic and foreign oppressors alike. The sickle becomes a tool that liberates Korean femininity from the nationalist symbolism equating the land with the female body. (*see figure 2-8 above*) To put it simply, I argue that the sickle is perhaps the only weapon that could be identified as similarly and significantly embedded both within Korean cinematic history and rape-revenge iconography.

By returning to and appropriating the iconography established during the genesis of rape in Korean cinema, Jang Cheol-Soo not only recycles (a more fitting term might be 'upcycles') the quintessential Korean nationalist trope of violated femininity to address the origins of the outdated territory/female equivalency but does so by using the iconography which holds shared symbolic value within both rape-revenge and Korean nationalist cinema. The extension of the feminist critique of nationalist symbology which includes Dokdo, and the comfort women issue accomplishes a similar end. Despite their inherent cultural differences, *Bedevilled* and its rape-revenge predecessors of the 1970s which visually and thematically expressed the friction of second-wave feminism and Hollywood similarly mobilize the "radical potential of the genre" as an "accessible exploration of how rape affects the victim's orientation toward the world" (Henry 14). Bok-Nam's third act killing spree is enacted through the symbols and on the terrain of colonial violation. The very iconography of castration and colonial labor is vital in the film's critique of the psycho-sexual elements of the violated female body. In the end, however momentarily, she reclaims her womanhood long enough to leave the island and the past behind. At the end of the film, Bok-Nam's death and Hae-Won's transformation signal the coming contemporary transnational incarnation of Korean cinema; one that may still represent colonialization as akin to rape, but the individual and collective victims find a modicum of retribution.

2.8 Collectively Speaking about the Past

Whether through the recovery of individual memory or the expression of collective trauma, both the city and countryside in *Bedevilled* are mired in silence. In addition to the shared violence of the two milieus, one of the more striking similarities between the film's depiction of Seoul and Mudo is the suppression of testimony; speaking about what has happened and why. All of the women are represented by the island, not just the heroine or the avenger. Some, like Hae-Won, Bok-Nam, Yeon-Hee, Mi-Ran, have their violations play out during the film. While others like Aunty, only hint at their past; trafficked to the island as a very young girl for marriage and labor. In this way, *Bedevilled*'s engagement with the comfort women issue is further echoed through the thematic expression of unspeakability. For the comfort women, the period of unspeakability occupies the void between when the victimization took place historically and the first emergence of the testimonies some 50 years later. The failure to remember, speak, and achieve justice for the victims of gendered sexual violence are commonalities shared between many of the films dealing with the historical past which is also true of

the historical record. These themes are a significant part of how I read *Bedevilled* as participating in conversations surrounding representations of the comfort women issue.

Korean advertisements for *Bedevilled* depict the mirrored heroines of the film bloodied, reclined; Hae-Won, the more urbane and consequently less bloodied of the two, playing her recorder as an entranced Bok-Nam with her head in the lap of her dear friend, mimicking the finger movements of the song being played (s*ee figure 2-9 on the following page*). The tagline above Bok-Nam reads “You are too unkind” (*Neonun neomu buelchin-jeolhae*). This specific line of dialogue is spoken by Bok-Nam to Hae-Won following the flashback reveal that Hae-Won had witnessed the accidental murder of Yeon-Hee and failed to act or speak in the pursuit of justice for a mother and daughter victimized by physical and sexual abuse while all but captive on the island.

Figure 2-9: The Korean poster released September 2nd, 2010.

The silence and complicity of Hae-Won and the other island inhabitants in obstructing and confusing the investigation of Yeon-Hee’s murder demonstrate an apathy bordering on wanton enabling. Hae-Won’s failure, and indeed the audience’s failure, to witness and speak of the gendered and sexual violence of the film concerns the systematic violation of national and sacred norms by the Japanese Imperial Military during WWII. During the 1951-1965 negotiations with Japan. Kim Jong-Pil, former Prime Minister under Park Chung-Hee, stated in a JoongAng Daily interview that “Korea's failure to address our comfort women issue reflected our society's near-paralysis, not knowing what to do for them. Those women miraculously survived the indignities inflicted upon them by the Japanese and returned home. They were still young, in their 30s or early 40s, and finally, they married and began to bear children. To drag out their unhealed past would have burst open their wounds for the second, maybe, third time” (Devine 2). Later revealed in the same interview that during the 1951-1965 negotiations with Japan, neither Korea nor Japan ever discussed Korean comfort women.

Because the mistreatment of comfort women remains unresolved, it is not fully integrated into Korea's collective memory. With the passing of each year, the number of remaining comfort women dwindles, leaving fewer firsthand accounts and individual experiences from which to draw historical testimony. Korean cinema has only just started processing how the comfort women and their stories should be fictionalized and represented as a cultural-historical narrative. However, the rape-revenge trope of muteness, as part of the mouth motif analyzed in the next section of this chapter, "makes literal the taboo unspeakability of rape and personifies the inability to articulate the sheer scope of female oppression" (Heller-Nicholas 43). In doing so, *Bedevilled* offers a gratuitous visual depiction to which the audience can viscerally identify and react. Bok-Nam's line "you are too unkind" points a finger at those who revel in the spectatorship of sexual violence as an essential element of revisionist rape-revenge films. Simultaneously, the line garners collective social empathy for the remaining women who suffered at the hands of the comfort system.

At the film's end, Hae-Won's witnessing of gendered violence is revealed as a revisitation of the violence she witnessed as a child. Her coldness and aloof attitude toward the woman attacked in the opening scene of the film and lack of empathy for the women she encounters in the bank show her disconnection from the violence she witnessed in her youth. Her coarseness and lack of empathy in dealing with other women, particularly the older generation further highlight her place as an emigrant to metropolitan modernity. While this emphasizes her position of privilege, it also positions her as someone lacking regard for the oppressed. Hae-Won's inability to speak of her experiences and her unwillingness to identify with other women is not an uncommon reaction for victims and witnesses of trauma. In an analysis of Nora Okja Keller's novel *Comfort Woman,* Deborah Madsen notes that this sense of alienation from the self, of the dissolution of subjectivity as a consequence of trauma, is not uncommon in survivor narratives. The inability to transform experience into discourse annihilates the subject constituted by that discourse. Events that befall the trauma victim cannot be expressed or narrated because there exists no historical frame in which to interpret sensation and transform it into the experience (Madsen 84). Hae-Won is not only alienated from herself, but also from other women, her own culture, and her individual memories, which represent larger collective memories of Korea's historical trauma. Underlying the spectatorship of brutality in the film is the connection between the traumas of the past, and by their unspoken nature, their continued influence on the present. Hae-Won's flashbacks of intimacy, eventual violence, and her unwillingness to neither prevent nor testify of Bok-Nam's assault provide an interesting parallel that implicates the audience within the legacy of the comfort women issue.

The comfort women issue has yet to be justly adjudicated to the degree of satisfaction of the surviving victims and Korean society at large. Yet, the film offers Bok-Nam's transformation and revenge as a momentary if unfulfilling catharsis for audiences hoping to witness retribution. Her death is an apropos conclusion in symbolizing the lack of closure tied to the comfort women issue. *Bedevilled* offers a critique of silence that stains the Korean local governments and officials who ignored or participated in trafficking comfort women for decades. Repressed and largely forgotten until the early

1990s, the suffering of the surviving comfort women remained unvindicated and un-avenged. It was not until Kim Hak-Sun, a victim of the comfort systems came forward to offer testimony on 14 August 1991 using her voice as a weapon against those who sought her silence for the sexual slavery and human rights abuses she suffered during the 1930s (Howard 2). Kim Hak-Sun's revenge against injustice and silence was enacted through the same means as Kim Bok-Nam's in the film. Both women achieve a measure of justice by using that which once kept their suffering a secret: their mouths. Like other vengeful mothers whose ghost returns to protect her children or seek retribution like those in *A Public Cemetery Under the Moon* (Gwon Cheol-Hwi, 1967) and other films that popularized the *wonhon* in 1960s Korean horror cinema, Bok-Nam similarly symbolizes the threat of the Other, in her case, the ultimate historical and cultural example of the Other. Bok-Nam symbolizes the rural poor women forcibly recruited into Japan's colonial comfort system further unifying her pain with "the diverse voices of a suffering country" (Hyangjin Lee 33).

2.9 The Mouth Motif

The thematic connections between the comfort women issue and *Bedevilled* are not limited to gendered violence and injustice. The inability to speak about gendered violence and injustice and the complicity of silence is a significant theme of the film and one that has been a condition as well as a key component of representations of the Military Comfort Women issue (Yang *Re-membering* 124). The repeated use of the mouth/voice as a weapon to combat this silence is perhaps nowhere more clearly represented than in the confrontation between Bok-Nam and Man-Jong. After relieving the island elders of their lives, Bok-Nam's attack on Man-Jong is thwarted when Hae-Won warns Man-Jong of the approaching danger. Man-Jong subdues Bok-Nam and beats her mercilessly, physically attacking her and verbally assaulting her as symptomatic of the crisis of masculinity at the root of his psycho-sexual frustrations. Once Hae-Won threatens to tell the police if Man-Jong kills Bok-Nam, the mouth, or more precisely the voice, becomes a weapon of justice. Something in Bok-Nam changes and her inability to fight off Man-Jong through physical means becomes clear and her demeanor shifts. As if recognizing that words can be used to achieve justice and to deceive, she uses her mouth to first seduce and distract Man-Jong from his attack. Her kind words and suggestive pantomime of oral sex on the phallic positioning of the blade and later his fingers reorient her mouth from the purveyor of damaging words and testimony to an object of sexual delight. She bites down on his fingers completing the inversion of sexual stimulation to symbolic castration.

Figure 2-10: Bok-Nam uses her mouth as a distraction and later as a weapon.

More interesting still is her use of her mouth to wield the blade once held by Man-Jong which she plunges into Man-Jong's chest (*see figure 2-10 above*). The obvious symbolism related to castration within rape-revenge conventions of transformation becomes far more engaging when read as a response to the political and judiciary system of silence. This scene nods to Kim Hak-Sun, who appealed to international justice in 1991. And like Hak-Sun breaking through the "sense of shame that kept this [the comfort women] subject unspoken," Bok-Nam's liberation involves reclaiming her body from the realm of masculine nationalism in which the personal tragedies of the comfort women were subsumed by the "wounding of both masculine and national pride" (Gateward 207). Bok-Nam, once a prisoner to the silence of those around her, family, friends, and even law enforcement, uses her mouth to free herself from punishment and finally manipulates the tool of her oppressors' demise.

Hae-won's continued silence is finally portrayed as more insidious and neglectful than first surmised. The final flashback in the form of a dream sequence reveals the aftermath of Yeon-Hee's murder and Hae-Won failing yet again to speak up for injustice. While Hae-Won sleeps on the sofa of the police station, the dream reveals that Hae-Won saw the events leading to the death of Yeon-Hee. This also more fully integrates the notion of the island space as composed of not only Hae-Won's memory space but also the repression and denial Hae-Won experiences. This denial distances her from her individual traumas and those of a more collective nature. The flashback is not shown primarily from her perspective, but rather with a larger perspective or god's eye view of the situation. The use of this sort of nightmare disconnects reality from her purely subjective experience and strengthens the idea that the traumas of the island and Hae-Won's childhood memories have less to do with her specific experiences but are rather focused through her as a symbol for a larger contemporary national subjectivity.

Hae-Won wakes up to a vengeful Bok-Nam who, now more in the guise of a traditional *wonhon*, dons a white dress which "is a social signature of the chastity of a widow, as well as functioning as mourning clothes; it is a seal of loyalty to both the living and the dead" (Hyangjin Lee 24). Free from her murdered husband, "her long black hair implies youth, a life-force that defies sexual restraint and control. In contrast to the neat hairstyle of a married woman, the *wonhon*'s long, uncombed hair signifies an uncontrollable energy that rejects Confucian orthodoxy" (24). She wields a sledgehammer, rather than the typical rape-revenge blade for castration, Bok-Nam has already incapacitated the police

officer and is seeking retribution and perhaps even recognition for Hae-Won's neglect-as-guilt, as a wanton bystander. Hae-Won and Bok-Nam scuffle in the locked police station until Hae-Won retreats to a cell and locks herself in. She is clearly and visually identified as guilty, a prisoner of her own making through her silence. At this point in the film, Bok-Nam is donning the clothes and make-up left behind on the island by Hae-Won. She gives Hae-Won her white recorder telling her to play as she used to when she was a child before uttering the revelatory line from the poster, "You are too unkind." During the climax in the jail cell, Hae-Won uses the white recorder given to her by Bok-Nam as the weapon used to stab Bok-Nam in her throat (her voice) causing her to bleed to death on the floor of the jail cell (*see figure 2-11 below*). The recurring symbolism of the voice, in this case, the removal of the voice, further asserts the power of speech as a tool of testimony as essential to the justice process.

Figure 2-11: Her voice taken from her, exploited Bok-Nam can no longer speak for herself.

As Bok-Nam is robbed of her voice by Hae-Won, Hae-Won's traumatic experiences have instilled a voice of her own and with it the ability to witness. In the following scenes, Hae-Won uses her voice at the Seoul Police Station to achieve some modicum of justice for the woman attacked at the film's beginning. Her new willingness to speak on the crimes and injustices she witnessed reconnects her to the suffering of the women she has encountered in her life. She has been re-assimilated as part of the national collective, her planetary roots have been re-established within national memory, and her physical body, for better or worse, has been reincorporated as gendered territory. The final shot, the dissolve from Hae-Won's body to the island landscape, visually re-establishes her connection to the physical and symbolic roots of her Korean womanhood.

Bedevilled's representation of the comfort women issue is as much about how the victims of gendered violence, historical or contemporary, are remembered. This is where *Bedevilled* offers something that prior cinematic representations have failed to offer. No closure or re-incorporation into the symbology of nationalism, but a visceral representation of suffering where retribution is at least symbolically possible. Although *Bedevilled* redeploys portrayals of the impaired Korean colonial-era bodies, which Kyung-Hyun Kim has suggested were first used during the 1920s and 1930s as an "unambiguous colonial allegory (in Na Un-Gyu's *Arirang*)," it does so with the ethics of spectatorship in mind. The violence visited upon the national bodies in *Bedevilled* represents a ressentiment and is used to shock contemporary viewers "whose rampant collective amnesia is a symptom of late-capitalism" (Kyung-

Hyun Kim *Remasculinization* 59-60). As a film that deals with memory—specifically the remembrance of gendered violence—this rape-revenge film blends individual and collective memory, creating surprising resonance, between the victims of colonial sexual labor and the spectatorship of an audience primed to witness the punishment of the sexual exploiters of coloniality.

2.10 Conclusion

The interrelated nature of the lingering gendered historical traumas manifested in *Bedevilled* share between them a national significance associated with collective memory and nationalist narrations. With no formal resolution in sight, the effects of the Dokdo and comfort woman issues on the post-colonial present have moved beyond the realities of history and have been subsumed into the greater symbolic national consciousness of identity. And while the traumatic events outlined in this chapter have a long history of incorporation into national memory, there has been a contemporary shift in cinematic attempts to engage with such complex issues which appeal to a cosmopolitan sympathy that ultimately offers little or no catharsis. The open ending offered by the history of the comfort women and Dokdo will ensure that both survive as manifestations of a national story of suffering and victimization at the hands of foreign aggressors, while the tropes perpetuating these representational violations continue to appropriate historical trauma as an exercise of the power of nationalist symbolism. *Bedevilled* exposes both the sexual and territorial anxieties underlying the process of modernization and internationalization leftover from the psychological and representational residue of Japanese Imperialism.

Representationally, when read as a critique of that collective cultural memory manifested in *Arirang* (1926), *Bedevilled* cuts to the genesis of "how a social group … constructs a past through a process of invention and appropriation and what it means to the relationship of power within society" (Confino 31). The imprints of how historical events work within the national memory-scape can be found in *Bedevilled*'s symbolism and allegorical representations equating female sexuality with the sanctity of nature and rurality. In the case of *Bedevilled,* the historical accuracy of how events are represented is less important than how they work in historical memory and how those events continue to echo decades or centuries later. The lack of clear historical finality is, I think, an essential part of reading *Bedevilled* as a film dealing with how *events* and *places* are situated within national memory and similarly how a film can, intentionally or not, reflect the sentiment surrounding a particularly violent historical event. Through the transferring of the visceral elements of trauma to confront melodramatized and innocuous depictions of sexual violence, *Bedevilled* offers a brutal and cathartic response to the history of normalized representations of sexual violence set in motion under colonialism. In doing so, the film uses rape-revenge iconography found in an early, foundational portrayal of rape in Korean cinema and one tied to the collective memory of colonial resistance, to excise a malignant cinematic tradition of substituting territorial with sexual violation.

Chapter 3 *Moss* (2010): Modernization and the Spatial Manifestations of Korean Authoritarianism

3.1 Introduction

In the face of growing economic and social instability in the decade following the Korean War (1950-1953), the Korean military seized governmental power in 1961, effectively ending any pretext of democracy in South Korea. Although many democratic trappings like free elections would remain in place, largely at the behest of the United States, a series of authoritarian military regimes would govern Korea for more than thirty years. It was under this rule that Korea's economic miracle took shape. This imposed and often painful process included efforts to forcefully modernize and commercialize agricultural production and improve the growing disparity in standard of living between Korea's rapidly modernizing urban centers and small villages mired in poverty. In the most aggressive of these measures, Park Chung-Hee launched the *Saemaul Undong* (The New Village Movement) on April 22nd, 1970, to forcefully modernize the South Korean countryside. It was an initiative designed to transform the rural economy, recast the landscape, and reshape the hearts and minds of rural Koreans as modern participants in the nation's development. Though hailed as a great economic success by force in the 1970s, *Saemaul Undong* meetings were often used to identify political dissidents and reinforce dedication to Park's military regime (Seo JungMin 62). Later revealed by the Presidential Truth Commission, that it was commonplace for KCIA (The Korean Central Intelligence Agency) to kidnap, surveil, incarcerate or even murder individuals expressing anti-government beliefs during the period of the *Saemaul Undong* (*Korea Week* May 10, 1977, p. 2), (C.I. Eugene Kim 363–378). It was during the latter half of the 1970s that the *Saemaul Undong* lost momentum in part due to the unexpected assassination of Park Chung-Hee in 1979.

In Korean cinema, the period of developmental authoritarianism is often set against the backdrop of the countryside that it aimed to transform. This tension is found throughout Korean cinema's new wave and national cinema alike, though its representations are varied. In *Memories of Murder* (*Salinui Chueok*, Bong Joon-Ho, 2003), the backdrop of Korea in 1986 during the nation's final authoritarian regime and a transforming Korean society compose the bureaucratic and cultural tumult of detectives hunting for a serial killer in the countryside. Alternatively, the symptoms of authoritarian governance are often addressed thematically; portrayed in the family structure by domineering fathers or father figures or represented within corporate bureaucracies caught in a cycle of coup and corruption, two historical motifs of Korea's 20th century. For example, *Sopyonje* (*Sopyonje*, Im Kwon Taek, 1993) is about a family of wandering traditional music performers and their generational family drama. The film tells the tale of an emasculated father who purposefully blinds his daughter to keep her from breaking free of the family and is allegorically set against the modernizing rural landscape of the 1960s.

Since the turn of the millennium, a number of films like *The President's Last Bang* (*Geudae Geu Saramdeul*, Im Sang-Soo, 2005) and *The Man Standing Next* (*Namsanui Bujangdeul*, Woo Min-Ho, 2020) directly address the authoritarian period. However, the symptoms of Korean authoritarianism continue to be symbolically portrayed through the misogyny, gendered violence, and trauma of men caught in the struggle between tradition, modernization, and democratization. In contemporary Korean horror films like *The Call* (*Kol*, Lee Chung Hyun, 2020), *The Wailing* (*Gokseong*, Na Hong-Jin, 2015), *The Piper* (*Sonnim*, Kim Gwang-Tae, 2015), *Bedevilled* (*Kim Bok-nam Salinsageonui Jeonmal,* Jang Cheol-Su, 2010), *Black House* (*Geomeun Jib*, Terra Shin, 2007), *A Bloody Aria* (*Guta Yubaljadeul*, Won Shin-Yun, 2006), and *To Catch a Virgin Ghost* (*Cheongchun Hakdang*, Shin Jeong-Won, 2004), male authority assumes different guises, but to the same ends. Corrupt police, murdered or absent fathers, abusive or rapacious husbands, amoral religious authority figures, and iron-handed village chiefs are able to exercise their power because of the conditions of their isolation and the means by which they control. However, in these films, hypermasculine authority becomes destabilized with the arrival of a contemporary urban traveler to the countryside. The figure returns to the countryside in search of knowledge about their past which unexpectedly exposes misdeeds that undermine the androcentric governance of the village. Inevitably, this clash of the contemporary search for truth and the veil of secrecy shrouding it creates conflict and extreme violence. Not coincidentally, the buried histories of these narratives often take place during Korea's modernization under the authoritarian regimes of Rhee Syng-Man (1948-1960), Park Chung-Hee (1962-1979), and Chun Doo-Hwan (1981-1988).

This chapter focuses on *Moss* (*Iggi*, Kang Woo-Suk, 2010), as a film that vividly depicts the traces of lingering social and political traumas resulting from Korea's authoritarian developmental period (1961-1988). Building from my analysis in the previous chapter, I draw foundational parallels regarding gender, landscape, and economy, linking Carol Clover's concept of *urbanoia* with Korea's authoritarian developmental process. The representations of isolated and developmentally-Othered rural communities in *Moss* embody traditional Korean culture, communalism, village organization, and socio-political hierarchy. However, these aspects undergo grotesque transformations due to the influences of western masculine capitalism and Confucian androcentric governance during the authoritarian era. In my analysis, this portrayal comes to life through *Moss'* interplay of spatial and thematic traces found in the village's surrounding landscape, its architecture, and layout. These spatial and thematic traces are amplified through the village's palimpsestic qualities, reflecting the hetero-temporal nature of Korean cinema's countryside. My reading of *Moss* addresses key research questions concerning the friction between authoritarian developmentalism and the countryside as a vehicle for horror. How do memories of the authoritarian developmental period shape the representation of rural communities it sought to transform? How do Korean backwoods horror films contribute to the broader discourse on the cultural and political legacies of Korea's authoritarian era and its implications for contemporary society? Unlike the Japanese colonial period, the broader and highly varied cultural memories associated with the authoritarian developmental period. Despite its

demonstrably repressive milieu, there exists modern nostalgia for the economic boom and democratic bust periods for the two decades of dictatorship under Park Chung-Hee, a condition termed “Park Chung-Hee Syndrome” (Cansfield 1). The developmental mindset and gendered hierarchical identity constructs of the Park era continue to be influential, especially among the rural elderly. In contemporary Korean society, there exists a resurgence of the political conservatism, nationalistic ideals, and developmentalism ethos that characterized the 1960s. Given this resurgence, it becomes imperative to undertake a critical reassessment of the Park Chung-Hee regime and gain deeper insights into its underlying dynamics, how it is remembered and portrayed, and examine its transformative power over how the countryside is experienced and perceived.

3.2 *Moss*: Authoritarian Backwoods Horror

Moss is a backwoods horror film nominated for best film and winner of best director at the Grand Bell Awards and the Blue Dragon Film Awards in 2010. Despite its critical domestic success, the film was released theatrically in only one other film market (Taiwan), grossing a respectable, if unextraordinary, total box office of 22 million USD (Box Office Mojo).

Based on the popular webtoon of the same title by Yoon Tae-Ho, *Moss* is a film told in two historically specific timelines, the late 1970s which takes place during the years of the *Saemaul Undong*, and the late 2000s during a period of historical re-examination under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was founded in 2005 to investigate numerous atrocities committed by various government agencies during Japan's occupation of Korea, the Korean War, and the authoritarian governments that ruled afterwards (a body that will be discussed further in chapter 5 of this thesis). The former timeline tells the story of a corrupt police officer named Chun and his torture and subsequent extortion and exploitation of a street preacher named Ryu Mok-Hyeon. Using Ryu’s religious influence and procured tithings, Chun amasses a group of criminals to extort, threaten, assault and even murder those who stand in his way. Chun’s authoritarian-like position is further deepened through his real estate extortion and fraud scheme, which has allowed him to assume control of the community. In a righteous exertion of power, Chun comes to know a young woman, Young-Ji, whose loyalty he earns by brutalizing three men who had raped her. The latter storyline revolves around a young man, Hae-Guk, who receives a mysterious phone call alerting him to the untimely death of his religiously fervent and estranged father, the street preacher Ryu Mok-Hyeon. Hae-Guk visits the remote village his father once founded with his associate Chun. Hae-Guk delves deeper into the mystery surrounding his father’s death with the help of an old friend and now a prosecutor in the region, Park. Hae-Guk’s increasingly precarious position as an outsider threatening to expose the misdeeds of village Chief Chun and his eccentric cohort of former criminals leads to murder attempts and deception. The depths of depravity the villagers are willing to navigate to maintain the power and wealth of the chief become clearer the nearer Hae-Guk comes to the truth of his father’s demise. The film ends with a village raid by Prosecutor Park and the police, leading to Chun’s suicide. Young-Ji is left to fill the power vacuum left by Chun’s death. Months later, Hae-Guk returns to the village, only

to realize the mysterious phone call that triggered the events of the film came from Young-Ji and that his investigation that led to the indictment of Chun was her orchestration.

In *Moss,* the rugged mountain landscapes give rise to an enclosed and inescapable ecosystem of violence, evoking memories of eerie backwoods horror films and traditional gothic settings. I use the term “hillbilly” or backwoods horror film to describe the horror film subgenre described by Carol Clover and Anthony Harkins as films in which an urbanite or family leaves the city for the hinterlands and encounters a very specific iteration of the rural Other. Traditionally in the American version of this conflict the “hillbilly” is “a modular cultural signifier: a vaguely white cultural "other" that includes white trash, rednecks, … etc” (Harkins 5). However, Harkins also notes that the “hillbilly inhabits any rural area at the fringes of civilization, regardless of its specific region” that is created and “mythical, geographically ambiguous place… on the rough edges of the landscape and the economy"(5). Delving into the geographical intricacies, context, and subtleties of this landscape allows viewers to grasp the profound influence of conceptions of rurality that are reflected upon and commented upon in backwoods horror.

The hostile rural environments in *Moss* evoke a sense of *topophobia*, inducing anxiety and depression as people experience these spaces, places, and landscapes (Relph 27). This emotional response arises from the conflicting sensations of perceiving these spaces as both idyllic and regressive, a concept cultural geographer John Wylie aptly describes as "landscape is tension" (1). Moreover, I find that *Moss* intimately ties contemporary rural settings with the haunting specters of authoritarianism, forming the foundation of my interpretation. Within this framework, the portrayal of the authoritarian period sheds light on the psycho-sexual effects of the post-colonial Korean subject. The unresolved trauma of colonialism in Korea often manifests in characters exhibiting "underlying perverse desires in the psyche of the postcolonial Korean subject" (An, *Parameters* 124). These desires involve extreme violence, the reestablishment of shattered patriarchy through domination, and rape as an allegory for the reclamation of masculinity and nationhood. As a further extension, the nationalist narratives in *Moss* displace colonial settings, while still favoring those that emphasize "Korean hyper-masculinity and vigilance about female chastity" (Choi and Kim 4), both of which serve as foundational themes in this chapter.

3.3 Historical and Representational Contexts

Before I begin my analysis of *Moss*, it is necessary to provide more historical context for the issues the film raises. Academic and historical perspectives of Korea's authoritarian developmental period are as varied as they are numerous, however, its role in shaping the nation's transformational 20th century is undeniable. The name most-closely associated with Korea’s modernization is Park Chung-Hee, who with his military coup of 1961, sought to counter the pattern of symbolic national emasculation represented by Japanese colonization, colonial economic and systemic exploitation, and war victimization. By blending Western masculinist capitalism and Confucian parental governance, Park

fashioned a brand of authoritarianism that exuded a hypermasculine developmentalism that "assumes all the rights and privileges of classical Confucian patriarchy for the state while assigning to society the characteristics of classical Confucian womanhood: diligence, discipline, and deference" (Han and Ling 1). This gendered positioning of authority is a recurring theme throughout this thesis, particularly in discussions of Korea's modernization where the countryside is more than just an unchanging placeholder of the past. Seungsook Moon and Chungmoo Choi have each written extensively about the androcentric position of Korean political and cultural authority and the Korean state as "a major agent of industrialization since the early 1960s [that] has tried to utilize nationalism as a way to legitimize repression and exploitation of the populace throughout the process" (Moon 33). In this process space, gender, tradition, modernity, education, sexuality, and ethics intertwine to construct an "official nationalism" (33) for a "timeless Korean nation" (34) that blends the past and present as an eternal reality.

According to the masculine nationalism apparent in Korea's modernization process, the countryside and those who call it home embody the feminine or less developed characteristics of society while the city assumes the active masculine traits. Park Chung-Hee recognized that the widening economic disparity between rural areas and urban centers could hinder the growth of the manufacturing sector and undermine the legitimacy of the military regime. On April 22nd, 1970, Park Chung-Hee instituted his most prominent and transformational development plan: the New Village Movement (*Saemaul Undong*). Through the regional New Village Movement administrators, the government injected financial aid and tasked technical experts with rural projects intended to increase agricultural and industrial development based on two objectives: "to improve the physical environment of villages and to increase rural income" (Ho 652). The forceful insertion of industrial practices–often anti-traditional in ideology—in the rural agricultural sector of the economy was imposed as a means to "advance national solidarity by eliminating the cultural imbalances between the urban and rural communities" (Nemeth 91). Rural communities lagged behind in developing at the same pace and with the same zeal as the major cities like Seoul and Busan, which were:

> Moving ahead at a dizzying pace . . . the countryside was still sunk in lethargy, passivity and even cynicism. Rural people were straggling behind their urban brethren. Something had to be done to correct the situation. The farmer had to be awakened (Nemeth 91).

The government defined the New Village Movement as a movement "crossing social, regional, class, and temporal boundaries and as an education project for the whole people of South Korea to revolutionize their consciousness" (Hwang Byeong-Ju 16). The essential component of this revolution was the transformation of an individual from the "pre-modern" being of the "era of poverty" to a new "modern" person (Hwang Byeong-Ju 16). However reluctant, the communities included in the New Village Movement were also tasked with more daunting re-education goals related to becoming more westernized and rational thinkers to increase their productive potential. According to John Lie, "Authoritarianism reigned in Saemaul (New Village Movement) projects" (110). New Village

Movement meetings outed noncompliant villagers as communist, and as I will discuss in the next chapter, operated as a forum for stamping out Korean shamanism as a backward and pre-modern practice. That being said, the initial success of the New Community Movement was largely due to forced compliance through fear, and its economic and cultural successes would later inspire lofty goals for expanding the New Village Movement into the shanty towns in and around major cities. However, in the 1980s, the movement had become so bogged down in a morass of corruption that it was disbanded (Chung and Vreeck 276).

In Kyung-Hyun Kim's analysis of localized "repressed historicity" (*Hallyu* 84) at work in cinematic depictions of Korea's authoritarian period, he states that a common practice of films depicting Park Chung-Hee is that they are "not motivated by a desire to faithfully reproduce historical landscapes and figures" (85). Instead, cinematic representations of the authoritarian period use a postmodern approach by utilizing elements of the time period and historical figures to create a tension between what they see on screen and their historical memory (85). While Kim's focus was on the conflicting depictions of Park Chung-Hee in recent comedic cinema and national memory, my analysis of *Moss* as a film is an attempt to elicit a similar effect about expressing a grotesque continuation of the Park era in backwoods horror. The film depicts an exaggerated fictionalization of the concentration of Korean authoritarian power within the countryside, playing on the most extreme associations of Park's historical legacy: modernization, transformation, corruption, bureaucratic dictatorship, masculine Christian capitalism, corporal punishment, and his close connection to the countryside he sought to remake.

Park Chung-Hee's New Village Movement of the 1970s forever changed how the countryside was perceived within the nation. While the ends may have justified the means, the effects of compressed modernization under authoritarianism and their representation in cinema conjure feelings of uncanniness, as the completion of the transformation is never fully realized. No matter the level of progress, the margins of the modern can be pushed deeper and deeper into the mountainous landscape. Away from city lights and paved roads, the rural villages of Korean horror cinema portray the traumas of a not-fully-realized and perhaps unreasonable modernization process. *A Bloody Aria*, *The Piper*, *Black House,* and other rural horror films about villages and families under the domineering hand of corrupt and violent patriarchs are less about historical accuracy, as they are about appealing to the repressed historicity of an eternally liminal and not-yet-fully realized modern state.

3.4 Patriarchy Run Amok: The Gendered Discourse of Korea's Modernization.

Korea's authoritarian developmental period (roughly 1961-1979) as portrayed in *Moss* shares a number of important parallels with Carol Clover's concept of *urbanoia*; most notably androcentrism, sexual violence, and the countryside as a repository for the traumas of modernization and development Here I intend to build from the discussion of *urbanoia* in the introduction and *Bedevilled* sections of this thesis beyond the rape-revenge cycle, while still connecting the concept itself to the dynamics

between history and memory as it coalesces around the countryside. As the major focus of this chapter, *Moss'* portrayal of abusive gendered Confucian power systems is a major organizational element of the film that further speaks to Korea's cinematic fear of the pre-modern Other. While *Moss* may have more in common with western films like *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972) or even *Straw Dogs* (Sam Peckinpah, 1971) than *Bedevilled*, its emphasis on the exploitative nature of hierarchy and governance through fear and violence communicates a similar kind of backwoods horror. Like the rapacious, regressive, and violent men of Mudo, the predominantly male population of Majae-Ri similarly reflects a deeply misogynistic cultural neurosis stemming from decades of the conditions of Korea's colonization and subsequent paternal authoritarian governments.

This androcentric and brutal proclivity toward gendered violence and masculine dominance is discussed by Carol Clover as backwoods horror trope known as the "problem of patriarchy run amok" (125), which positions urban protagonists in a narrative of psychosexual victimization and revenge (164). In western backwoods horror, this masochistic scenario often justifies the annihilation of rural or native characters, evoking class guilt among city dwellers. A similar pattern emerges in *Moss* in the events of Ryu Hae-Guk's investigation into his father's murder; his position as an urban outsider establishes clear class distinctions between the victim and victimizers. One important difference is that the inequalities of class guilt translate temporally in *Moss*, in that clear distinctions are also made between the city as contemporary, and the countryside as firmly entrenched in the authoritarian past.

Moss begins with an unusually long 16-minute pre-title sequence seeded with elements of Korea's authoritarian past that takes place in the waning years of Park Chung-Hee's regime in 1978. A jeep drives down a wooded road to a prayer house where the female preacher speaks to a nearly empty room about Satan and evil always lurking nearby. Police detective Chun and the local minister walk through the forest. They talk of his shrinking congregation and come upon a group of worshippers listening intently to a quiet and calm man named Ryu Mok-Hyeon, who speaks of forgiveness and goodness. Chun asks if he would like Ryu to be locked away, and the minister confirms and then alludes to the very cheap land sale that Chun could procure as a bribe for his help. Ryu is initially incarcerated, but gradually Chun sees the value of Ryu's influence in his rise to power. Ryu is able to convert all the petty thugs in his cell block to Christianity. Chun recognizes the power of Ryu's faith, yet he believes Ryu must have an ulterior motive. In Chun's interrogation of Ryu, Ryu asks Chun for a favor, and it is here where Chun first encounters a young victim of sexual violence named Young-Ji. Chun is tasked with teaching her rapists a lesson. Chun, enacting his terrorizing and corrupt tendencies, rounds up Young-Ji's assailants, sexually degrades them by leading them to a bridge by their sexual organs, throws them in the river, and beats them mercilessly as Young-Ji watches on from the passenger seat of Chun's police car.

Moss' frequent incorporation of masculine sexualized violence achieves two things. It creates a thematic and symbolic link to the era of Korean dictatorships. Additionally, it emphasizes a psychological connection with the patriarchal sexual violence portrayed in the films that explore

repressive state violence. The portrayal of the Korean male subject as emasculated can be attributed to the enduring effects of decades of colonial and authoritarian subjugation, ultimately leading to a reshaping of identity influenced by Park's reimagining of the masculine Korean subject. The discussion on gendered nationalism and the crisis of masculinity in the first chapter of this thesis serves as a foundation for understanding the rise to power of figures like Chun and the subsequent violent wielding of that power. Such actions are fundamentally rooted in and expressive of the androcentric and paternal power structures associated with the brand of nationalism adopted by Korean authoritarian leadership. While nationalism itself is not exclusive to Korean culture, more European focused scholars such as George Mosse in *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* and Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* each argue to a similar conclusion, that nationalism inherently embodies a masculine discourse *par excellence*.

However, what sets Korea apart is its unique historical relationship with colonialism, war, decolonization, and rapid modernization under authoritarian rule. This confluence of culturally and historically interdependent circumstances has given rise to a distinct intermingling at the nexus of gender and power. The recurrent theme of masculine sexualized violence serves as a reflection of the broader struggles faced by the Korean male subject in grappling with their identity amidst the lingering impact of past oppressions and the pervasive influence of nationalist constructs. The representations of violence by authoritarian leaders like Chun are deeply embedded in the patriarchal structures that have shaped the nation's history. To truly comprehend the complexities of this subject, it is essential to delve into the intricate relationship between power, gender, and national identity within the context of Korea's tumultuous past. This allows us to better understand *Moss'* artistic portrayal and also reveals how broader cultural and historical forces still influence representations of Korean power, gender, and cultural structures today.

Between the end of World War II and the start of the Korean War (1950-1953), the Korean people were aware of exploitation by outside powers. They had "traded Japanese colonization (1910-1945) for post-war American paternalism" and status as a satellite state in the cold war (Lewis 138). Korea's first democratically elected president, US-backed Rhee Syng-Man, followed by twelve years (1948-1960) of more of the same: authoritarianism, limited economic development, and suppression of political opposition. After his consolidation of power, Rhee's failure to move Korea from third-world economic status and growing public unrest led to his resignation and exile during the April Revolution of 1960. The effects of a half-century of subjugation and torment can be found in *Moss* and literature of the set during the same period. According to Kim Chong-Un and Kyung-Hyun Kim, respectively, men in post-war Korean literature and cinema were overwhelmingly portrayed as the "walking wounded"; his body and soul "deprive[d], distort[ed], destroy[ed], and... pulverize[d]" (Kim Chong-Un 13) by the war, the walking wounded passed through life as victims of history.

Park Chung-Hee sought to first exploit for political power and later stamp out under re-education and re-acculturation, and the villagers of *Moss* assume the guise of the disjointed masculine undercurrent. Not only are Ha, Kim, and Jeon representative of the rural poor, but they also are men broken by the cycle of androcentric control, damaged by the masculine ideals of the post-colonial Korean subject. Chun, Ha, Kim, and Jeon represent the conditions of their time period. These psychologically damaged men, in many ways, embody the return of the repressed that is conventionally found in the thematic universe of horror. Chun's henchmen are the monstrous Others in a horror film that signify the combined projection of repressed desire and the contradictions derived from it. In Korean rural horror, the recurring theme revolves around these downtrodden rural characters, often damaged men, who are constantly teetering on the edge of violent outbursts. This stems from their struggle to reconcile their present-day existence with their historical roots. These characters adhere to static and stereotypical representations of sexually violent males expressing their repressed masculinity. In the case of Chun and his henchmen, they embody an exaggerated manifestation of masculinity common to portrayals of Korean males during the authoritarian era.

Depictions of repression and masculinity on edge were a common theme in the "New Korean Cinema" period in the decade following Korea's transition to democracy which saw filmmakers like Chung Ji-young, Kim Hong-joon, Jang Sun-Woo come to the vanguard. Some of the best examples of post-authoritarian portrayals of masculinity come from Park Kwang-Su. Park took advantage of the post-authoritarian relaxing of censorship laws, creating films rife with authoritarian imagery. *The Uprising* (*Lee Jae-sueui nan*, 1999), and *Chilsu and Mansu* (*Chilsu-wa Mansu*, 1988), each portray the struggles against authority traditionally censored during Korea's authoritarian regimes. Park's *Black Republic* (*Geudeuldo uricheoreom*, 1990) is one particularly cogent example that takes place during the same time period as *Moss*. *Black Republic* takes place soon after the brutal suppression of the Gwangju Uprising in 1980, a student activist on the wanted list hides out in a dying mining town near the North Korean border. The film features a similar line-up of hard luck characters; a prostitute with a heart of gold, and a nepotistical thug who controls the town's wealth through a mining operation. Caught in the middle, the film's protagonist, an anti-authoritarian student activist on the run for leading demonstrations against the government, has his identity exposed, and witnesses the brutality of unchecked authority.

In *Moss*, Chun and Ryu's band of 'reformed' criminals and henchmen display what Park Chung-Hee might call the rural mindset, which is the same mindset that Park sought to reshape under his modernization policies. Park himself wrote extensively about the premodern era's evil vestiges, which he believed continued to haunt and self-handicap the Korean people (Park Chung-Hee, "Build" 58). Paramount to his reshaping of the Korean rural subject was the dismantling of regional and local tribalism and the need to develop a more nationalistic— and by definition, masculine—frame of mind. These men have effectively created "small state[s] within the state" and fostered "a narrow family and caste consciousness" (59), as a form of privilege consciousness. Park viewed this as an indication and deciding factor in his belief that the Korean people were not only economically impoverished but also

mentally backward, describing them as " extremely lacking in originality and initiative… timorous… weak of resolve," and having "a sense of futility and of living for the moment" (59-60). According to Park, this is why Koreans were culturally predisposed to authoritarianism and explains why "the spirit of popular resistance to authoritarianism was totally nonexistent" (60).

3.5 Urbanoia and Masculinity

Building upon my previous chapter's examination of violent and misogynistic male characters in *Bedevilled*, I further delve into the authoritarian impulse driving these characters. In this context, I draw upon Carol Clover's concept of *urbanoia*, which I have already brought into the discussion of this section, as well as Kaja Silverman's notion of 'masculinity in crisis.' Silverman, in her work *Male Subjectivity at the Margins,* elucidates the psychoanalytic link between this crisis of masculinity and historical trauma. Certain historical events can lead to a "psychoanalytically specific disruption with ramifications extending far beyond the individual psyche" (Kaja Silverman 54). This disruption can prompt a temporary withdrawal from the collective beliefs and assumptions, the so-called “dominant fictions” (54) that govern social formations. In the Korean context, Confucianism and authoritarianism represent distinct social formations and serve as ideological systems through which the normative subject constructs its “imaginary relation to the Symbolic order” (54). The structures of hierarchical life and of the family and nation are portrayed as agonizing and nightmarish, shaped by gender dynamics contorted under the weight of national violations and traumas. Korea’s historical traumas have profoundly impacted depictions of gender relations, particularly prevalent in melodrama.

Consequently, the weight of national traumas undermines the power and authority traditionally bestowed upon South Korean men under Confucianism and the patriarchal social order of androcentric capitalism, resulting in a profound crisis of masculinity. This crisis finds embodiment in rural men, who are often deemed savage and regressive, seemingly colonized once more by their own government. The portrayal of these men in *Moss* reflects the profound impact of historical trauma on the collective psyche, exposing the tensions and contradictions within the construct of masculinity under the shadow of authoritarianism and its traumatic aftermath. In the Korean context, these men are indicative of what Kyung-Hyun Kim asserts is a “wrecked and disordered… male subjectivity after the Korean War, the subsequent division, and the continuing legacy of colonialism through a military dictatorship” (*Remasculinization* 11). What Kim calls the male lack “was located in every field imaginable; of the accouterments of power in sexual potency, paternal authority, communal function, historical legitimacy, and professional worth” (11–12). Fathers, as stand-ins for authority, appear as victims of their military and economic mobilization by the nation and patriarchy.

The violence resulting from the associated national trauma is “transferred to their sons and is eventually consolidated into a prevailing masculine narrative. Likewise, fathers’ masculinity and the nation itself are complementary and mutually guaranteeing” (Gu 86). Paternal generational relationships play out both in the relationship between Chun and his police officer son and also in Ryu

Mok-Hyeong and his son Hae-Guk. However, Chun and Ryu, as two sides of the same paternal coin, symbolize something deeper related to the masculine power structures of traditional Confucian hierarchy. Their ability to assemble a group of young criminal cast-offs to start a new community and Chun's ability to control and manipulate through the demand of absolute loyalty portrays a deeper Confucian quality of camaraderie and belonging. In Elaine H. Kim's examination of Korean constructions of women, gender, and masculinity, she similarly connects the societal homosocial ideologies of Confucianism to the power structures in the Korean economy and politics. Kim writes:

> The traditional Confucian virtue of loyalty between male friends seems to have been reformulated for the modernization of South Korea, which has been built on interlocking relations between the military, government, and industry—all hierarchies run by networks of tightly bonded men. No matter what their age, the middle-class and wealthy men … particularly emphasized the importance of male friendship, by which they also meant male networks and connections that were concomitant with the debasement of women (75).

The backstory of rape, forced prostitution, and the murder of women by Chun's village comrades emphasizes their status as projections of both Korean masculinity in crisis and sexually violent backwoods monsters. Most indicative of the androcentric abuses of power found in the film are the sketchy backgrounds of Chun's henchman. In particular, Ha Sung-Gyu's past as a bar and brothel operator on Walsan Island and his murder of trafficked sex workers to the island by burning them alive in their cells illustrates the deeply misogynistic backdrop of gendered violence portrayed in the film. When the film cuts to the backstories of Chun's thugs, it reinforces the bonds of gendered violence and economic strain at work in the psyche of these severely damaged and broken men. In particular, Ha's confinement of bar hostesses that double as sex workers in cells and his willingness to let them die in the fire rather than allow them to leave the burning building and risk them escaping their chains paints a picture of gendered cruelty that only emphasizes the interplay of male dominance and female destruction that compose the film.

When examining the recurring themes of violence, masculinity, and power dynamics present in both the authoritarian impulse depicted in *Moss* and the dysfunction of the developmental state, it becomes evident that these are intertwined with economic motivations and broader societal struggles. Here I return to Clover's analysis of the clash between city and country in urbanoid western backwoods horror films and their shared visual and thematic vocabulary with the dysfunction of the authoritarian developmental state in Korea. Park Chung-Hee's fervent focus on rural development reflects anxieties and economic factors analogous to Clover's concept of *urbanoia*, wherein urban and rural tensions intertwine with economic interests. As Clover highlights, economic tensions and class confrontations underpin the guilt felt by urbanites in their interactions with rural counterparts, metaphorically characterizing the city as a rapist of the country (129). In *Moss*, the metaphorical rape of the countryside by the city portrays many of the negative impacts of Park Chung-Hee's New Village Movement. Forced land consolidation, displaced farmers, and the concentration of economic and

political power and resources in the hands of a few chaebols (family-owned companies) are all elements of *Moss* that parallel the shifting economic balance that resulted from the New Village Movement. Through the exploitation of his inner circle of damaged rural men, Chun accumulates land and constructs an insular society reflective of the most damaging aspects of Korea's authoritarian hierarchy and androcentric structure, fortified by an organization of power befitting a dictator. This system maintains its authority through the threat of violence, with both the police and criminals operating indistinguishably.

In "Scream and Scream Again: Korean Modernity as a House of Horrors in the Films of Kim Ki-young." Chris Berry explains why the horror genre is an "appropriate genre" to explore Korea's punishing and traumatic modernization process. In Korea modernity and capitalism were not developed by the "emergent middle classes against the state and the monarchy," rather it was "state… directed, organized, led, and if necessary forced the middle classes into rapid industrialization and modernization" under Park Chung-hee (Berry 108). He goes on to state that:

> Although modernization promised the middle class material wealth and power on a national scale—making it highly desired—it also turned its would-be-beneficiaries into pawns who lost their agency and individual autonomy in the process. If certain families prospered running what became the enormous corporations known as chaebol, they did so at the pleasure of Park's regime and certainly not by fighting it. The fact that rapid modernization in South Korea under Park Chung-hee was accompanied by the turn away from rather than toward both democracy and the free market is emblematic of this very different experience. (Berry 108).

In using the countryside in *Moss* as a canvas to explore the complexities of Korean society's journey towards progress, the film also reflects tensions between the modern struggle and historical and cultural legacies of the period. The version of unfettered patriarchal Confucian exploitation and regressive rurality that emerges in 1978 persists through the more contemporary 2009 timeline and depicts how little has changed in the thirty-one years between the founding of Majae-ri and the events surrounding Hae-Guk's investigation of his father's death. The violent and exploitative ecosystem of control has festered and become unsustainable over time, and its continuation sheds light on the persisting struggles of Korean society still grappling with the complex interplay between modernization, tradition, and the abuse of power. In *Moss*, the landscape embodies the authoritarian strain running through much of Korea's historical trauma, economic development, and contemporary patriarchal structures. By exploring the dynamics of rural exploitation and the consequences of unchecked power, the film serves as a reflection of Korea's historical journey and societal challenges. The interconnectedness of these themes makes *Moss* a complex exploration of the country's identity and its ongoing struggle to reconcile its past with the present.

3.6 1978 and 2010: Traces and Repetitions.

In the previous chapter of this thesis, I refer to the assertions of Kim Soyoung, Choi Chungmoo, Elaine H. Kim, and Jinsoo An regarding the colonial period in Korean cinema, depicting it as a truncated chronology, separated from the linear national history. While much of the previous chapter's analysis applies to *Moss*, particularly the *palimpsestic* nature of time and space, the manifestation of authoritarianism, and its lingering effects differ. Carter J. Eckert even draws parallels between Korea's authoritarian period and the traumas experienced during Japanese colonialism, notably under the influence of Park Chung-Hee, a devout Japanophile and graduate of the Japanese military academy, whose developmental dictatorship was heavily influenced by Japanese militarism (1-2). This addendum aims to further explore the dislocated temporally *palimpsestic* qualities of the Korean countryside in horror cinema by incorporating the authoritarian developmental period.

As a film dealing with two timelines, each emphasizing an unchanging countryside, *Moss* allows me to build from the spatio-temporal critique of the previous chapter of this thesis regarding the layering of chronology. To briefly summarize, Bliss Cua Lim argues that in horror, the effect of the layering of chronology means “homogeneous time translates disparate, non-coinciding temporalities into its own secular code because the persistence of supernaturalism often insinuates the limits of disenchanted chronology” (13). She refers to traces of untranslatable temporal otherness in fantastical and supernatural horror films as “immiscible times" (13). For Lim, these multiple times never quite merge into the code of modern time consciousness, and therefore never quite dissolve or “attain homogeneity” (13) with the uniform chronological present. In *Bedevilled*, I examined the inability to reconcile these disparate temporalities into a single chronology through the use of flashbacks, which are used to connect the island space to individual and cultural memory. In *Moss,* the flashback is replaced by a parallel story structure that speaks to a more historical and less subjective conceptualization connecting the present to the past.

Majae-ri is an intermediary space; it is not a real place but rather one composed of the historical traumas of rural modernization. Most prominent is its anachronistic structures and unaltered existence between linear time periods, which are emphasized by the film’s parallel narrative structure that highlights the overlapping nature of the past and present. Like Hae-Won in *Bedevilled*, Hae-Guk is a contemporary urbanite with one key difference as it relates to their relationship with the countryside as a register for memory and the traumas of the past. Hae-Won's experience of the island as an adult is translated through her repressed memories of having lived on Mudo as a child. Her visit to Mudo is not a transgression of boundaries, rather, it is a return to her ancestral roots, childhood memories, and a connection to the traditional culture from which she has disconnected entirely. Her re-experience of personal and collective memory, uniting her past and Bok-Nam’s present with the sexual violence of Japanese colonialism. Hae-Guk, on the other hand, goes to an isolated village where he has never been; the locals and the environment are alien, and his only personal connection is to investigate his

father's death. From Hae-Guk's perspective, the past events in Majae-ri are merely tangentially related to personal history and even less so to personal memory.

In *Moss*, the city is a backdrop for Hae-Guk's investigation, shown in a few brief moments of Chun and Ha visiting banks and Ryu Hae-Guk visiting a local district office for a document about land ownership. The almost complete absence of any modern urban setting along with its investigative plot line asserts the film's focus on the past as something to be dug into. This is in line with Jinsoo An's observation that against the backdrop of "the historical unconscious of South Korean films, the retrospective tendency of horror and revenge films offers exceptional instances for the investigation of history and memory" (*Parameters* 109). It is interesting to note that Hae-Guk's pursuit of the truth is not only for personal satisfaction or justice for his father's murder. Rather, it is connected to a more expansive investigation into the finances, property, and corruption of Chun. The film's generation-spanning story and exploration of history's authoritarian horrors suggests it is not merely that authoritarianism *occurred* in the Korea of the past, but rather, continues to occur as part of the linear temporality essential to any nationalist narratives of history.

Here I turn to Max Silverman, who, in his book *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*, introduces the concept of *concentrationary memory* as a specific form of memory that pertains to the contemporary recurrence of totalitarian traces of the past, as a part of what he describes as the "concentrationary universe." The term "concentrationary" is derived from concentration camps and encompasses not only the physical sites of internment but also the broader social, political, and psychological aspects associated with such institutions. To return to the previously discussed political aesthetic of defamiliarization from the previous chapters, concentrationary memory is "indicative of a society in which thought is deadened, action is programmed, and there is no vigilant anxiety about or active resistance to the absolute corrosion of human singularity and human rights" (Pollock and Silverman 3). This concept is not limited to Nazi Germany, but rather as a more widely applicable "instrument of a totalitarian, anti-democratic political regime[s]" (Pollock and Silverman 3), of which any of Korea's authoritarian regimes would qualify.

Moss begins in 1978, a year of political turmoil and unrest, and just one year before the assassination of then-South Korean president Park Chung-Hee brought a heightened hope for democracy that provoked countermeasures of authoritarianism. With a story spanning some thirty years, *Moss* portrays the same kind of authoritarian impulses of control, violence, and suppression of individual freedoms from which concentrationary memory is created. The film's story coincides with Korea's authoritarian period following Park Chung-Hee's 1961 military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government that was itself roughly three decades long (1988). It is the milieu of authoritarian themes and its use across temporal registers that creates Ma-JaeRi as neither wholly the past nor the present. Instead, Majae-ri "refuses boundaries that enclose the past as an event of history; it speaks, instead, of leakage and contamination to which the present must become alert" (Pollock and Silverman 4). This is

significant in my analysis of the countryside as an authoritarian ecosystem, embodying the natural symbolism of Confucian art merged with the authoritarian developmental period because it is a temporal blending of the symbols of power.

The film presents a traumatic modernization of Korea's countryside, with past and present timelines haunted by the same "traces" and "repetitions" of this transformation (Silverman 53). Concentrationary memory further describes the phenomenon as a palimpsestic memory composed of layers of repetitions and similarities across time, splitting the event between its presence in the here and now and its dispersed impact across overlapping sheets of time and space, neither "confined to a specific era nor a universal occurrence" (Max Silverman 54). Instead, concentrationary memory disrupts the notion of historical singularity, existing instead as an ever-present and indelible trace that permeates the contemporary world. Operating through defamiliarization techniques, this influences our perception of the present and impacts representations of the concentrationary experience in diverse realms such as politics, society, and culture. By understanding concentrationary memory in this way, we gain insight into its profound effects and its ability to shape our understanding of the past and present. *Moss* exhibits a number of palimpsestic characteristics, exemplifying how this memory persists and re-emerges, leaving an enduring impact.

In *Moss*, the perpetual insistence of the authoritarian past upon the present is found both in the distinct milieu of androcentric hierarchy and sexual violence perpetrated in the village. Lim invokes Frederic Jameson's assertion that "spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (and maybe even the future they offer to prophesy) is still very much alive and at work, within the living present: all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us" (Jameson, *Signatures* 38). The precariousness of not recognizing the present conditions as a product of the past is fundamental to how *Moss* portrays power and violence spanning generations. By exploring the conflicted processes of memory-making in post-dictatorship South Korea, *Moss* exposes the stark divide between those who lived through it and those born among the living ruins of it.

3.7 Disproportionate Landscapes: A Grotesque Confucian Hierarchy

Moss' overgrown and unordered natural landscape portrays a distorted version of foundational, hierarchical Confucian values which have been communicated for hundreds of years through painting and philosophical traditions. The mountainous landscapes and lush forests overwhelm many of the interior and exterior shots (*Figures 1 and 2*). Always in the background, the natural world in *Moss* symbolizes the natural ideological hierarchies found in the landscape painting of the predominantly Confucian societies of South Korea and China. In *Moss'* first scenes in the 2010 timeline, Prosecutor Park and Hae-Guk are having a phone conversation, when Park utters an important line of warning: "Live quietly… like the moss stuck under a rock." As the film title and its defining visual motif, the

moss is symbolic of the power embodied by the natural environment. In another reading of the same line, the moss is something that is always hidden under the surface, which one may not notice attached to the rock. Moss is natural and as a part of the natural environment, is indifferent, yet simply exists as it is. It grows, holding to the bottoms of stones, always present but never noticed. A final more visual reading, the trees, plants, and even the mountains themselves function as pictorial symbols of a natural order. As I will explain below, Confucian depictions of the natural world symbolize the deeply rooted tenets and natural hierarchical order of Confucianism itself: those between ruler and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend.

Just like the moss that lies on wet stones and under fallen branches, characters in the movie lie down and continuously take in the brutality of Chun in an effort to maintain a peaceful existence out of danger but also outside the warmth and light of the sun. Moss is natural part of the environment, it grows in dark recesses, holding to the bottoms of stones, always present but never noticed. A final more visual reading, the trees, plants, and even the mountains themselves function as pictorial symbols of a natural order. They are symbols of deeply rooted tenets of Confucian natural order. However, their abundance, as a dominating visual motif, communicates an unbalanced and un-tempered Confucian hierarchy. The mountainous landscapes and lush forests overwhelm many of the interior and exterior shots. (*see figure 3-1 below)* Always in the background, the natural world in *Moss* symbolizes the Confucianism's natural ideological hierarchies found in the landscape painting of the predominantly Confucian societies of South Korea and China. However, *Moss'* overgrown and unordered natural landscape portrays a distorted version of foundational, hierarchical Confucian values which have been communicated for hundreds of years through painting and philosophical traditions.

Figure 3-1: Two of the many instances where characters are surrounded by the forest and mountains; symbols of authoritarian control.

In order to explain how *Moss* distorts the visual symbolism connecting nature to Confucianism, I turn to Yang Sixue. Yang, drawing from the lineage connecting the Korean tradition of landscape painting to the art of landscape painting called Chinese Shin-sui, describes Korean landscape painting as possessing "a long-lasting power to abstract and summarize social and political ideology in a visual form (17). Depictions of the landscape, whether in painting, photography, or cinema, are never merely a simulation of nature, but rather they sublimate the "human senses of natural features like mountains and rivers into a political and philosophical conception" (7). In examining the landscape of *Moss* as, in

part, drawn from nature's ability to both reflect and influence human experience, I invoke W. J. T. Mitchell's thesis that "landscape is not a genre of art but a medium" (Mitchell 3) around which "social and subjective identities are formed" (1). In the case of *Moss*, Korea's mountainous and isolated landscape is complexly layered by the "natural, pictorial, symbolic, mythic, imagined, built, and so forth" (DeLue and Elkins 2). Therefore, the mountains express "artistic, social, economic, and political ends (some nefarious, some not)" (3). The fact that the landscape has remained largely unchanged over the 30 years between the film's timelines speaks to its connection to those who inhabit it and, more importantly, those who control it.

In the Chinese and Korean landscape painting traditions, "natural settings are laden with potency as places of physical refuse and as the repository of paradisiacal, sacral, and rustic values" and the "contemplation of nature to be the activity of sages" (Foong 1). The more general symbolism typically found in traditional Korean landscape painting illustrates a similar overall visual structure and communication of Confucian hierarchy embodied in nature. David E. James makes a similar connection when writes that "landscape is the core of pre-colonial Korean painting, and… [is] informed by the rigid sexual codes of Confucian patriarchy" (James 19). When proportioned and composed according to the Confucian symbols and ideology, traditional depictions of mountainous landscapes express foundational human social and political truths. Because they connect heaven and earth:

> Mountains are especially powerful focal points; divinities and immortals dwell there as do recluses and sages. In their bounty and mystery, mountains also have the power to fulfill wishes: they are places where boons are granted and spiritual nourishment is gained through transcendental experience. As sites emanating an aura of sacred power, the mountains are not only awesome but also terrifying" (Foong 1).

In the power they embody, the "Confucian notion of hierarchy is also apparent. It ensures that the mountains always appear in groups and that the central mountain is always the tallest, thus the most important" (Tian 12). Lee Hye Seung echoes the significance of height in her analysis of the Mountains as giving the impression of "strength and durability" (57). A lonely peak surrounded by a mountain range "symbolizes the power of sovereign authority over the subjects" (57).

In her book *The Efficacious Landscape: On the Authorities of Painting at the Northern Song Court*, art historian Foong Ping describes how the "harmonious order of nature reflects the harmonious order achieved by the emperor," as the ultimate example of filial Confucian leadership (Foong 9). In Foong's analysis, she examines Guo Xi (1000–1090), a seminal figure in the establishment of technique and symbolism adopted for hundreds of years in the East Asian landscape painting traditions. Guo's painting *Early Spring* (*Figure 3.2 on a later page*) is considered one of the great masterpieces of the Northern Song landscape painting. It is a monumental art piece that uses landscape as a poetic political metaphor. In Foong's analysis, she translates a passage from a treatise written by Guo Xi. Guo writes:

> A great mountain is dominating as master over the assembled hills. So it orders the ridges and peaks, forests and valleys by hierarchy, which are far or near, large or small in relation to its sovereignty. Its figuration (*xiang*) a great lord, glorious and facing south [as does the emperor on his throne. Even though a hundred nobles hasten to his court, the mountain is without an arrogant or capricious disposition. A tall pine stands erect as a model for all other trees. So it orders the vines and creepers, grasses, and trees by hierarchy, which stirred and aroused, lean and rely on its teaching. Its propensity (*shi*) is for composure like that of a gentleman in his prime. Even though a multitude of lesser men serve him. [the pine] is without an overbearing or despairing attitude (Foong 8-9).

According to Guo Xi, innate authority is naturally manifested in the relationship between the "great mountain" (symbolizing the emperor) and smaller hills, ridges, and peaks (the emperor's subjects). Xi extends this metaphor to other symbols of nature that dictate the same order and hierarchy. One significant example shared between the political and ideological organization of natural symbols of power in traditional landscape painting also found in *Moss* is the "tall pine (the gentleman)" standing over "lesser trees and plants (men of lesser education and lower social standing). Thus, the landscape painter employed images of mountains and certain tree species to evoke hierarchical relationships-indisputable hierarchies dictated by nature itself" (Foong 9). (*see Figures 3.3 and 3*.4)

In *Moss*, those delicately balanced motifs of power and hierarchy reflected in nature are a grotesque exaggeration of the same Confucian principles. The symbolism of benevolent sovereignty poetically analyzed by Guo Xi and the misshapen natural environment of Chun's androcentric authoritarian village become evident when examined side by side. (*Figures 3-2 below and 3-3 on the following page*) When properly balanced and ordered in Xi's *Early Spring*, nature assumes a spiritually regenerative role. David D James has described this sort of idealization of the rural Korean landscape in contemporary Korea's post-industrial and urbanized state as "the location not of agrarian labor or deprivation, but of recreation and spiritual renewal" (20). Order is visually communicated through a staggered staging of size and orientation often through a visualization of The Five Constant Relationships of Confucianism. This is visually depicted by a clear hierarchical order of importance and impact within the landscape painting, as well as the layering of subjects for their symbolism and clarity of composition.

Figure 3-2: (left) “Early Spring” by influential Artist Guo Xi. (right) “Oksunbong Peak” by Kim Hong-Do. Each are representative of Confucian ideology in landscape painting.

Figure 3-3: A balanced landscape shot in Moss is quickly tilted out of proportion.

When the benevolent ideals of Confucian hierarchy are disregarded, its natural physical embodiment warped, its generative qualities uncultivated, and the natural order of deference and reverence untended, it becomes something more sinister. The way the village is depicted in the film depends on who is in charge. When Chun is in control, the shots show the landscape and village from his dwelling on the mountainside, looking down on the village below (*Figure 3-4 on the following page*). When Chun surveys the village, the shots typically use a point-of-view or over-the-shoulder perspective, but he is never shown within the frame. There are no shots looking up at Chun's hilltop home either. Instead, the director relies on medium close-ups and full shots, positioning those standing on the balcony as separate and above those moving beneath, suggesting Chun's pervasive and encompassing means of monitoring his underlings without directly participating in the landscape below. Even though Chun is never shown in a long reverse shot, he dominates the frame of long and medium shots in a similar way to how the valley walls impose themselves on the village's exterior shots. Both Chun and the forest are visually presented as looming, oppressive, and constant, exerting their authority. These shots represent the hierarchical structure of the village, and they are crucial in showing how the village changes after Chun's death (*see figure 3-4 below on the following page*). This completely changes at the end of the film when Young-Ji assumes control of the village. In her position as Chief in Chun’s old home, shots of Young-Ji and the construction managers are foregrounded within the frame. In fact,

the reverse shot from Hae-Guk's perspective shows us a view of the mountainside and the Chiefs home that had been previously unseen in the film. While both point-of-view shots visually convey the theme of surveillance from an authoritarian position, they clearly communicate a different use of landscape and visual dominance. Chun's home looms over the village connoting his dominance that is out of proportion to the rest of the buildings in the village.

Figure 3-4: The skewed perspectives to and from Chun's godlike position above the village.

When juxtaposed (*see figure 3-4 above*), the matching shots of Chun's hilltop view and Young Ji's hilltop view visually reflect two very different organizational models that can be read to convey two forms of authoritarian governance. Chun's hard-line, loyalty-through-fear-driven leadership reflects what most outsiders might recognize as an authoritarian control over the village; his loss of power and eventual suicide would also, therefore, indicate a reversal of politics. This takes form at the end of the film when Young-Ji assumes the direction of the village as the new leader. However, because of the distinctive form of authoritarian leadership utilized by Park Chung-Hee and the explicit visual references in the final village long-shot hilltop sequence of the film, I offer a slightly different reading.

The placement and organization of the structures of the village become apparent from early on in the film, as do their uses within the community. Their positioning and stratification communicate how space expresses social hierarchy and paternal position within the village. Chun's home atop the hill adjacent to the entrance of the village overlooks the valley. Contrary to where a central meeting place might be located, it reflects a hierarchical stratification. Its location is a product of its function as a hub of control and surveillance. Not only is the watchful eye of Chief Chun positioned to look upon and keep tabs on the villagers below, but his henchmen, each with their secrets, concealing their violent and criminal pasts, form a network of information that we can see represented in the film in the initial arrangement of structures in the village. The arrangement of structures, primarily those of the Chief and Ryu, are similar in position and elevation within the spatial hierarchy. Not only do the relative positions of Chun's and Ryu's homes indicate positions of prominence as leaders of the village, but also suggest that their perspective or view of the village is more encompassing. They are both in

positions that would allow them to see the entirety of the village below. This form of stratification constitutes the visual regime of the film.

Similar to Foong Ping's analysis of natural hierarchy yet explicitly concerning authoritarian shot perspectives, James Corner's study of landscape and environment emphasizes the human relationship to political authority through the gaze, stating that "...visual regimes – such as perspective and aerial views – are extremely effective instruments of power, enabling mass surveillance, projection, and camouflage. Synoptic, radiating vision extends a gaze that makes the viewer the master of all prospects; a scopic regime of control, authority, distance, and cool instrumentality" (Corner 155). This visual regime emphasizes position along a Y-axis is indicative of the control and power enacted on that which lies below. According to Adriana Galvani and Riccardo Pirazzoli in their survey of the power of landscape in relation to visual hierarchy, this positional expression of power asserts that high positions or markers are indicative of exclusion (authoritative control or command), while the low position or markers are indicative of inclusion (democratic participation). (*see figure 3-5 below*) Similarly, Kress and van Leeuwen refer to a similar concept as the politics of perspective. They suggest that just as frontal angles invite involvement while oblique angles contribute to detachment, high angles reinforce viewer power compared with eye-level angles that situate us more equally. In contrast, the low angle shots give the participant in the scene more power (Kress and van Leeuwen 134-146).

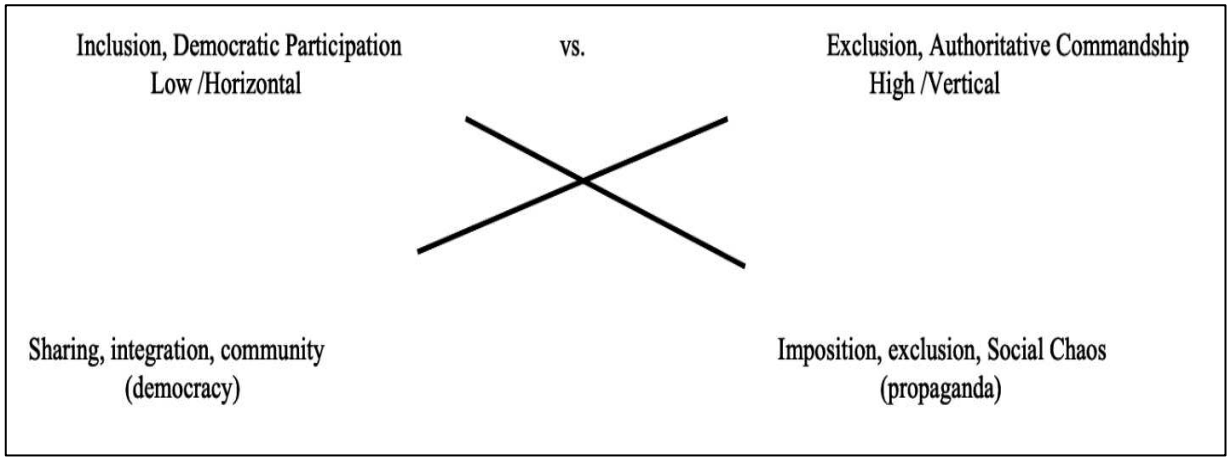

Figure 3-5: Galvani and Pirazzoli's assigned meanings of high and low markers (119)

Chun's home is perhaps the most dominating feature of the village because it operates as the centralized power for the town. In a traditional Korean village, the houses of the head family played a central role as a space for religious gatherings, village meetings, hosting ancestral rights, and gatherings for extended families. Because the head families were considered "agents of central government" in small communities like Majae-ri, the house of the chief or head family also often acted as a place of government within the surrounding area. In many cases, these homes even "acted as a court for exercising jurisdiction." With a monopoly of local power as an extension of larger governmental and spiritual forces and organizations, "the houses of the head families were literally the religious and political center of the small society" (Choi Yoon Kyoung 593). As socially constructed

spaces it is possible to trace generations of historical control and exercises of the affiliated procedural sustenance through the organization of Korean villages. In particular, the predominant families' houses functioned as "a spatial apparatus or mechanism which produced, promoted, and served the power structure of the society" (602).

Because one of the tenets of Confucianism is that men are above women, the visual regime extends beyond wealth, ranking and class. Chun's act of looking from this position and watching those below becomes gendered. For Gillian Rose, those looking down from the top of this visual regime represent a "masculinism of seeing landscapes" producing in-turn "a passive" and as such, "feminized landscape" below (165). This is spatially indicative of gender and power relations as well as a positional hierarchy. However, in this instance, it is important to note that according to Corner, this masculinism equates to what Heidegger refers to as "loss of nearness" (156) which everyday inhabitants of a landscape do not experience. For the individual who finds themself a part of the landscape being viewed, Corner suggests, there is no clear separation of self from the scene. Instead, theirs is an eidetic relationship characterized by an "acoustic, tactile, cognitive, intuitive as well as picturable" connection to their surroundings (154). As the father and governor of the village, Chun runs the village primarily by proxy, controlling the thugs-turned-villagers who maintain his physical stranglehold on the community. This aspect of Chun's leadership relates to the physical manifestation of "popular sovereignty" (Lim J.H. 327). Lim defines "popular sovereignty" or "participation dictatorship" as the transformation of the population from passive subjects into active citizens by projecting the general will of the people as the will of the nation.

A period of contemporary contention, Park Chung-Hee's rule was characterized as "Mass Dictatorship," a term created by JH Lim to express both the method of Park's leadership and his goal to reshape Korean culture and economics through developmental projects like remaking rural villages, thereby organizing the common people to align with the newly transformed Korean society's goals. While Moss accentuates the negative aspects as a part of Chun's leadership, the more positive aspects are highlighted when Young-Ji takes over at the end of the film. Chun's detachment from modern government and bureaucracy, as well as his role within the visual regime, and the village's stagnant community that benefits only those at the top of the hierarchy are a dark version of the corrupt instincts at work in Korea's economic development. While at the end of the film. Young-Ji's efforts to reorganize and develop it reflects the less negative aspects of Park Chung-Hee's approach which focused on improving the "everyday lives of ordinary people in all of their multiple, variegated, and often conflicting dimensions" (Lee Namhee 45). While Chun's more traditional form of authoritarianism partially incorporates two of the three tenets of mass dictatorship – "consent or consensus" and "state penetration into the private sphere of individuals" – however, his greed and unwillingness to protect and foster the growth of the have-nots portrays the low wage driven economic imbalance that bolstered Park's economic modernization. These differing perspectives of leadership, as two parts of a larger whole, reflect a shift in Confucian governance models that allowed Park Chung-Hee to leverage traditional community virtues prevalent in Korean society, helping him gain

public support. Notably, these virtues of consensus and a singular visual identity enabled Park to simultaneously dismantle Korea's democratic system.

3.8 The Framing of Inherent and Residual Authoritarian Power

The dominating natural landscape as a symbol of a disproportionately authoritarian Confucian hierarchy is not limited to exterior shots. The prevalence of the natural environment depicted within the film's interior spaces is similarly striking. The district office, the prosecutors' building, car windows, and every doorway and window frame in the film is occupied by the magnificence of the rolling mountains and imposing landscapes, which I have tied closely to the political power and mechanisms of Korean authoritarianism. The pervasiveness of this authoritarian androcentric leadership represented by the moss has left a visible and inerasable mark on the present timeline of the film. The mountainous landscape represents the Confucian hierarchical structure of power in Korean authoritarianism and fills visual gaps throughout the film emphasizing the influence of authoritarian hierarchy within the public and private institutions behind which it appears. Backgrounding every shot, constituting every horizon, the landscape looms in the background frames of the contemporary spaces of the film (*see figure 3-6 below*).

Figure 3-6: The visual reminders of natural order lurk even in the windows of public institutions.

The moss, forest, trees, and valleys visually permeate the window frames, growing in and between homes, indicating the oppressiveness of the inescapable natural environment. The two primary urban environments we see in the film are when Hae-Guk wakes up in the hospital and the interiors of Prosecutor Park's office. However, the green and lush natural landscape framed through the windows are an example of the way the power of the landscape sits, observable and looming, even in nondescript modern environments. The visually intrusive landscapes portrayed in these scenes convey the notion that the characters exist within a contemporary system that is encompassed by a broader symbolic power dynamic. In exterior shots throughout the film the overwhelming environment blankets the majority shots in the village and of the village. The sky becomes visible only through Ryu's perspective, while the omnipresence of natural and patriarchal dominance pervades every environment, akin to the spreading of moss.

Although the windows depict the rural landscape reminiscent of an authoritarian past, it is arguable that it is not entirely detached from contemporary life. In his analysis of the recurring use of windows and glass in *Yi Yi* (*Yi Yi*, Edward Yang, 2000), David Li asserts the motif represents "the growing

indistinguishability of the inside and outside that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe as characterizing the generation of 'imperial subjectivity'" (Li 200), or in this case, one looking to expand its power internally. In developing post-colonial nations, like South Korea from the post-war period through the early 1990s, it is important to recognize that authoritarianism operates differently from empire, but they are not entirely unrelated. For instance, David Lewis has observed that authoritarianism in Central Asian nations can be seen as an internalized extension of the imperial models imposed during colonialism (Lewis 178-196). In the case of Korea, Japan's colonial rule from 1910 to 1945 played a significant role in shaping and facilitating the establishment of Korean bureaucratic authoritarianism. This influence was further amplified by the historical social organization of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) and the deeply ingrained culture of Confucian hierarchy, which had dominated Korean political and social life for centuries. The transition from empire to authoritarianism in Korea can thus be seen as a continuation of existing precedents. Scholars like Hong Nack Kim and Park Sang-Seek have discussed this continued predisposition towards authoritarianism among the Korean people as being indigenous (Hong Nack Kim 100-120). Park Sang-Seek specifically identifies this conditioning reflected in the pronounced social stratification and the prevalent *gapji* mentality (superiority complex) among government officials and business executives. This notion is further supported by Korea's exceptionally high Power Distance Index (PDI) score, which measures the extent to which individuals obey their superiors without question (Park Sang-Seek 1). Building from my earlier analysis of the moss, trees, and green foliage as natural environmental symbols for authoritarianism, it is necessary to point out that they are also inherently organic, which further epitomizes the cultural inclination.

More importantly, it is the structures outside of the homes that reflect the remaining influence Confucian power in contemporary Korean society. the mountainous landscape. Hospitals and government buildings are not immune to the habitual practice of Confucian hierarchy in everyday life and the repeated use of green mountains in their window frames illustrates this. In the Korean cultural context, these institutional structures (see figure 3-6 on the previous page) remain strictly influenced by the Confucian pecking order and are indicative of the enclosed disciplinary society. Hardt and Negri describe an enclosed disciplinary society as one "in which social command is constructed through a diffuse network of dispositifs or apparatuses that produce and regulate customs, habits, and productive practices" (23). Rigidly structured around hierarchy, these spaces are institutionalized and bureaucratized; enforced through disciplinary action where seniority is often a product of age or gender. This internally directed enforcement of power and discipline is a shared feature between the rigidity of Korean social structure and authoritarianism.

The walls of these institutions obstruct views of the landscape within the institutional space of the film, in essence, stopping those inside the system from seeing the full authoritarian ecosystem in which the institution operates. The use of windows to frame the landscape raises questions about the extent to which windows are complicit in how the buildings conceal "the agendas of those who commission and construct the landscape" (Corner 158). The institutionalized disciplinary space is an

interesting counterpoint to the village environment. While attempts are made to conceal the role of bureaucratic authoritarianism in these institutions, the village is overgrown and surrounded by vegetation and characterized as a more natural and traditional space. The surrounding environment is a means to reinforce social, economic, and political status while the concealed overgrowth of this control in the windows of the contemporary interiors of the hospital and district office visually expresses the permeating influence and institutionalization of authoritarianism found throughout all social, economic, and political organizations the present.

Hae-Guk's investigation of the rural village serves a significant purpose beyond being a mere plot device. It symbolizes the exploration of a hidden family secret, which is a common metaphor for the discovery of a contentious historical narrative. This motif frequently appears in Korean films that tackle controversial historical events. In this particular case, Hae-Guk's return to his hometown, a place of personal significance, is intertwined with an ongoing power struggle. The houses and villages are integral components of an imperial system, where events and information circulate within a larger community or nation, perpetuating its power through encompassing everything within its reach. These closed yet modernized institutions contribute to a disciplinary society framework. Although these two spaces operate differently, they share common origins in the successes and failures of developmental authoritarianism. In the film *Moss*, both spaces are engulfed in lush green overgrowth, symbolizing the lingering effects of an authoritarian past that have left traces on all aspects of contemporary life. By the film's conclusion, Hae-Guk comes to a realization that the present world is inherently linked to the past, woven from the same fabric. This revelation stems from his journey of uncovering the interconnectedness between historical events and their enduring impact on the present.

3.9 The Korean Traditional Home: Surveillance and Scaled Societal Structure

The *hanok* (Korean traditional home) is an elegantly simple architectural style. Traditionally *hanoks* are designed for the harmony between exterior natural space and the communal village spaces characterized by window and door frames that can be adjusted based on seasonal necessity. Their openness and flexibility are a product of the desired intermingling of interior and exterior spaces. The *hanok*'s sliding paper doors and windows serve an architectural purpose for heating and cooling the interior of the home but also reflect more nuanced sociological and cultural purposes. The ability to create insular containment or open village access suggests both the importance of internal family cohesion and the necessity of community interaction to "promote ethical discipline in both family and social lives, as well as the detailed steps of rites of passage in the four ceremonial occasions (coming of age, wedding, funeral, and ancestor rituals)" (Jeon 53). The architecture of the traditional Korean home is cinematically engaging because of its geometry and has been used by filmmakers like Im-Kwon Taek and others to create frames and control layers of depth within shots. The natural materials and unfolding design create a modifiable space in which the exteriors and interiors can co-mingle. This design ostensibly articulates the idea of private and communal space as one which can be changed or breached at any moment, serving both utilitarian purposes and the aesthetic appreciation of

the landscape. Traditionally "villages formed in such a way [as to] show the similarities between the spatial layout of a village and the spatial layout of an individual house" (Jeon 69). In essence, the layout of the *hanok* is microcosmically expressive of the structure and balanced order of a Confucian society, while the village is similarly microcosmically expressive of the natural hierarchies and structure inherent to the Confucian understanding of the broader natural world. However, in *Moss*, these beautiful and utilitarian structures are uncannily rendered. Like the film's distorted Confucian landscapes, the *hanoks* in *Moss* similarly become a powerful and disfiguration of traditional Confucianism's controlling structure.

As variations on the traditional *hanok*, many of the homes in *Moss* are not entirely private dwellings. They neither fully conceal the interior nor fully open to the exterior spaces by the nature of their open facades. In Nikki J.Y. Lee's analysis of the horrific apartment spaces in *Possessed* and *Sorum*, she highlights two important aspects of spatial horror that similarly apply to *Moss*, namely "temporal permeability (of the intruding past)" and "spatial permeability" (Nikki J.Y. Lee 107). These attributes are also found in *Moss*' depiction of rural homes Majae-ri, albeit realized in very different ways. First, the temporal permeability of the village space is expressed through the unchanging village structure and architecture, particularly of Chun's and Ryu's homes and Ji-Young's shop, communicating an insistence of the past exerting control into the present. To relate this back to the concept of "concentrationary memory" (Silverman 2), the institutional nature of architecture and its semi-permanent presence disable the shifting "between eclectic temporal and geographical coordinates" (Saxton 142), as a controlling past haunting the present. This is in line with the reading of Korea's apartment spaces made by Nikki Y.J. Lee as structures of authoritarianism in Korea that exist as "as a historical monument or ruin [that] evokes horrifying memories buried in the modernisation period's blind combative style" of modernization and leadership that "cinematically envisages the horrifying lived experiences (and deaths) hidden beneath the myth of Korean economic development" (Nikki J.Y Lee 107), by nature of the village's monumentalizing of the period.

The second aspect of spatial horror shared between apartment horror films and *Moss* is that they both "draw[s] upon the porousness of apartment space where people of different social backgrounds live in close proximity, and where different individuals with different interests are easily able to infiltrate the private space of other people" (Nikki J.Y. Lee 108). More specifically, the access to the private space of the home be it through breaking and entering, surveillance via tunnels system or as simple as the peepholes and paper windows one only needs a finger to poke through.

Two scenes feature Chun's thugs gaining access to Ryu's dwelling during Hae-Guk's stay. The first takes place the night following Hae-Guk's dinner with Chun and his cohort in front of Young-Ji's shop. Hae-Guk briefly stops on his way back to his father's house to pick up a package from his car and place a call to Prosecutor Park. Upon his arrival back at his father's home, he is alerted to a noise under the trap door built into the floor of the home. He descends into the basement, where his phone

drops the call. Hearing a door close in the basement, he realizes that even this private space is not so private. The basement is full of objects from the past, a bicycle, old books, some traditional cooking and farming tools, an analog television set, and vintage furniture. It is noteworthy that as he goes further and further into the dark toward yet another compartment of the home the items become increasingly old fashioned. In the back corner he finds an empty cabinet.

The next day, while Hae-Guk installs a motion detection light, Kim passes by questioning Hae-Guk's untrusting nature. Later that night, Kim is caught by the motion detection light trying to break into the home. When Hae-Guk catches him, Kim tries to talk his way out of a confrontation. Hae-Guk realizes he is not safe. Where the home should provide shelter and safety, his father's home is continually breached. At this point he returns to the basement through the trap door. This time, next to a pile of paper doors and broken windows that would normally make up the access points of a *hanok* he finds yet another trap door. Down the second trap door, Hae-Guk makes his way through an underground structure. Eventually, the tunnel comes to an end at a pair of locked wooden doors. Hae-Guk can hear Chun and Jeon on the other side discussing stolen information and Ryu's personal data. Hae-Guk overhears a clue to help him unlock the mystery of his father's murder and its connection to Chun. Like Russian nesting dolls, the interior of the home increasingly condenses the essence of the *hanok*. In this case, the increasingly microcosmic spaces also become more secretive, controlled, and privileged. Hae-Guk's access to information increases the deeper he goes into the home's structure, just as control and authority in the traditional *hanok* are increasingly contained within masculine spaces as "collective space[s] of restricted access" (Wallace 73) (*see figure 3-7 below*).

Figure 3-7: Chun in the tunnels beneath the village. A method of surveillance and control.

The vast network of underground surveillance tunnels that sprawl beneath the homes is also reminiscent of the authoritarian state surveillance apparatus. If the pervasive greenness of the landscape is indicative of the institutional pervasiveness of authoritarianism, then the interconnected tunnels under the homes of the village further represent the authoritarian surveillance's disintegration of the boundary between interiority/exteriority and the individual/community. This is a compelling way of spatially representing that which is hidden as a multi-layered and ever-unfolding series of rooms and corridors that make up the deepest parts of the interior. As almost infinitely larger than what the facade suggests, these spaces both add to the representation of pervasive control discussed previously but also suggest espionage and observation, that are historically resonant as the defining characteristics of the Park regime. As was common practice during Park's presidency, competing

intelligence departments contended with one another through spying and information manipulation. The homes in the film thereby spatially represent this convolution of private and public space.

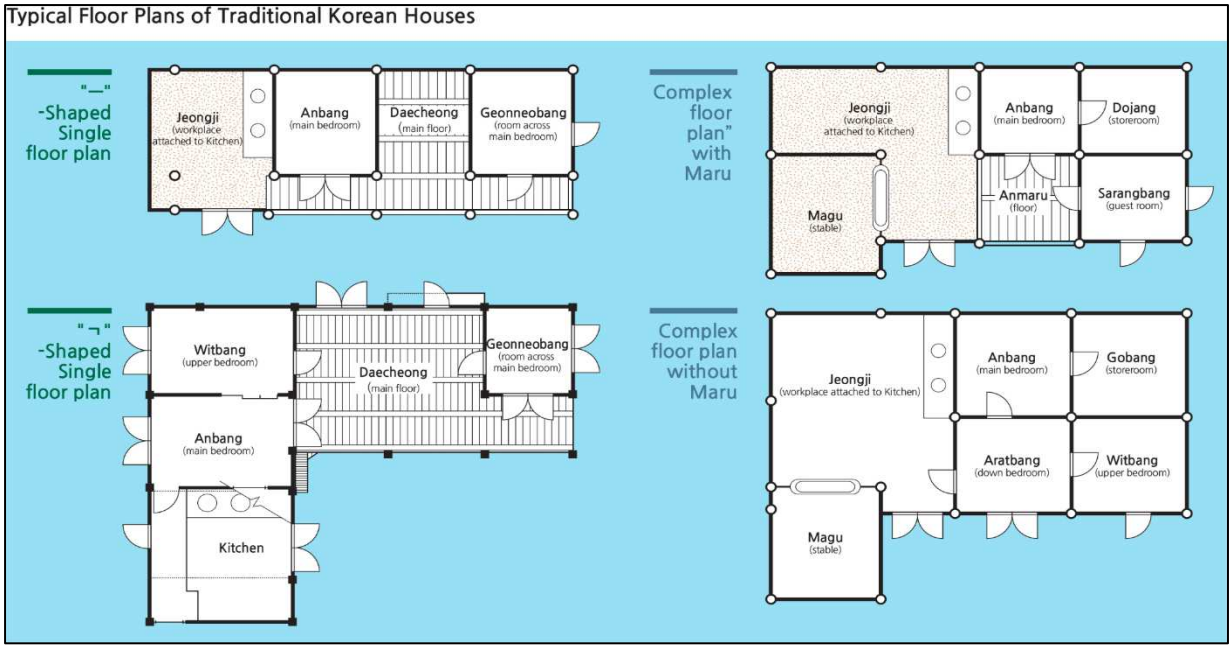

Figure 3-8: Floorplans of traditional Korean houses share some common characteristics. (1) multiple sliding doors to blend interior and exterior space. (2) Concentrically restricting rooms. (3) The *Anbang* (main patriarch's bedroom) is position of control (Seo and Ryoo 9).

Another important part of reading the *hanok* as a constructed reinforcement of Confucian power within the film is how the interiors of *Moss* are increasingly compartmentalized. The *hanok* is by design a space of control and segregation. (*see figure 3-8 above*) As dwellings heavily influenced by Confucian ideology, they are organized with the intention of enforcing social structures. In examining the architectural characteristics of the *hanok*'s floor plans as projections of Confucian ideology, Seo Kyung Wook and Ryoo Seong-Lyong assert that two social dichotomies are clearly communicated by the segregation of space in the *hanok*. "First, men and women should be separated in every aspect of social life. Second, members of the ruling class should be separated from members of the common classes or servants. Based on these two essential conceptual divisions, house planning in Choseon was developed in a way to materialize the Confucian philosophy to regulate and control household members' behavior. Confucian principles were established and disseminated during the 15th and 16th centuries and fully institutionalized during the 17th and 18th centuries to control every aspect of life" (Seo and Ryoo 2). More Contemporarily, *hanoks* fell out of favor during Korea's compressed modernization period. With the rules of traditional Confucian communal life no longer strictly enforced, and under the social transformations that accompanied Korea's development in the 1960s and 1970s (dramatically shifting gender roles, the establishment of a broader middle class, and apartment and single-family housing trends), what were once valued separations of space became old-fashioned and oppressive.

The organization of the houses by themselves, in any Korean village, has historically shown "strong cohesive relations with the people who lived in them." In each village, the power structure was visible

and architecturally represented in the community layout. This is significant in that the villages and houses "latently contain various aspects of social dynamics. In their spatial structure, power exhibits itself in such a way that it reveals the cultural idiosyncrasy of the society" (Choi 593). In short, their reflection of power structure scales up and down. This would change over the course of Korea's modernization, especially when more modern accommodations would supplant traditional Korean structures and with them, many of the traditional Confucian ways of life that would be reshaped by the shifting classes and gender roles of modern Koreans of the period. Gradually, during the boom period of Park Chung-Hee's economic leadership and the institution of the New Village Movement, traditional buildings were to be updated during the aggressive government campaign that included financial incentives for villages meeting their guidelines; many traditional houses disappeared, replaced by those rebuilt or remodelled with modern materials. Thatched roofs and sliding door *hanoks* were replaced with concrete structures with slate roofs. The style and architecture of the homes in Chun's Majae-ri are strikingly different from the more contemporary homes and buildings at the end of the film after Young-Ji assumes control.

The shift in sentiment toward traditional housing and their more modern counterparts provided unsettling spaces for some of Korean cinema's more compelling horror melodramas. In "Family, Death, and the *Wonhon*, in Four Films of the 1960s," Hyangjin Lee briefly analyzes how in *The Housemaid* (*Han-yeo*, Kim Ki-Young, 1960) and other domestic horror films use the transformation of architecture during Park Chung-Hee's push for modernization as sites of conflict. In her analysis, the shifting boundaries of the home and dissolution of the family structure express "the fear of the demise of patriarchy as a result of Western Capitalism" (Hyangjin Lee 25). Similarly, *The Devil's Stairway* (*Ma-ui Gyue-dan*, Lee Man-Hee, 1964) relies on western-style houses and hospital buildings as variants of the modernized middle-class family home which features a blending of traditional spatial gender and class segregation common to the premodern era. Thus, the unusual juxtaposition of traditionally masculine and feminine spaces within modern buildings becomes an uncanny reflection of the changing times in the face of "the male-centered moral justification of a repressed and controlled femininity in a traditional society" (Hyangjin Lee 27). A similar transformational quality is expressed through the homes in *Moss* reflecting a less socially progressive and more twisted quality where in the village of Majae-ri's lack of women, children, or anyone other than the dysfunctionally damaged men has, over time, created a dissolution of clearly defined interior spaces. Those that do exist are more about secrecy and access to information rather than gender or class.

Figure 3-9: The anachronistically composed homes of Majae-ri. Notice the mixing of public and private space and the slate roofs.

Outside of Chun's and Ryu's more traditional style homes, the buildings in Chun's iteration of Majae-ri are a mix of utilitarian concrete cubes and modified traditional homes (*see figure 3-9 above*). Young-Ji's shop and the other villagers' residences are architecturally ambiguous and contain elements of traditional and poorly renovated pre-modern architecture. They display the slate roof tops which were powerful symbols of Park Chung-Hee's rural reforms, however as composites, their period is not clearly identifiable. Chun's village is made up of older traditional Korean structures with make-shift industrial features. Traditional clay is replaced with cement, wood is replaced with metal and plastic, and the amalgam of materials and styles in the village suggests disrepair and embodies the broken system in which the people live. The anachronistic nature of the structures conveys an attempt at rural renovation without fully investing in substance, i.e., the use of concrete bricks, corrugated tin panels, and plastic coverings which are certainly newer but are neither modern nor traditional. Their haphazard amalgam of materials, concrete blocks and traditional wood and clay, portrays a village never quite remade while the overall layout is characterized by a similar irregular positioning of buildings.

While this idea of renovation seemed only partially fulfilled in Chun's MaeJae-Ri, the village under Young-Ji represents a different kind of authoritarian governance under mass dictatorship. The renovations of the village at the end of the film can be read as "a response to the colonial deprivation and rapid industrialization process that dominated South Korea in the late twentieth century" (Yun 111). At the time, many South Koreans understood and accepted the destruction of the *hanoks* during the decades of urban redevelopment and the throws of the New Village Movement. Contemporaneously, the rationale of modernization and economic development at any cost, the defining trait of the Park regime of the 1970s, is now understood as the loss of traditional spaces and the disappearance of communal life.

Young-Ji's village spatially reflects the changes in urban housing which occurred as a part of the Village Structural Improvement Project which began in 1978. In his thesis "The Countryside and the City: A Spatial Economy of the New Village Movement in 1970s South Korea", Kim SungJo describes the Village Structural Improvement Project as a redress of the housing changes intended under the New Village movement. However, it presents "a more comprehensive and structured spatial

image of the ideal rural village, which had been sporadically expressed in different sites of the New Village construction" (Kim SungJo 216). The goal was to create a more modern i.e. "urbanized lifestyle" (217) while further industrializing farming methods. The new rural houses under construction in the 1970s were often called "urban style houses (*Tosihyŏng chut'aek*)" or "cultural houses (*Munhwa chut'aek*)" (195) In Kim's study he goes on to show that these new houses represented a kind of "spatial unification or homogenization between domiciles in the countryside and the city" (195).

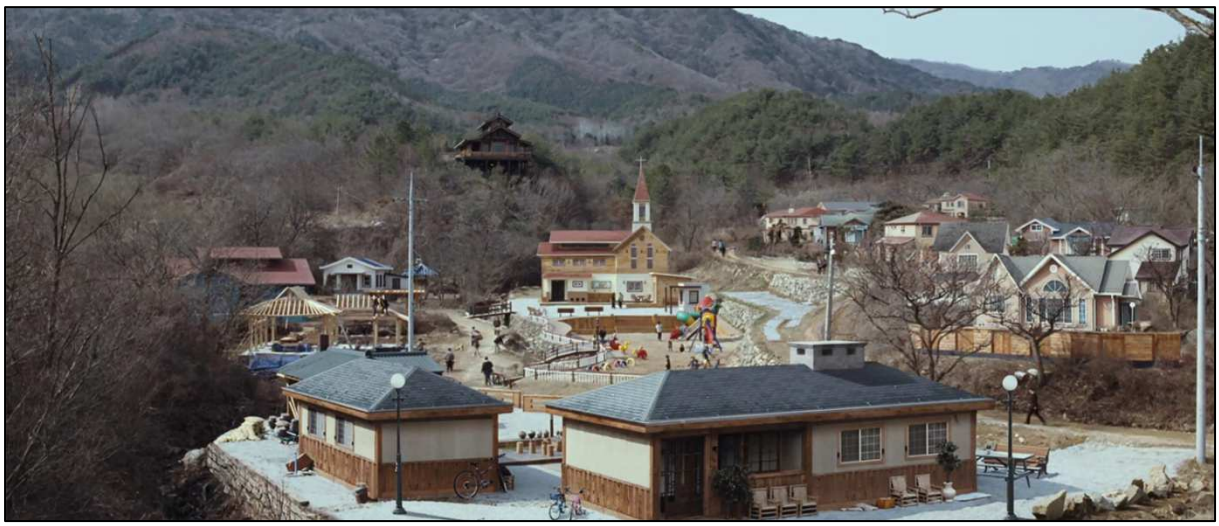

Figure 3-10: The village as reimagined by Young-Ji. A combination of Traditional homes with more contemporary urban homes unify the space.

At the end of the film, the redistribution of space and the organization of home designs in the newly rejuvenated community are more in line with the goals of Korea's authoritarian developmental period. In many ways, the new Majae-ri at the end of the film is an idealized spatial and architectural timeline of rural community development and organization under the New Village Movement; one free from Chun's grotesque exploitation of power and corruption. (*see figure 3-10 above*) At the very bottom are the traditional *hanok* rural homes built chiefly of wood and Hwang-toe (a kind of traditional mud used for making bricks). Beautiful in their simplicity, as traditional structures, their organization is reminiscent of pre-Chun era village organization and no longer the internally contorted versions I discussed earlier. Understanding the shifting village organization and the changing architecture within the space is essential in grasping the significant implications for the evolving locus of power. To the right of the frame are the modern, suburban homes constructed along what would be considered the main road of the village. These homes are clearly of a more contemporary design. They are concrete and wood structures, fenced and self-contained single-family homes one might see in any contemporary suburban neighborhood. In pinks and blues, and whites, their presence in the village indicates the influence and influx of new citizenry, having abandoned the more utilitarian style of older rural villages in Korea. The cracked concrete structures and tin/slate roofs of the past have been replaced by roofs done in the traditional Korean tile motif and the more modern shingle roofed homes that are more common in suburban environments. Altogether, Young-Ji's village reflects a balanced,

ordered, and more egalitarian composition more befitting Confucian ideals of the paintings of Guo-Xi, or an idealization of Korea's modernized countryside.

3.10 Conclusion

Collective memories play a vital role in fostering social cohesion, yet they can also lead to conflicts when different groups within a society rally around divergent memories of the same past. Our memories, whether shared or individual, shape our identities, making disputes over the interpretation of historical events intensely charged. The clash of perspectives in national memory revolves around how the past is understood and the significance assigned to those events. The representations of historical memory in Korean rural horror cinema, though marked by brutality and trauma, can also be a source of considerable national pride for the accomplishments achieved through those events. Films like *Moss* heavily employ allegory, often relying on the traces of trauma to explore authoritarian governance and the Confucian social structure. As a cultural way of life Confucianism, to this day, underpins traditional Korean customs, which is how generations interact through proper language and respect. In depicting the monstrous elements of familial connection, these films delve into the essence of rurality and the ancestral spaces, depicting the unbreakable bonds that link generations of men to legacies of violence, deceit, and suffering. In doing so, they not only reveal the inexpressible traumas of past regimes but also pay homage to the enduring sacrifice of countless men and women who labored for a better future for their children and future generations.

The final sequence of *Moss*, ominous as it may seem, is mirrored in many of the films that constitute the Korean backwoods horror genre. They similarly depict a once powerless character adopting the guise of the oppressor. In *Moss*, Hae-Guk finally unravels the mystery of his father's death and realizes that Young-Ji was the one who made the call and started Chun's unravelling. As this occurs, the camera slowly pulls in to show Young-Ji staring into the camera, effectively breaking the fourth wall (*see figure 3.19 on the following page*). A mixture of power, satisfaction, and ominous retribution falls over her face. The final shot is used to a similar effect in another film about the corruption of power that also allegorically addresses post-war authoritarian politics on the Korean peninsula. In *The Piper*, the character of Woo-Ryong, a man whose life had been destroyed by the lies and deceit of a patriarchal authoritarian village chief, leads the last surviving children from the destroyed village with a song from his pipe. The music promises safety under the guiding hand of a new father figure, who like his predecessor, willfully leads them to their destruction. The innocent children, scared and unable to care for themselves, follow. Analogously in the final shot, Woo-Ryong looks into the camera, a satisfied grin forms, born of vengeance and pain. (*see figure 3-11 below)* Both films depict the cycle of vengeance, corruption, political retribution, and ruin all too familiar in Korean history.

Figure 3-11: The two protagonists who once fought Confucian patriarchy each become agents of what they fought against.

By consolidating a distorted interpretation of Confucian values and using it to fuel a re-masculinized national identity, the authoritarian regimes of Rhee, Park, and Chun not only prolonged their rule but also employed it as a re-education tool. Like Chief Chun in *Moss*, these Korean authoritarian leaders camouflaged their personal political interests as matters of national security. In similar fashion, Park Chung-Hee exploited the New Village Movement to solidify his power base, relying on rural support that continues to nostalgically remember him as a transformational leader rather than just another military dictator. They cunningly capitalized on Korean traditional and neo-Confucian culture to gain tacit approval for their draconian measures and policies. *Moss'* portrayal of authoritarian power in the rural past invokes a conflicting mix of nostalgia and discomfort, creating a backdrop for memories that vividly display the cultural, economic, and even contemporarily institutionalized spatial manifestations of its influence. This unsettling observation suggests that the horrors of bygone eras might not be as distant in time or location as we would prefer to believe.

Chapter 4 *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* (2019): Syncretic Horror and the Liminality of Transportation Infrastructure

4.1 Introduction

A New Religious Movement (NRM) is a religious organization or spiritual group that has a modern origin and is peripheral to its society's dominant religious culture (Clark 3). The approximately 500 NRMs which have sprung up in Korea over the past century speak to the pluralistic nature of religious practice in Korea, with conservative estimates suggesting no fewer than 342 are still active (Kim, Yu, and Yang 1). Often founded during times of upheaval and insecurity, "most of Korea's controversial religious groups have in common is that they can be traced back to one of three periods in the country's modern history... the Japanese occupation, the Korean War, and the period of military dictatorships that reached the peak of its authoritarianism in the 1970s and 1980s" (Power Par. 13). In Korea, these New Religious Movements are often steeped in ancient ritual, magic, and shamanism. Although the term 'cult' is not typically used in Korea, NRMs in Korea are often syncretic faiths with cult-like practices and secrecy. Their ceremonies and beliefs are often organized around a self-proclaimed supernatural leader and blend the traditional Korean shamanic theology and Confucian hierarchy with religions more closely aligned with Korea's modernization, like Catholicism and Buddhism (Kim Hong-Cheol 16-17). An undeniable feature of the contemporary religious landscape, NRMs have a long history of influence and mystery in Korean culture, from the Unification Church (colloquially referred to as 'the Moonies') in the 1970s to today's more fringe messianic sects.

Historically, it is rare for any religious group, no matter how obscure or esoteric their beliefs might be, to be openly criticized in a public forum in Korea. However, recent tragic events involving NRMs have only exacerbated anxieties that go back to the dawn of Korea's modernity concerning folk religions and syncretism as an encroaching archaic Other. An investigation into the sinking of the Sewol Ferry in 2014, which killed over 300 people (most of whom were young students) revealed that the owner of the ferry company, Yoo Byung-Eun, was the founder of an NRM called the Salvation Sect (Song Sang-Ho 1). The 2016 Choi Soon-Sil scandal stoked fears of syncretic cult practices penetrating the Blue House of former president Park Geun-Hye. This event exposed a nerve running through contemporary sensibilities concerning the influence of ancient practices on the religious landscape of a modernized Korea (Choi Hye-Jung 1). Meanwhile, the NRM Shinchoenji made headlines as the first epicenter of the 2020 COVID19 outbreak in Korea. The group's secrecy and unwillingness to cooperate with government authorities to stem the spread of the disease garnered negative publicity and cost hundreds, if not thousands, of lives (Kim Suki 1). The media coverage of these historical events has fueled a growing national sentiment of negativity regarding the proliferation

of NRMs and their burgeoning influence on the daily life of Koreans. At the heart of the matter is a conflict over the center and periphery of contemporary religion and where ancient shamanic practices and their syncretic influence fit in a modernized Korea.

In this final chapter of my thesis, I examine the film *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* (*Svaha*, Chang Chae-Hyon, 2019) as a syncretic religious horror film dealing with the contemporary anxieties over NRMs. As a film about the dangers of NRMs, it is largely predicated on Korean Shamanic Exorcism Cinema's long history of representing the religious and cultural backwardness of rurality as an ever-present threat to modernization and contemporary religious practice. As such, the film is a part of a larger cultural dialogue concerning how the center and periphery of modernization have been created. In *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, the friction between the developed and undeveloped spaces represents the conflict between modern and pre-modern Korea. In my reading, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*'s spatial and temporal blending of the once distinct urban and rural dichotomy works to critique the singular homogeneous narrative of religious modernization in Korea. The dissolving contrast of the metropolitan religious and their rural counterparts exposes the cracks in Korea's nationalist narrative intertwining the nation's economic and religious modernization.

In the previous chapters, I laid much of the groundwork concerning former president Park Chung-Hee's role in the modernization of Korea along with his history of violence. Daniel Martin has argued that in *Bunshinsaba* (*Bunshinsaba*, Ahn Byeong-Ki, 2004) Korean shamanic horror is tied to history through authoritarian cues. In his analysis of a flashback sequence in which a radio broadcast announces that "President Park Chung-Hee has declared a crackdown on witchcraft and occult practices," Martin contends the film "signals the brutal and unjustified murder of the two women – by a group of villagers dominated by fear and a pack mentality – as a sign of the times, an equivalent to the nationwide human rights abuses and violent authoritarianism of the military government" (150). The position of Shamanism as one of the "country's oldest religious traditions, … increasingly marginalized and ruralized with the rapid development of the twentieth century" (Martin, *Korean Horror* 432) further speaks to the authoritarian milieu surrounding shamanic horror films. Problematic portrayals of Shamanism in recent Korean horror films as religion that rejects authoritarian cues that refuses "to adapt to modern conventions and the customs of the majority"(Martin, Korean Horror 432), play an important role in my analysis of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* in this chapter. As the major focus of my analysis in this chapter, the highways and roads in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* that connect the urban and the rural spaces function in contradictory roles. First, as infrastructure projects that were intended to expand Park Chung-Hee's central authority, literally and symbolically, highways and roads operate as the backbone of South Korea's transit economy. In *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, the roads become a tool for exercising central religious authority. Second, the same roads in the film operate as liminal or "in-between" spaces where the modern and pre-modern intermingle. The "in-between" spaces of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* articulate one of the consistent themes of my thesis, namely, how the coexistence of the traditional/rural with the modern/urban expose the cracks in what Kyung-Sup Chang has described as Korea's "compressed modernity" (31). In this case, the countryside is the

cradle of premodern religious practices that threatens to unmake the perceived linear progress of religious history and modernization. I chose to close my thesis with this film because it is the most contemporary of the films analyzed in this study and it affords me the opportunity to explore the exchange between urban and rural spaces in Korean Horror through a bidirectional spatio-temporal interactivity, rather than a unidirectional recalling of history and memory.

4.2 *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*: Too Close to Home.

Svaha: The Sixth Finger was released on February 20, 2019, attracting some 190,000 viewers on Netflix during its first week, as well as opening number one at the domestic box office. Over the course of its four-week run, a total of 2.19 million tickets were sold. The total gross in cumulative ticket sales was ₩20,007,508,194 (Namu Wiki) which equates to roughly $16,481,474.98 USD. The commercial success of the film was somewhat hindered by mixed reviews. Following his earlier success with *The Black Priests* (*Geomeun sajaedeul*, 2015), director Chang Chae-Hyon was criticized for delivering a film in which "audiences expected *GokSeong*" (*The Wailing* [Na Hong-Jin, 2015]) but were instead given "a Korean version of *The Da Vinci Code* (Ron Howard, 2006)" (Namu Wiki "Svaha").

The plot of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* plays equally to folk horror and exorcism cinema. One storyline follows Pastor Park, an extortive publisher of a religious journal, who is tasked with investigating a fringe syncretic Buddhist cult called the Deer Mount. To do so, Park must travel to and from urban Seoul to a mountainous eastern region of South Korea in Gangwon-Do to piece together the clues of an occult religious history that threatens to dislodge itself from the narrative of religious modernization strictly mediated by orthodox Korean religions. The second storyline involves a teenager named Geum-Hwa who, with her grandparents, must hide her deformed and frightening twin sister from the world. Geum-Hwa and her sister, who they refer to as 'it', are the vessels of a prophesied evil foretold by the immortal, Christ-like figure, Kim Je-Suk, who is worshiped by the Deer Mount Cult, is a messianic figure common to contemporary NRMs and a heresy to the orthodox religions. The film follows the two intersecting storylines which involve the investigation of ceremonial murders of children by the cult in hopes of preventing the prophesied evil from coming to fruition. Along the way, Pastor Park must learn the secrets of the cult and the identity of the prophesied evil. In order to restore the balance of an occulted religious history that calls into question the very authority of contemporary Christianity and Buddhism, Park must confront the living god, Kim Je-Suk, and quell the spread of dangerous syncretic belief for the Christian and Buddhist religious establishment.

As a religious horror film, more specifically a variation on the Korean Shamanic Exorcism film that pits a female shaman as an agent of traditionalism against the Christianizing or secularizing industrial establishment (Humpal 7-10) , *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* was mired in some negative publicity that speaks to the film's significance as part of a larger cultural dialogue concerning religion in Korea. The

first controversy is related to the production design for Jeong Dong-hwan, the actor who plays the syncretic monk named Kim Je-Suk who achieves immortality after gaining enlightenment. In one of the historical photographs featured in the film, the actor's head was Photoshopped over an image of a colonial period Korean independence activist of note named Na-Cheol. Na-Cheol is known as a founding member of Korea's independence movement (Schmid 144) who founded Daejong Gyo (*see figure 4-1 on the following page).* Aside from the colonial connections of the historical figure and the fictional Kim Je-Seok from the film, Daejong Gyo is a loose collection of some seventeen syncretic religious movements "within the framework of Korean shamanism" (Baker 211) which shares Buddhist roots. While Daejong Gyo is more definable as a creed or a faith system rather than an organized religion, its close association with the Korean independence movement under Japanese colonialism and its ties to Korean national identity complicates the use of an image of such a seminal and revered figure as the underlay of the antagonist of an occult horror film. A number of Korean groups descending from Daejong Gyo spoke out in newsletters and online forums (locally referred to as cafés) against the historical alterations involving Na-Cheol (Namu Wiki).

Figure 4-1: Side by side the image of Na-Cheol (left) and the character Kim Je-Suk (right).

The second controversy involved the fictitious sect and its depiction at the core of the film's narrative because it was seen to be modelled on an actual home-grown NRM known as Shinchoenji. This controversial NRM, founded in 1984, became internationally noteworthy as the first epicenter of the 2020 COVID19 outbreak in Korea and its secrecy and unwillingness to cooperate with government authorities to stem the spread of the disease. However, at the time of the release of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, Shinchoenji's organizational protest centered on a number of scenes from the trailer which depicted worship eerily similar to some of the group's practices. The perceived similarities between their NRM and the fictitious sect depicted in the film raised concerns that "the film could damage the group's reputation" (Namu Wiki).

However, the controversies involving the film are indicative of a broader cultural dialogue regarding non-dominant religious groups and their role in contemporary Korea. My reading in this chapter builds on Jinsoo An's analysis of Christianity in Korean post-war Melodrama while offering a horror-oriented and contemporary perspective on the role of syncretism in nationalist constructs. In his article, An briefly discusses how the religious discourse of Christianity problematized the nationalist discourse of independence. During the early 20th-century protestant syncretism, what he calls the "pervasive character" of Korean Christianity, was an obfuscating step too far (An, "Screening the Redemption" 72). An argues that "rather than a mechanical transplantation, the discourse of syncretism alludes to a persistent aporia and contradiction as the new religion has actively mediated and promulgated the polarizing but interrelated discourses of modernity and spirituality" (73). In other words, "Underneath the syncretic character of Korean Protestantism lies the ambiguity of conflicting temporal orientations: the one that is clearly affiliated with the modern and social and the other with the premodern and esoteric" (73). Through the adoption of a more indigenous worldview and practices, Korea's syncretic Protestantism expresses a contradictory coexistence in modern consciousness. As an expression of these discursive processes, "Syncretism therefore constantly calibrates and equalizes the deep-seated anxiety over the disparity of modernity and tradition" (74). Specifically, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* and other contemporary Korean religious horror films, as a modern permutation of the traditional Shamanic Exorcism film, I analyze in the following section reflect a growing cultural unease with NRMs, and more importantly, the alternative religious history they represent.

4.3 The Spatial Politics of Korean Religious Horror Cinema: Historical and Cinematic Contexts

While Shamanism is not presented as the direct threat in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, only glimpsed during the film's opening scenes, it is a significant tradition that backgrounds the film's approach to religious modernization and the spiritual milieu of the film. Shamanism, a belief system that incorporates and recognizes gods, ancestor and nature spirits, even historical figures from various cultures and religions, is oftentimes the unifying force that draws together the various aspects of the syncretic belief systems of Korea's NRMs. At its core, the Korean shamanic tradition is anchored by the act of mediation through suffering. Shamans are chosen by a specific spirit due to a shared trauma or pain, and that deep emotional connection allows for the shaman to "understand, hear and translate [the spirits'] words to the living" (Min 1). In the western tradition, a similar figure is a medium. Just as the idea of "identification with a larger community" is central to the shamanic tradition, the shamans themselves then serve as mediators between the spirit world and the material world, however shamans also act as mediators between "family members, community and ancestors" (Seo 30). Whenever Korean shamanism faced the possibility of extinction its practitioners have always used "innovation as a way of asserting its right to continued existence" (Seo 22). Its adaptability and openness to

interpretation has enabled its survival despite hundreds of years of conflict with the political and religious establishment.

The modern perception of Museok's (Korean Shamanism) threat to Korea's economic and cultural modernization began with the popularization of Catholicism at the end of the 19th century and continued under Japanese Colonization beginning in 1910. During this period of immense transformation, Museok, which is predominantly a "religion of women" and one of the few places where women have "continually held power in Korean society" (Oh Kyong Geun 71-72), fell under attack. Unsurprisingly, the spatial segregation of Museok throughout Korea's modernization has primarily involved the discourse around rural women, who time and time again, have been "inextricably tied to the print media's discussion of mudang, revealing the coloniality of this discourse" (Merose Hwang 123). A deeper examination of the role of gender in the religious constructs of space can be found in a later section of this chapter. However, it is important to note here that in the decades following Korea's freedom from Japanese imperialism, under Rhee Syngman and later Park Chung-Hee, the influence of western religious orthodoxy would be inextricably paired with capitalism and the development of a modern economic state (Kirsteen Kim 217-218). Shamanism, on the other hand, would time and time again be repressed, villainized, and made out to be a backward and dangerous superstition clearly belonging to premodern Korea.

It was during the 1970s that the clash between indigenous spiritualism and the progress of modernization, as representative of Korea's past and present/future, became evident. This clash is most clearly exemplified by Park Chung-Hee's New Village Movement (*Saemaul Undong*) which has been discussed in depth in the previous chapter of this thesis. To briefly summarize from the previous chapter of this thesis , this mass mobilization program aimed to comprehensively transform rural Korean communities, addressing both their physical structure and their underlying ethos (Kendall 10) in effort to modernize the rural infrastructure to improve industrial farming and quality of life (Conner 31). The changes did not end with construction projects. For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to note that the *Saemaul Undong* also included the reshaping of the hearts and minds of rural Koreans by transforming deeply entrenched spiritual and social structures involving local spirits, festivals, and shamans as a part of the "Movement to Overthrow Superstition" also referred to as the "Movement to Overthrow the Worship of the Gods" (*Misin Tapa Undong*). Despite its roots going back to Protestant preachers in the 1880s as well as its use by Japanese colonizers in their attempts to secularize and modernize the Korean peninsula, the "Movement to Overthrow the Worship of Gods" was not officially sponsored by the Korean government until its incorporation into the cultural re-education reforms of the New Community Movement in the 1970s.

As a significant part of the New Village Movement's cultural reforms, the "Movement to Overthrow the Worship of Gods" allowed authorities and local leaders to collaborate in repressing *gut* rites (also romanized as *gut*). *Gut* rites are those performed by Korean shamans, involving offerings and sacrifices to gods, spirits and ancestors (Lee Jung Young 27). The "Movement to Overthrow the

Worship of Gods" also included the harassment and violent suppression of local cults; employing tactics such as dousing village shrines with gasoline and setting them ablaze, dismantling sacred trees, totem poles, and cairns, and conducting raids on gut ceremonies while apprehending shamans (Conner 28). Despite its economic successes, contemporary critics have censured the New Village Movement for its detrimental impact on indigenous religious traditions and for influencing a significant portion of the South Korean populace to adopt foreign religious beliefs, particularly Christianity (Kendall 31). Historians like Shalon Park, Brandon L. Santos, and Sam Han have each addressed the effects of the New Village Movement in their individual theoretical frameworks, underscoring the effects of religious persecution as part of Park Chung-Hee's enterprising spirit of modernization.

Effectively othered and repressed, it is no surprise that it was also in the 1970s that the cultural and economic conflict between Korea's authoritarian modernization and Museok became the central focus of a number of Korean horror films. Choi Ha-Won's *A Shaman's Story* (*Munyeo Hoeuirak,* 1972) pioneered a trend of representing the spiritual practice at odds with contemporary society reflecting Park Chung-Hee's pairing of modernization with Christianity and Buddhism. Based on the Kim Dong-Ree novel *Munyeodo*, both *A Shaman's Story* and the 1979 cinematic remake of the same novel *Eulhwa* (*Eulhwa*, Byeon Jang-Ho) depict generational conflict as a proxy allegory for the cultural conflict of shamanism with modern Korean society. The plot centers around the experiences of Mo-Hwa, a local Mudang, when Christianity gains a footing in her village. As a result, Mo-Hwa's divine power begins to decline. This is compounded when she learns that her own son, Wuk, has been studying western theology. She performs an exorcism *gut* (rite) to rid her son and village of evil spirits, eventually even tearing up a Bible. The conflict between mother and son destroys their relationship. Floundering in a losing battle, Mo-Hwa performs an exorcism for a drowned woman. Her performance of rites of exorcism to draw the spirit and body of the woman from the water ends in vain. In her hubris Mo-Hwa refuses to capitulate and is herself gradually subsumed by the water, never to return.

The typical backdrop of Museok films is an idyllic rural island or remote fishing village, where the local Mudang has historically held a great influence on local people. Along with *A Shaman's Story* and *Eulhwa*, films like *Oyster Village* (*Gulli Maeul*, Jeong Jin-Woo, 1972), *The Early Years* (*Eorin Nalui Mannam,* Lee Doo-Yong, 1977), *The Divine Bow* (*Sin-ui Hwasal,* Im Kwon-Taek, 1979), and *The Placenta* (*Taeban,* Ha Myeong-Jung, 1986) are particularly potent examples of shamanism as a regressive matriarchal force. Each film features places alienated from modernized society where the Mudang controls the daily life of people as a dominant socio-cultural figure. *Iodo* (*Iodo*, Kim Ki-Yong, 1977) is the prime example of isolated populations and the anachronistic relationship Museok shares with contemporary society. Iodo is an island so isolated and remote that it has yet to be touched by economic, social, and spiritual modernization. One day, a tourism company plans to build a set of luxury hotels on the island. Squarely within the horrific mode, the supernatural haunts the superstitious and backward villagers who ascribe an unsolved murder to a sea demon. However, when the tourism company manager becomes the only suspect, an exorcism is performed to exhume the dead man's

body from the briny deep. Together with the deceased man's widow, the Mudang performs the ritual *gut* and raises the body from the bottom of the ocean. The power of the Mudang is absolute, and her horrific control over the inhabitants and spiritual sanctity of the island results in the widow being spiritually impregnated by the corpse of her dead husband and the seduction of the tour company manager by the sexually dominant female bartender of the island. Similarly, in Lee Doo-Yong's film *In The Hut* (*Danggudae Sog-eulo,* 1980), a Mudang, Ok-Hwa, intentionally ruins a prestigious family to get revenge for her parents. In the film, the Mudang is a revolutionary character struggling against a suppressive patriarchal social system with their supernatural power.

When *gwigi young-hwa* and *gongpo young-hwa* (early names for supernatural horror films) returned to Korean cinema in the late 1990s as *ho-reo young-hwa*, (contemporary horror films) as noted by Baek Moon-Im, it marked some significant shifts in the exorcism genre partially born from the International Monetary Fund Crisis (IMF) in 1997. Two of the most pronounced shifts pertain to the dissolution of the nuclear family, and the desire of women to economically contribute to society in the workplace (Baek 267). For the better part of the early 2000s, Korean exorcism cinema fell out of favor despite the commercial success of teen targeted examples like the *Whispering Corridors* series. The shift away from horror depictions of shamanism toward syncretism can be traced to 2013 with Yeon Sang-Ho's animated follow-up to *The King of Pigs* (Dwaei-ji ui Wang), *The Fake* (Saibi, Yeon Sang-Ho, 2013). The film shifts toward syncretism while relying on the same shamanic horror tropes discussed above. A village is set to be flooded for the construction of a dam and its residents are to be relocated with compensation. In the village, a con-man pastor promises to help relocate the residents while the town drunk, aware of his plans attempts to expose the nefarious plot.

Since 2015, there has been a resurgence of Korean exorcism and religious horror depicted in works such as limited series *Hellbound* (*Jiok,* 2021), *The Guest* (*Son: The Guest,* 2018), and *Save Me* (*Guhaejwo,* 2017), and films like *8th Night* (*8 Ya,* Kim Tae-Hyoung, 2021), *The Closet* (*Keullojet,* Kim Kwang-bin, 2020), and *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* (Chang Chae-Hyeon, 2019). These films exemplify a syncretism-focused approach that redefines the spatial conventions of Korean Shamanic exorcism cinema. Contrary to earlier Korean shamanic horror films that portrayed stark opposition between tradition and modernization, the Syncretic exorcism genre presents a liminal environment where past and present, traditional and modern, orthodox and syncretic seamlessly merge. This blending of ideologies sets the stage for horror, highlighting the uncertainty of religious faith and history. In these films, the conflicting interests of priests, doctors, and shamans contribute to the mixing of beliefs, resulting in culturally relevant exorcism narratives reflecting the shifting religious landscape in Korea. An early example of syncretism in Korean exorcism cinema is the film *Possessed* (*Bulsinjiok,* Lee Yong-Ju, 2009), which portrays a religious battle for a daughter's well-being involving a policeman, a shaman, and a mother with syncretic Christian beliefs. Similarly, films like *The Chosen: Forbidden Cave* (*Toema: Munyeogul,* Kim Hwee, 2015) and *The Wailing* (Na Hong-Jin, 2015) utilize a similar fusion of Christian and Shamanic elements in the spiritual struggle against evil. The conflicts of religious modernization are no longer restricted to the isolated countryside.

These films, as part of a cinematic tradition of Shamanic Exorcism cinema, share a similar thematic background as social barometers for change and transformation. In their contextualization of the traditional exorcism narrative, Olson and Reinhard suggest that the social concerns often found in the exorcism subgenre represent "prevailing anxieties in any given historical period," (60) especially concerning women and minority cultures. Traditionally, Korean exorcism cinema foundationally concerns the ways in which a modern Korean society perceives and represses as a pre-modern Other: namely religious minorities, urban-migrating rural farmers, and even female believers in shamanism who were portrayed as a danger to the urban/modernizing Korean character. Although Shamanism, Christianity, and Syncretism are all "socially practiced belief systems in contemporary Korean society" (Nikki J.Y. Lee 110), they continue to be situated on different rungs of the social hierarchy. Kim Ho-Gi, and other contemporary Korean sociologists describe this co-presence of different forms of social development and cultural values in contemporary Korean society in terms of contemporaneous non-contemporaneity (Kim Ho-Gi). The intermingling of disparate religious practices in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* has temporal as well as sociological implications, not the least of which concerns the pluralistic tensions between underlying the modes and methods of modernization. Deregulation, the rise of powerful *chaebols* (family-owned conglomerates), and the narrative of progress at all costs (including capital and human) are all hallmarks of Korea's authoritarian past that have been linked to the rise of NRMs and their growing influence in business, government, and recent mass casualty events (Humpal 7-10) (Wagner 515-532). The contemporary renaissance of exorcism and religious horror cinema in Korea squarely focus their prevailing anxieties on syncretic NRMs that have recently been scrutinized for their role in national tragedies and scandals.

4.4 The Road as Linear History

Svaha: The Sixth Finger features an inordinate number of shots and scenes which take place or highlight the roads, tunnels, trains, and other infrastructure projects upon which Pastor Park, Na-Han (also called Gwang-mok), Geum-Hwa, and Kim Dong-Soo (the alias for the servant who is actually Kim Je-Seok) travel and interact. The recurring theme of transportation infrastructure begins with Pastor Park's first trip to Gangwon Province shrouded in the darkness of night after he receives surveillance information from his informant embedded in the Deer Mount Cult. His eyes are illuminated by the dashboard lights of his late-model BMW and his headlights projecting up the pavement of the empty highway. A single sign appears which reads *Gangwon-do*, a popular year-round tourist destination that happens to be the least populated and largest of the mainland provinces with a reputation for remote mountainous landscapes and traditional/historical sites. His car passes under the sign and in a hypnotically induced moment, like Hae-Won's bell-initiated journey to the past, a non-diegetic bell chimes. While this is later shown to be a very long J-cut and the bell chime originating from the Deer Mount Cult's religious service, this leads to another representational similarity between *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* and *Bedevilled*: the shrouding of the landscape as the protagonist crosses a threshold into the rural palimpsest. Immediately, fog begins to settle on the

highway, growing thicker as he ventures further into the night; another bell chimes and the shot J-cuts to the outside of a rainy provincial town with a building marked with a stag's head. Another bell chimes and the film cuts to a woman's hands holding a lotus delivering a sermon inside the Deer Mount Cult. The film's recurring use of fog and weather to obstruct or cloud any sense of place along the roads occurs again under different circumstances when the body of a young girl, a victim of Kim Je-Suk's guardians, is found within the cement caisson of a tunnel opening along a rainy mountain road. A clandestine or hidden environment concealed from the road is a motif carried throughout the film that I will address in a later section (*See Figure 4-2 below*).

Figure 4-2: Pastor Park's BMW barrels down the linear highway surrounded by a vast grey nothingness.

As the focus of my reading of the film, the roads connecting the urban and rural spaces are more than just a medium for Park to travel along during his investigation. They are interactive conduits between the rural and urban portraying a linear road as a linear and inexorable and invariant history. Bakhtin uses the term *chronotope* to refer to this kind of assigned meaning which concerns the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed" (84). In this instance, the *chronotope* of the road operates on two important levels: "First, as the means by which a text represents history; and second, as the relation between images of time and space in the text, out of which any representation of history must be constructed" (Ganser, Pühringer, and Rheindorf 2). The road in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* expresses the accepted narrative of religious modernization. The road is a single line that has a beginning (the past) and an end (the present) but lacks deviations and discursions. While the road starts from this singular narrative of history, the "accidental pluralism" symptomatic of Korea's "compressed modernity" (Chang, *Compressed Modernity and its Discontents* 31) begins to unfold a more discursive narrative of the nation's contemporary religious history. The roads spatially connect the coexisting "traditional, modern and postmodern trends" with the "indigenous, foreign and global elements" (33) and facilitate interaction between them. The resulting splintered and widespread "cultural, ideological and institutional hybrids between indigenous and foreign elements" (32) compose the syncretic faiths and spaces in the film. The surrounding mixture of urban and rural environments further backdrop the incongruent modernities of traditional and modern religions, while the primarily shrouded landscape embodies the very essence of syncretism, that is, deviating from the established road, occluded and mysterious. The road provides the pathway to rediscover a powerful, hidden, religious past that threatens to upend Korean history, religion, and therefore the dominant narrative of modernization upon which contemporary society is built.

Kyung-Hyun Kim discusses the Korean road film as expressing a need to reconstitute male (national) subjectivity, through the engagement of "hegemonic narrative conventions" (Kyung-Hyun Kim *Remasculinization* 54) of the genre itself. In *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, a similar reclamation project is attempted. As a horror film that denies the "nostalgia evoked in the ahistorical postmodern framework of time" (58), the investigation of Kim Je-Suk through first-hand experiences of his contemporaries provides a means to reconstruct the present by refiguring the past. Like *The Man with Three Coffins* (*Nageuneneun kileseodo swiji anhneunda*, Lee Jang-Ho, 1987), another Korean road film that relies on various strands of religious themes, one of which is shamanism, "contemporaneous time is rendered visible through images that hauntingly invoke history while still speaking in the present tense" (Kyung-Hyun Kim *Remasculinization* 58). However, where *The Man with Three Coffins* portrays "the tragic terms of present reality-where the memory of the [Korean] war has yet to fade" (58), *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* produces a hauntological critique of present religious circumstances surrounding syncretism that ruptures the accepted nationalist historical timeline, which has traditionally ignored Korea's syncretism. And like *The Man with Three Coffins*, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* does so through not only through the "hegemonic narrative conventions" (54) of the road genre but also through its prevalent themes and symbolism tying the road to progressively developing national identity and personal subjectivity.

This is an assertion similarly articulated by Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient in their reading of the railroad tracks in *Peppermint Candy* (*Bakhasatang*, Lee Chang Dong, 1999). In their analysis, the train tracks are a "connective tissue linking the fragmented temporal and spatial nodes of the film's self- sustained episodes" (127). In their assertion, they cite Lynne Kirby in drawing the visual metaphor of trains as vehicles "embodying modern nation-states" (127) that symbolize the "forward trajectory of history, promised both the real and imaginary suturing of far-flung citizens and scattered locales" (127), ostensibly "solidifying national identity in association with modern technology and territorial expansion" (127). Within the Korean context, the Japanese colonial ties to the history of the Korean rail system as well as its reshaping by foreign capital and technological interests in the post IMF years "reflects a troubling and not-completely-reconciled colonial history" (127). Chung and Diffrient conclude that the railroad emblematizes both the "protagonist's plunge into his repressed past but also that of the nation" (128). As a metaphor for modern Korean history, its tracks unfold against an affective landscape composed of the inseparable coalescence of personal pain and collective trauma that manifests a politicized discourse by stitching critical events that aroused antiforeign, nationalistic sentiments to the uncanny images of railroad tracks, [as a] ghostly palimpsest of Japanese colonialism" (128).

While Korea's train transportation and the railroad system are tied to the traumas and humiliation of Japanese colonialism and represent a disjointed and disenchanted chronology, my analysis of the highway system in *Svaha: The Sixth* Finger similarly suggests it is a connective tissue involving the reshaping of the Korean cultural and environmental landscape under Park Chung-Hee's authoritarian consolidation of power. The road as a personal and collective historical metaphor engulfed in an

affective landscape is a hallmark of the Korean Road film, to which I argue *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, and other syncretic horror films like *8th Night*, *The Chosen: Forbidden Cave*, and others firmly belong. In Korean cinema, the road genre is used not only to narrativize the failure of both personal development and national modernization, as in Im Kwon Taek's *Sopyonje* (*Sopyonje*, 1993) and Lee Man-Hui's *The Road to Sampo* (*Samporo-ui Gil*, 1975), but also uses the trope of the journey as a means to re-engage with the past as a separate place and the ruins of trauma left behind. As a country without vast geographical distances to traverse, the road film in Korean cinema often doubles for a re-exploration of time. More contemporary examples of Korean road films more specifically engage with traumatic historical events like in the aforementioned *Peppermint Candy*, and Jang Hoon's *A Taxi Driver* (*Taeksi Unjeonsa*, 2017).

Whereas the road film intertwines the characters' respective personal histories to collective memory and historical trauma, Pastor Park's journey along the road is not necessarily about his personal history, but rather, what he represents as an orthodox religious authority and academic. His investigation is intended to delegitimize both the Deer Mount Cult and the supernatural qualities of Kim Je-Suk as a historical and religious figure. This is accomplished in the film through Pastor Park's consolidation of the discursive history represented by Kim, the symbolic bridging of past and present along the road leads to destinations that diverge from the accepted authoritarian narrative of Korea's religious modernization and reveals information, and the disentangling of Korea's discursive and occluded religious history that is as repressed and traumatic as his own personal history. This indeterminate gap is articulated by the road lacking landmarks and identifiable landscape features. Where the traditional Korean road film highlighted the natural beauty of the landscape as a victim of exploitation by modernizing economic forces, the landscapes along the roads of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* are obscured, occulted by the vastness of nothingness.

It seems only fitting that *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, builds from the Korean road film and the Western and Shamanic Korean traditions of the exorcism film which emphasize a post-colonial rhetoric concerning the transgression of boundaries and a kind of "circulation; one thing passing into another, mutating, even melting identities along the way" (Gelder 35-38). This plays out in the film through the dissolving of duality and dichotomy; twins, the rural/urban, indigenous/imported to list a few examples, the idea of melding or overlapping of oppositional spaces of religious practices. Exorcism cinema portrays the conflict that "exists at th[is] intersection of the tensions between tradition and modernity" (Olson and Reinhard 72). This sentiment is echoed in the road film, which emphasizes modernity's gaze as a fundamental driving force of the narrative foregrounding "our desire for modernity, our desire to be perceived as moving (and quickly at that) against or beyond tradition" (Orgeron 2). *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* offers the road as more than just a means of getting from somewhere to somewhere else. Rather, the roads, highways, and railroads of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* are a physical mapping in space and time of a network of ideologies related to nation, tradition, and development. In light of the contemporary climate around the political and economic influence of NRMs in reconstructing Korea's religious history, the film also provides "a ready space for

exploration of the tensions and crises of the historical moment during which it is produced" (Cohan and Hark 2).

Where the previous two chapters of this thesis have focused on the urban-rural divide and the palimpsestic nature of the countryside as a site of interaction with the past, both through memory and history, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* builds from this rendering of relational time and space throughout the film by visually mapping an obscured history uncovered through investigation. Spatially, the roads of the film connect the city to the countryside. However, on the temporal level, the gaps between the modern urban cities and the more rural towns also reflect temporal distance, both in the time necessary to travel from the city to the country as well as the level of modern development. *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, perhaps more clearly than the other films in this thesis, depicts the temporal and spatial transgressions represented by Korea's rural horror cinema; the further one moves away from urban modernization, ostensibly, the further one regresses toward the horrors of historical trauma and the premodern shadow of shamanic syncretism.

4.5 The Road: Projection of Power and Authority

In my analysis of the highways traveled by Pastor Park, they are first and foremost read as spatial symbols of the forces that constructed them. While I addressed much of Park Chung-Hee's spatial legacy of modernization in the previous chapter of this thesis, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* represents the means of circulation by which his forceful policies of rapid economic growth and national integration, begun under the Economic Development Plan in 1962, were carried from the more modern metropolitan centers to the the villages he sought to transform. One of the largely overlooked aspects of his rural modernization initiatives is that they were made possible by connecting the country through large-scale, modern infrastructure projects: the construction of highways, trains, tunnels, etc. If we view his politics as a way of spatially deploying power (like on it, through it, or under certain spatial conditions), then we can think of President Park's 1967 campaign promises for national land development as a simple expression of control. These promises were part of his Second Economic Development Plan, which involved building four major expressways (Gyeongbu, Yeongdong, Honam, and Namhae Expressways). These actions can be seen as a material expression of his nationalist ideas, while symbolically bringing the Korean people together under his strong vision of renewed paternal authority. For more details on this, you can refer to chapter 3 of this thesis. Traveling the roads to reconstruct the dangers of a subverted religious history, Pastor Park operates from the position of modern and hegemonic authority. However, Park's contemporary orthodoxy is only one of the ways the highway serves as an authoritarian motif.

The construction and the extension of transport plays an important role in capitalist economic growth. Road development increases the reach of centralized political power by extending the influence of that power within the state. From a geo-political standpoint, Park Chung-Hee's policies that increased machine-based mobility were an attempt to overcome the distance between the modernized urban

spaces and the outlying rural communities. His expansion of infrastructure was also a way to accelerate the speed of modernization to provincial spaces through heightened mobility. His highways connected Koreans by providing a basic framework for reorganizing modern space/time and extending the influence of his authoritarian regime.

As a mechanism of control, the Yeongdong and Gyeongbu Expressways featured in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* consolidated the reach of Park Chung-Hee's influence both spatially and symbolically by connecting regions once considered geographically isolated and therefore outside of the immediate reach of the *SaeMaul Undong*'s promise of modernization. Through the geo-political necessity of developing a more robust transportation network, Park Chung-Hee's ambitious infrastructure construction projects like the expressways reshaped the time-space that connects Korea's developed urban centers and its underdeveloped regions, essentially bridging the gaps between staggered sites.

The Yeongdong and Gyeongbu Expressways are part of a larger highway system built in 1971 under the Park Chung-Hee regime as a means of expanding the nation's transportation network. However, these highways symbolize an extension of the nationalist imagination in part because they were constructed as a representation of national cohesion during a time of great upheaval. In his study of the Gyeongbu Expressway, Choi Byung Doo cites D.S. Ryu's research on a similar construction project, the '88 Olympic Expressway, as "a political symbol mobilized by the new military regime of the President Chun Doo-Hwan" (Ryu 254). Choi Byung Doo goes on to equate the highway construction projects with the "internal enforcement of centralized political power and the enhancement of social and spatial integration" (183). The product of which is the symbolic dominance of a modern technological civilization created through increased spatial accessibility as well as the circulation of people, materials, and information between nodes of commerce and networks. Highways and byways essentially extend the influence of central power to peripheral regions, and the new transport facilities which make use of the thoroughfares allow access to resources while also increasing the speed of transporting commodities. Politically, they strengthen military mobility, strategic capability, and enhance territorial control. In these ways, the construction of new transport networks by the Park Regime during the 1960's and early 1970's can be understood as a part of his territorial strategy or geo-strategy of political power. *(see figure 4-3 on the following page*)

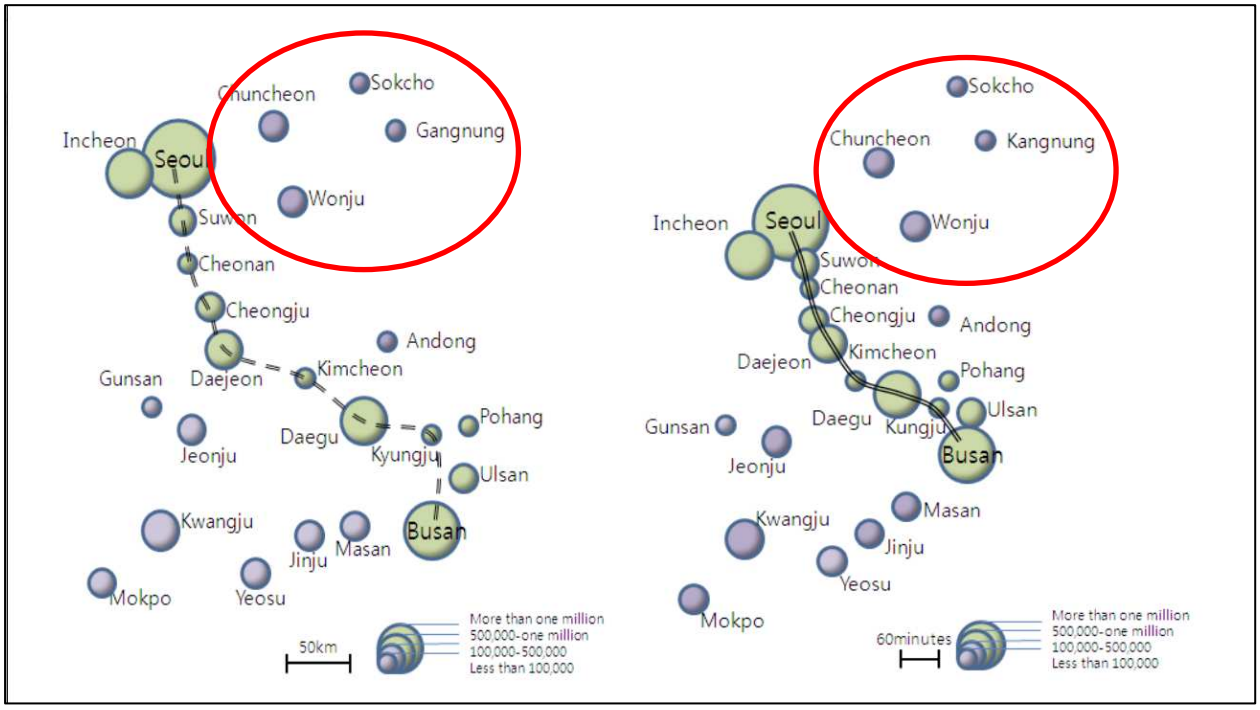

Figure 4-3 (left) illustrates the physical distance in time between cities before the Gyeongbu Expressway. (right) Illustrates the physical distance in time between the cities after the construction of the expressway, visually portraying how little highway infrastructure has closed the distance between the cities and the rural cities of Gangwondo (circled in red). (Choi B. 205)

There are a number of instances in the film which clearly convey the roads as the spatial assertion of authoritarian power, particularly near the film's climax when the full effect of infrastructure as a controlling device slows the characters movements and narrative momentum of the film. This occurs in an almost absurd moment as Gwang-Mok travels to surveil and murder Geum-Hwa and her sister. Making his trip from the Gangwon Province Department of Education where he has secured Geum-Hwa's papers, his progress is halted when his car is stopped by the arm of railroad crossing gate outside of Geum-Hwa's village. Despite his insidious intention, the film highlights this moment though the narrative progress grinds to a halt as he patiently waits for the road to clear. A few moments later, Geum-Hwa is shown disillusioned and contemplating running away to Seoul. She walks down the street, taking shelter in the bus station during a rainstorm, where Gwang-Mok sits waiting for his chance to take her life. At this moment, they are both surrounded by a cacophony of uniformed military. As an extension of military control, the presence of uniformed soldiers on the streets of Geum-Hwa's village is significant because the scene, while superficially suggesting protection and regulation, exposes the extent to which the military is a symbol of state power. The military exercise later obstructs (indirectly and directly) the fulfilment of Kim Je-Suk's prophecy and leads to his eventual demise. The power of the road, now more clearly and visibly identifiable as the military presence, reinstates the dominating presence of Park Chung-Hee and his religious reforms.

Figure 4-4: Kim Je-Suk (Kim Dong-Soo) is slowed to a stop by the recurring presence of military personnel.

In the film's climax, the paths of Pastor Park, Kim Je-Suk, Geum-Hwa, the police, and the military eventually all intersect on a rural mountain road. Military vehicles pass by Geum-Hwa, in effect reintegrating her back into the safety of military control, which extends centralized power via the highways. Kim Dong-Soo (the real Kim Je-Suk) who is driving to presumably murder the remaining girls and fulfil his prophecy, encounters a soldier directing traffic as a part of the same military practice exercise (*see figure 4-4 above*). It is in this moment of interaction in which the occulted nature of Korea's religious history represented by Kim Je-Suk is overtaken or subsumed by the infrastructural projection of authoritarian power associated with Korea's highway system represented by the military presence. The road, as a connector for Kim Dong-Soo to move into the urban present, has now slowed his progress. Kim Dong-Soo salutes the soldier, unaware that they have impeded his journey just long enough to allow Pastor Park, Gwang-Mok, and Yosep to catch up. The soldier salutes back to Kim Dong-Soo and this is ostensibly as far as Kim Dong-Soo gets to becoming fully reintegrated into the linear narrative of Korea's religious history. The syncretic threat to the Christian/Buddhist narrative collapses in one anachronistic interaction where the occulted religious past is extinguished by the orthodox religious present. For all the power he wields as a living god on earth, Kim Dong-Soo is not undone by military attack but rather slowed to a stop. The continued military presence in the film enforces immobility along Park Chung-Hee's modernization project which helped to stamp out backward, rural spiritual practices.

Ultimately, the highway system as a physical projection of spatio-temporal expansion and symbolic force is about the mastery of time. The final destination of the mobility politics in the film is not geo-politics, but what Paul Virilio terms "chrono-politics," in which "distribution of territory becomes the distribution of time" (Virilio 115). As the discursive religious history represented by Kim Dong-Soo collides with the hegemonic discourse represented by the military as a repeated visual motif, Pastor Park puts the pieces of the puzzle together in a flashback sequence that reveals the identity substitution twist. In a second twist, Gwang-Mok has secretly slipped into the backseat of Kim Dong-Soo's car. Gwang-Mok learns the truth of Kim Je-Suk as Kim Dong-Soo explains his mastery of time: "Time makes humans rush through their lives and die. However, I won the race against time. I am the inextinguishable light." The explanation offered by Kim Dong-Soo is further indicative of his place in the past and the anachronistic nature of his existence in the present. However, his attempt to transgress

the chasm between the past and present is thwarted when Gwang-Mok strangles Kim Dong-Soo, causing an inversion.

The disorientation which results from the clash of time periods is described by ‘It’ as Kim Dong-Soo and Gwang-Mok barrel roll through their car accident along the mountain road, as an inverse of physical space. ‘It’ poetically describes this in the line, “The sky becomes the earth, and the earth becomes the sky.” Though Kim Dong-Soo emerges from the wreck unscathed, he is stranded along the road. His prophecy comes true when the trail of gasoline leading him back to the car is ignited by Gwang-Mok. Kim Dong-Soo is engulfed in flames. This occurs while parallel cuts link the simultaneous deaths of Kim Dong-Soo and ‘it’ further assert their inability to exist as participants in the current religious climate of modernized Korea. The history they represent, though equally as valid and legitimate (or even moreso), is incompatible with the contemporary timeline.

Figure 4-5: The closest urban center erupts in Christmas fireworks following the death of syncretic figure Kim Je-Suk.

The moment Pastor Park and Yosep stand at the feet of Kim Dong-Soo’s lifeless body, fireworks erupt from the closest urban center. (s*ee figure 4-5 above*) A Christmas celebration marking the death of Kim Dong-Soo and ‘it’ erupts from the now-visible urban periphery. The historical religious practices survive and prosper while the idea of a Korean messianic figure, though portrayed in the film as a true supernatural being, has been extinguished. This reinforces the dominant historical account of the failure of backward rural superstitions of indigenous religious practice. The moment is pointedly bittersweet. As an anticolonial hero, religious messiah, and philanthropist, Kim Dong-Soo is a figure that represents the best parts of Korean identity, while also signaling those contradictory to the narrative of Korea’s modernization and the role religion played in reshaping Korean identity under Park Chung-Hee. Because the established religious power structure and narrative is founded on modernization, the inability of the discursive religious history unearthed by Pastor Park to coexist within it necessitates that it be reintegrated. This can only occur with the erasure of Kim Dong-Soo and ‘It’ which occurs at the end of the film.

Through its representational dichotomies of the cities and countryside, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* portrays the cultural complexity of consequences of creating accessibility between spaces of uneven development as a nationalist exercise of political power and influence. In the film, the city of Seoul and the 5 smaller satellite towns, Taebaek, Jeongseon, Jecheon, Danyang, and the centrally located Nokyawon are connected by a transport network which allows those traversing the distances between to enjoy a reduction of time-distance. which spatially expresses both ties of the past and present. The ease of accessibility afforded by improved infrastructure has the unintended effect of spatially demarcating disparity and how those spaces are understood within the idea of nation. By extension, the infrastructure is the method by which control is maintained and power projected in the film.

Not only is Pastor Park an investigative body sanctioned by urban religious power structures to regulate and legitimize an agent of a central governing body, but from a purely political standpoint the film uses infrastructure as a means of reducing travel times across spaces as a tool for the exertion of military influence and control. In places like a road, where both location and time are notably uncertain and constantly changing, this infrastructure, initially intended to drive modernization through the flow of national commerce and military activities, serves as a tangible embodiment of ideology. In this case, it's the path that reflects how national narratives are enforced and the peripheries of accepted deviation. The shortening of time-space distance via the highway projects of Park Chung-Hee has led not to a meeting of the urban and rural as interactively engaged with the same time/space, but rather competing representations of the same national and religious essence. Unsurprisingly, by the time the credits roll, the syncretic threat of Kim Je-Suk will have been subverted, contemporary religious power reaffirmed, and the illusion of developmental uniformity in Korea’s modernization reimposed.

4.6 Non-Place as Occluded History

Rather than a road surrounded by a landscape with sweeping shots of the mountains and rivers of rustic scenery, the roads of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* are markedly disconnected and shrouded in an unrelenting haze. The landscapes along the highways of the film are rendered as abstract, non-geographical, or as non-places because of the accelerated mobility typical of contemporary (urban) societies. They lack identifiable locative markers or connection to recognizable sites or the movement of characters along them, and therefore lack any kind of defined *place-ness*, creating a *non-place.* Non-place is defined as “a space where there remains a bleakness without producing social solidarity or social emotions, though it is a space of circulation, communication, and consumption” (Augé 178). Intended for the circulation of goods and ideas, roads are included in Augé’s list of non-places as transitory sites displaying the above features. According to Augé, places are localities that come to existence by virtue of being relational, deeply historical, and intimately connected to identity, both social and individual.

As the contemporary religious authority, Park's journey to the rural past is affected by the sense of placelessness. For those who operate within the skin of a new modernity like Pastor Park, his privileged stance as anti-superstition, it seems only natural that his perceptual construction of history is a linear road, suggesting a tunnel vision interpretation of history. Without being a definitive and identifiable place, the broader representation of the countryside as a featureless abstraction in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* provokes ambivalent emotions in those who no longer live there or identify with it. It becomes a construction of imagined space which is an empty vessel to be filled with an as yet discovered "vanishing authenticity" (Ivy 22). The road lacks direction, and the landscape is indiscernible from the car windows, Park traces fragments of religious history back through time and place. (*see figures 4-6 below*) His access to these rural temporalities is shrouded in non-placeness because the path of history remains a mystery at this point of the film. One such instance occurs when Pastor Park is traveling with his assistant and *Deer* Mount Cult spy Joseph to the youth detention facility from which Kim Je-Suk adopted his generals.

Figure 4-6: The roads connecting the urban modern to the rural past, disconnected from recognizable temporal features.

The road, as well as the recognizably rural and metropolitan spaces of the film, are uncanny blendings of physical space and psychological projection. The roads in particular, are psychological projections of mis mapping or a spatial representation of gaps in time. Like Hae-Won's foggy boat trip to the island of Mudo in *Bedevilled*, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*'s "defamiliarization of the landscape" (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Hallyu* 26) suggests an affectivity of space. The landscapes similarly become a site of inverted collective consciousness upon which audiences "produce sensations, affects, and feelings" as a part of "a modern subjecthood of interiority" (26). In this instance, the collective subjectivity is expressed as indeterminacy of Korea's accepted historical religious narrative. This occurs on a

personal level for Pastor Park as the preeminent point-of-view of the investigation who himself suffers from a crisis of faith.

The combination of individual and collective affectivity of landscapes in Korean road films is used as a way of capturing the microcosmic aspects of broader political and cultural apparatuses, and vice versa. Hyeon Seon Park similarly points out that *The Road to Sampo* and other Park Chung-Hee regime-era films allegorize “the ordinary people's experience of loss and deviation in the swirling speed of modernization” through a “seemingly perpetual, temporality of cold winter” that delivers “the political and cultural atmosphere of the time, as the 1970s in the history of South Korean cinema has been remembered as an era of "darkness" and "decay” (*Road to Sampo* 192). In much the same way that the island of *Bedevilled* merges the individual and collective national memory of colonial sexual exploitation and violence, the roads of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* portray an affective presentation of landscape, saturated with both collective and individual memory and mood.

The road offers a simplistic rendition of history based on a closed system; an originating defined place in the past and a defined “destiny” wherever the road leads. In this instance, the destination is known and is pre-ordained. No matter what is discovered from Pastor Park’s investigation of the past, the present cannot be changed. Rather than representing the road as a space for mobility, deviation, and transformation, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* demonstrates orthodox religious history’s unflinching resistance to an open and more inclusive historical record. This is of course in step with the compressed circuit of authoritarian modernization. Through its enclosed landscape, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* offers an aesthetic criticism of Korea’s narrative of religious modernization and its Othered and unintegrated religious identities. In doing so, the film visualizes NRMs perceived disruptive and indeterminable experience of time and space.

The peculiar aesthetics of the film's affective landscape are not limited to weather. Part of Pastor Park’s obscured view from his car windows stems from the speed in which he travels the road. One of the liminal effects of non-place-ness is the result of what Virilio calls “The strategic value of nonplaceness of speed (that is, the situation free from place through speed) has decisively substituted that of place.” In this way, “speed becomes power itself,” while “stop is regarded as death” (115). Being free from place is, in this instance, also a result of speed. As the defining feature of the highway system, speed of accessibility allows Pastor Park to interact with the rural past almost instantaneously. Outside the windows of his car, the landscape is subject to motion blur. However, as I have discussed in the previous section of this chapter, as the film nears its climax, character movements along the roads are interrupted. As their journeys slow, so too does the perceived shortening of time/space due to motion blur, inevitably resulting in the collapse of all obscured landscapes as competing timelines into the singular visible dominant timeline. This is essentially a restoration of the present after the syncretic and occluded religious history offered through the Kim Je-Suk narrative is erased when time and space converge along the road during the film’s climax.

Each of Pastor Park's expeditions reveal that his modern presuppositions regarding the Deer Mount Cult is more founded in contemporary prejudice than in the practices of the cult itself. This is visually portrayed when, later, as Pastor Park receives confirmation of Kim Je-Suk's divinity, the non-placeness of the roads begins to clear. The fog lifts, as if to suggest the religious history is itself being clarified. The road becomes a place: the mountains and clouds reflect sunshine, and the religious history of the historical figure Kim Je-Suk is revealed as real. Park accepts his preconceived notions of the Deer Mount Cult as the result of the dominant narrative surrounding accepted religious practice in Korea. After the revelation, Gwang-Mok is shown carrying Geum-Hwa from the car into a bucolic field. This field is different from the brief glimpse of rural scenery offered earlier in the film. Reflecting the infrastructure of development, wind turbines create a sense of meshing together two very different elements which the film to this point had kept separate. The shot from inside the car, at a Dutch angle, implies the incongruities of the rural past with the rural present (*see Figures 4-7 below*).

Figure 4-7: The present imposes itself on the rural past. The wind farm shot at a Dutch angle foreshadowing the roll-over car accident that upends the past and present.

As Nechung Tenpa and Pastor Park walk along a rural road showcasing the sky and mountains for the first time, Nechung explains Kim Je-Suk's prophecy as *maitreya* (a Buddha of the future). Rather than a non-place, the gap, previously represented by the placeless roads disconnected from the rural past and urban present, is filled with clarity of location, time, and knowledge. At this point in the film, the road becomes more than just a connector: it becomes the path of revelation. Nechung Tenpa explains the Kim Je-Suk divinity, and in doing so, reveals the missing information Park needed to disentangle the mystery of the book and the murdered children. (s*ee figure 4-8 on the following page*) The past cannot be changed, but the present, as understood through the discursive history of the past, can be enacted upon. At this point, the path between the past and present comes into focus and Park evaluates the past as the steps which led to his present circumstances. Despite Park's privileged position reliant on a singular, colonial narrative of religious history, he recognizes the legitimacy of Kim Je-Suk's syncretic shamanism. The traffic light in front of him turns red. He can no longer move forward because he has reached contemporaneity along the discursive religious narrative he has been following. He physically cannot go further without putting the pieces together as a means of incorporating his presupposed religious history with the newly uncovered and occulted history. The

mystery of the numbers, the photographs, and the missing children, once thought to have nothing to do with another, are in fact discursive elements to the larger story.

Figure 4-8: (right) Pastor Park walks with Nechung Tenpa gathering information. The sky clears. (left) Parks return to the modern is marked with the consumer driven model of urban faiths.

More than just glimpses of urbanity from the car, the signs of consumer capitalism, Baskin Robbins and Innis Free, force a perspective change for Park. He is surrounded by the economic forces brought about by Park Chung-Hee's religious reforms which reshaped Korean society and set it on the path toward modernization (*see figure 4-8 above*). This blends economics, religion, and modernization as inseparable bedfellows in contemporary Korea. One and the same, the neon lights of boutique shops and Christmas decorations blur together. Rather than being propelled forward through the progress of modernization, Pastor Park must return to the past to disentangle the syncretism which threatens his understanding of the present. Along the highways which dictate how the rural past has become the modern present, Pastor Park and Yosep begin their trip to the Gangwon-do once again, this time the familiarity of the neon lights and signage background the cross hanging from Park's rear-view mirror. Once separated by the placelessness of the road, the plural temporalities represented by the rural past and modern present begin to fold in on one another. The road becomes something else when the mysterious numbers and antiquated, occulted nomenclature are revealed as nothing more than nicknames and modern codes for social security numbers. The two distinct time periods related to religious modernization are revealed as different versions of the same story, and the road connecting them is a projection of modern political power over the fringe faiths lost to history.

4.7 Investigation and the Nationalist Narrative of Korea's Religious History

Navigating *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*'s complex terrain where different times, beliefs, and cultures intersect is Pastor Park, who assumes a crucial role as the mediator between what have historically been very distinct understandings of religious history and their links to Korea's rapid development under compressed modernity. Like Hae-Won in *Bedevilled*, and Hae-Guk in *Moss*, Pastor Park leaves the city for the countryside and a contemporary connection to history and/or national memory. His task is to uncover the mysteries of the Deer Mount Cult, its heresies, and their potential threat to Korea's contemporary religious establishment. However, Pastor Park is less concerned with spiritual truths as he is with the personal economic consequences of exposing those truths. As a religious

journalist, he legitimizes and delegitimizes religions as he sees fit, seemingly the result of occasional curried favors and monetary compensation. Near the beginning of the film, Park returns to his office after being assaulted by nuns throwing eggs. It is at this point that the motivations and reasoning behind Park's investigations are made clear. In conversation with Deaconess Shim, his secretary, he reveals that his research institute is little more than a front for an unofficial religious licensing publication that is paid to publish articles denouncing or legitimizing religious groups for the right price. Park is revealed as a man who buys designer clothes with church money, and publishes articles for profit, timing their release to maximize the economic control of his Christian and Buddhist financiers. His investigation into the Deer Mount Cult begins as an economic venture, to exploit the syncretic nature of their religious practice because, as Pastor Park quips "You see, with Buddhist organizations, the amount of money jumps to another level." And while his economic motivations are personal, his investigation quickly uncovers facts and archival evidence that contradicts the dominant religious narrative as set by his Buddhist and Christian financiers. Pastor Park's skepticism of Kim Je-Suk and the Deer Mount Cult is a part of his position within the church and the governmentally constructed account of Korea's religious history. However, this skepticism gradually wears down by the end of the film as he uncovers Kim Je-Suk's very real past and supernatural abilities, all while the audience learns of Park's troubled past and spiritual doubt.

For all his scepticism, Park is part of a larger system which upholds the idea of a singular nationalist religious history. By working for the Buddhist and Christian religious establishment, Pastor Park's job is to further cement the dominant nationalist religious discourse. As explained in previous sections, this discourse pairs Korea's modernization with the establishment of Christian orthodox churches and the nation's deeply rooted Buddhist cultural fabric, most unabashedly formed during the Park Chung-Hee regime. The necessity of establishing this kind of dominant narrative is explained by Homi Bhabha's assertion that nationalist discourses attempt to project "the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress" through "the narcissism of self-generation" (1).

The actions of those in control stabilize and propagate the state; neither deviation nor alternative perspectives are allowed. However, by the end of the film, Pastor Park's discoveries expose that this concept of nation is always riddled with contradiction. Through his investigation, Park uncovers multiple legitimate historical narratives that have contributed to modern Korean religion and, more significantly, addresses the diverse syncretic practices that inform many of Korea's contemporary NRMs. The alternative historical narratives Park sees elucidate the enduring discursive elements that contradict the official narrative of a single dogmatic religious history from pre-developed to developed nation, which suggests "a much more transitional social reality" (Bhabha 1). The criminal investigation thus progresses in what Youngmin Choe, in her analysis of post memory in DMZ films, suggests is an "*allochronistic* manner—that is, stating difference in terms of difference in time, where tradition belonged in a past before modernity—which produces alternate versions of the past, during which witnesses are interrogated regarding their accounts of events, and then organized into a narrative of truth that approximates the past" (Choe, *Postmemory* 320). An identical memory effect is

produced during the course of Pastor Park's interviews with those who knew Kim Je-Suk; their testimonies constellate a more complete, albeit questionable portrait of the controversial historical and religious figure.

This concept is further reflected in the indeterminacy of the newly uncovered religious history of Kim Je-Suk, which is a product of information regulation and economic influence indicative of the dualistic and contrasting "Janus-faced" discourse on the nation; incompletely-complete because it is constantly being rewritten and revised. As such it is an example of the discourse of the nation, which is that it "may be partial because [it] is in medias res; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image" (Bhabha 2-3). Like the immortal Kim Je-Suk, Pastor Park finds himself caught between traditional religious history and the transitional forces of the historical moments he is investigating. Park is a figure placed between times, places, and varied narratives of modernization, colonialism, and nation. During his investigation, Park consistently negotiates between the fragmented and discursive historical evidence and the prevailing nationalist narrative ingrained in the collective memory of the Korean people: the narrative intertwined with Park Chung-Hee's symbolic and geographic nationalist legacy, as well as his initiatives for rural transformation, which have left their imprint on the landscape. However, through his investigation, Pastor Park does uncover that the narrative constructed around religious history is at least in part an occulted history of nationalism, colonial participation, and supernatural transformation.

When Pastor Park visits the Buddhist Abbott's home to question him regarding Kim Je-Suk, they trace Kim's historical records through the various newspaper clippings. One of the places mentioned in the media records is the Yangju Juvenile Detention Center. Once again, Park travels along the road, this time in the passenger seat. A fog engulfs the road and the landscape with an eerie sense of directionlessness. No signs for roads or even shops can be seen. The real history of Kim Je-Suk and his place within the annals of Korean religious history and colonialism has yet to be unearthed. As his late model BMW speeds down the highway, completely devoid of traffic, Pastor Park provides context to his crisis of faith and its origins. The death of his friend's young family has weighed heavily on his mind, and he wonders if there might actually be a living god somewhere in the world. The idea of a physical human being endowed with god-like powers is a foundational messianic belief for many of the NRMs and, outside of Jesus Christ or Buddha, a heresy to the contemporarily anchored Christian and Buddhist Orthodoxy portrayed in the film. Outside of the developed urban environs, the illusions of progress and development lose their hold. "Where is our god? And what is he doing?" seem like unusual questions for a pastor to be asking. However, traveling away from the certainty of the developed urban environment toward the uncertainty of an occulted religious history, Park, in many respects, represents the contemporary disillusionment with foreign religions and the desire for Koreans to believe something more domestically rooted. The road of linear history is surrounded by a powerful, hidden, religious past that threatens to upend Korean history, religion, and therefore the dominant narrative of modernization upon which contemporary society is built.

The Investigative aspect of the narratives present in *Bedevilled* and *Moss* is most cogently expressed in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* as a film about how the past, no matter how deeply or institutionally repressed, is re-expressed contemporarily. In "Postmemory DMZ in South Korean Cinema, 1999–2003," Youngmin Choe analyzes cinematic representations of North/South Korean relations, as told through the investigation trope. According to Choe, "depositions of suspects and investigators' reports against the background of believable historical circumstances, can also be said to constitute a history of how popular culture imagines these political relations" (*Postmemory* 317). With cinema's powerful ability to disseminate images and narrative, historical material is "ripe for transformations, distortions, and realignments in the work of postmemory" (317). Re-examination of the historical past, particularly as it relates to political authority, has been a preeminent trend in South Korea over the past twenty years. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a South Korean governmental body, established on December 1, 2005, responsible for re-examining and investigating controversial or unrectified historical incidents that occurred from the Japanese colonial period (1910) through the end of authoritarian rule in South Korea in 1993 (Hanley 2). Since 2005, South Korea has been confronting its dark past in hopes of finding transitional justice for those affected. Of particular interest were the numerous atrocities committed by various government agencies during Japan's occupation of Korea, the Korean War, and the authoritarian governments that ruled afterwards. Executions, persecutions, human-trafficking, political prisoners, and human-rights abuses have all been petitioned for investigation. However, a re-examination of religious persecution has yet to be raised.

There has been a renewed interest in a balanced historical record regarding Korea's religious history. Scholars like David Chung, James Huntley Grayson, and others have set out to reconstruct a religious history of Korea more inclusive of the influence of non-dominant and folk religions, thus complicating the perceived singular narrative and timeline. In much the same way, the films of syncretic horror explore this re-articulation of history through investigative narratives that often portray discursive histories.

4.8 Korea's Post-Modern Religious Landscape

From the opening scenes of *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, it becomes clear that the crux of religious horror is no longer primarily based around the beliefs and practices of arrested rural villages and their shamans as a repressed premodern Other. Instead, the horror lies in the breakdown between the premodern shamanic Other and the contemporary orthodoxy via syncretism. This is expressed in how the premodern beliefs and practices have been reintegrated, creating uncanny representations of contemporary faiths and practices. On one level, Korean religious horror films still portray the spiritual effects of breaching the threshold of modernization with the premodern or vice versa. For example, in the film *The Chosen: Forbidden Cave*, a possession stemming from a family curse from an isolated historical event, passed from one generation to the next. However, on another level, beyond the temporally modern and premodern, the breach invariably translates spatially; the possessed

mother affected by the curse must travel to the serpent caves outside an isolated village on JeJu island to alleviate the spiritual illness. Harkening back to the classic tropes of Korean Shamanic Exorcism cinema, the clash of the premodern and modern often occurs in satellite towns and suburbs, sites not wholly metropolitan or modern. More specifically for the focus of this chapter, the road as a transitional non-place reflects the same transformational qualities of a post-modernized Korea where epistemic grand narratives of the nation's religious modernization have seemingly buckled. In these gaps the palimpsestic bleed-through from the layering of chronology and anachronism underneath emerge.

Like the obfuscated landscape along the highway, the coalescence of vastly different religious traditions and histories has resulted in grey areas, between which the traditional and the modern lose their separability. Progress is no longer seen as a singular vision but rather tainted by uneven development and further complicated by the blending of tradition, history, and memory. The once sharply divided urban and rural registers are no longer purely oppositional; instead, they intertwine in a liminal manner, existing in a syncretic milieu. Within this context, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* portrays a Korea where orthodox religion, shamanism, and even science fail to provide adequate answers to a society that embraces blended beliefs and a palimpsestic sense of time and space.

The film opens with teenage Geum-Hwa standing in her village road, staring at the face of black goat while her voice-over describes the circumstances of her birth and family plight. A match cut to another black goat begins a flashback. The events are dated 1999 Yeong-Wol, Gangwon-do, complete with washed-out sepia color grading painting an image of rural Yeong-Wol as largely unchanged by the passing of the first fifteen years of the new millennium. The seamless transition between the events of 1999 and 2014 is significant. The necessity of color grading to depict past events is a technique often used to differentiate time periods. However, its use in the opening sequence also serves to highlight the sameness or unchanging rurality over time. The unchanging and non-developing countryside of the flashback in the film's contemporary timeline is telling. This opening sequence with its flashback and accompanying voiceover is more than just filling in gaps of exposition pertaining to the backstory. It is the first instance of a recurring temporal motif in the film in which rurality is the site of memory, in constant contact with the past (*see figures 4.16 and 4.17 below*).

Figure 4-9: Sepia toned 1999 and standard color 2014 depict little discernible development.

The village reeks of connections to the natural and animal world, a place still in the purview of premodern supernatural forces. Like any village suffering depopulation and decline, misty with morning fog, the necessary agricultural subsistence of the locals becomes even more evident when overwhelmed by the browns and greys of winter settling on the farming village and surrounding valley. The camera pans toward a corrugated tin barn to reveal two luxury import automobiles parked in front of an otherwise humble and provincial setting. Strikingly out of place, the cars indicate the disconnection of the drivers from the modest environment and villagers. A veterinarian and his assistant sit outside the structure, despondent looks on their faces, resigned to the mixture of superstitious disbelief and helplessness. The barn door behind them is closed and sealed with a yellow shamanistic talisman repelling other evils that have yet to beset the interior (*See figure 4-10 below*).

Figure 4-10: (left) Exhausted veterinarians sit outside the bard where an exorcism ritual is taking place. (right) The syncretic paraphernalia of Geum-Hwa's grandmother.

Inside the barn, the pulsing drums and sounds of the *piri*, a reed flute plays along to the trance-like drumming of ritual music. The shaman, half covered in the blood of sacrificed chickens and goats, performs a *gut* involving a sacrifice to spirits to performatively battle the evil spirits thought to have cursed the afflicted farm. Sacred objects surround the shaman and musicians, and sacrificed black goats contrast the living goat which held Geum-Hwa’s stare in the opening sequence. The camera pulls out to reveal the shaman’s losing battle. Dead and dying cattle are strewn about the barn. One final calf is left standing, indicating the evil has not yet totally overwhelmed the farmer’s herd. Desperately, the shaman manages one final assault on the malady with her blessed blades and the fervent prayers of friends and family. Surrounded by the paraphernalia of the *gut*, a kind of exorcism ceremony to ward off the spirits plaguing the livelihood of the suffering persons, the shaman spins and dances in an attempt to ward off the negative energies responsible for the decimation of the livestock. The atmosphere reaches a fever pitch until the shaman loses the battle and the final cow falls to the ground. The village by-standers watch the shaman in disbelief; he is impotent, powerless. Having failed, the shaman, her assistant, and the cattle farmer talk briefly of the quiet family on the hill. The family's arrival coincided with a series of maladies inflicted on the surrounding farms. The shaman’s group ascends the hill to the home occupied by Geum-Hwa and her family. Peering through closed curtains and locked doors, the reclusive family recoils from the supernatural and possibly physical confrontation.

In the next sequence inside the home, night descends, and Grandma uses the time for her peculiar brand of religious prayer and penance (*See figure 4-10 on the previous page*). Geum-Hwa less-than-enthusiastically pantomimes speaking in tongues, no doubt forced to participate in her grandmother's unorthodox rituals. After a brief conversation between Geum-Hwa and her grandfather, the shaman and her assistant watch the outside of their home. They make their move and enter the property through a gate adjoining the prison which holds Geum-Hwa's sister among the cages of dogs raised for meat; in and of itself a rare display of the backwardness of rural villages at a time when many dog farms have been closed by province and central government legislation. Wielding bamboo, a common tool for shamans, the Shaman attempts to confront the evil behind the door. The weakness of the shaman is exposed when she is bitten by a snake and chased out of the complex by a deluge of snakes from under the door.

Where countryside portrayed in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* is rife with feckless shamans, useless medical doctors, and most importantly a dominating syncretic milieu, the modernized city suffers from its own spiritual crises. Religious authority and regulation weed out heretical and syncretic sects, while Christian and Buddhist orthodoxy intermingle their practices and celebrations. Despite their hypocrisy, rural religious groups operating outside the aegis of central religious authority are investigated by religious scholars and publications funded by the church; those who fall outside the boundaries or favor of religious orthodoxy are excommunicated. As if to add insult to injury, the impotence and irrelevance of shamanism in dealing with contemporary evils in the countryside is made only clearer in the opening scenes of Seoul. In the lecture conducted by Pastor Park, in which he highlights various "charlatans" and fake prophets who form cults as an economic endeavor, his PowerPoint presentation singles out practices like the one which had failed in the barn in the previous scene. At the end of Park's lecture, his shilling and request for donations borders on hypocrisy.

The clear connection between rural space and traditional religion found in Korean Exorcism cinema is problematized by the chaotic and syncretized religious landscape portrayed in metropolitan Seoul, a product of their connective transportation infrastructure. In much the same way that *Bedevilled* depicted Korea's misogynistic male postcolonial subject as a contemporarily ubiquitous product of foreign influence on culture, the temporal bleed over of the horrors of the past has morphed as Korea has internationalized and urbanized. In the film, the dangers represented by the premodern Other have already integrated into contemporary Korea through the free exchange of the traditional and the modern. The blended city and countryside illustrate the danger is no longer the differences between the urban and rural religion, instead, it is their lack of delineation that threatens to undo the religious and spatiotemporal boundaries rooted in Korea's modernization.

Figure 4-11: Syncretic nuns protest Pastor Park, and a Buddhist Monk celebrates Christmas in Syncretic Seoul.

Svaha: The Sixth Finger's shifted contact zones are spaces so mixed and hybridized that Pastor Park investigates urban religious sects as well as those found in the countryside. At the beginning of the film an order of nuns throws rotten fruit and vegetables at Pastor Park outside of his office after Park himself wrote an exposé on them, reporting on their blasphemous and non-orthodox practices. Even the urban associated faiths that share no dogmatic connection or history are working together to delegitimize the syncretic and traditional faiths, despite that what they too are doing is syncretic in nature. The decadently portrayed Christian and Buddhist faiths work hand in hand to maintain supremacy and distribute illegitimacy to heretical sects. Monks and Abbots drive Land Rovers, drink expensive whiskey, and hire scandal sheet writers like Pastor Park as foot soldiers to do their dirty work while they scheme to maintain their pre-eminence. As modern urban faiths associated with Korea's economic miracle tied to authoritarian development, Christianity and Buddhism even hold joint religious services and celebrations like a Christmas celebration at a Buddhist temple (*see figure 4-11 above*), reference and quote the other's scripture as a means of connecting ideologies or relevant interpretations. Their reach and influence extend as far into the countryside as they dare to travel.

The amalgamation of traditional indigenous elements and modernized foreign influences in *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* is symptomatic of the rapid changes resulting from what Kyung-Sup Chang terms "compressed modernity" (Chang, *Compressed Modernity and its Discontents* 34). This compression engenders a unique form of simultaneity, where disparate temporalities and spaces coexist in a complex interplay. Historical incidents and external dependencies have led to a proliferation of "cultural, ideological, and institutional hybrids between indigenous and foreign elements," presenting Korea with an "accidental pluralism" (31) of temporal experiences. Chang's analysis illustrates how "Western-borrowed elements" have become central to state and social organizations, while "indigenous or traditional elements" (33) are selectively incorporated into peripheral segments. The hegemonic dominance exerted through economics by the Christian and Buddhist faiths echo Korea's authoritarian developmental period, marked by "patriarchal political authoritarianism, chaebol's despotic and monopolistic business practices, abuse and exclusion of labor, neglect of basic welfare rights, ubiquitous physical dangers, and ideological self-negation" (34). These elements represent the hazards and challenges that characterize the distinct trajectory of South Korean modernity.

The blending of urban and rural space and their associated religions also has temporal implications wherein-by the premodern and modern times exist simultaneously. The resulting heterotemporality, in turn, calls into question the illusion of singular linear time which is asserted by nationalist discourses of development. Bliss Cua Lim suggests that the fiction of a homogeneous national culture is founded on this ascendancy of homogeneous time (Lim 34-35). In her analysis of how spiritual conflict like hauntings and exorcisms work to undo the illusion of homogenous time, Bliss Cua Lim cites historian Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum's idea that the clock is an "index of urban modernization" (Bliss Cua Lim 20) or a tool that naturalizes historical modern time as universal. This is oppositional to the world of spirits and ghosts that compose the traditional rural shamanic milieu in which the intermingling of past and present creates a more subjective, less linear, and more flexible experience of time.

Not limited to Korean horror films, Frances Gateward writes at length about the defining characteristic of Korean cinema is the fragmentation of time, instead, they rely on "narrational strategies that deviate from the paradigm of linear progression" (Gateward 193) that "offer a repetition of events from varied perspectives, parallel-time structures, regressive causal momentum, violations of the space/time continuum, time travel, and most common, and perhaps most telling, a reliance on flashbacks to explicate the present" (193). Hye Seung Chung and David S. Different's similarly analyze of reverse chronology in Korean cinema and contend that "reverse chronology is not only a narrative maneuver to undermine the hegemony of a linear progressive temporality but also a subversive ideological apparatus" (Chung and Diffrient 126) that allows for a reorientation of history from a critical perspective. By questioning a single linear narrative of religion and history, it becomes necessary to question the singular narrative of modernization, because of the ties shared between Christianity and Buddhism to Korea's economic and industrial development (Kirsteen Kim 212-236). Suffused with disparate and alternative historical frameworks, the blending of truth, fact, and ambiguity create sensations as frightening as any horrific, supernatural, or spiritual terrors.

The common use of broken chronology in Korean horror cinema creates liminality which, through the blending, whether it be spatial, temporal, or the blending of realism and the fantastical in horror films, is an important critical device. Bliss Cua Lim's asserts that this coexistence between disparate and seemingly incongruous elements in East Asian cinema articulates "symbolic excess through which the active force of the supernatural provides a mechanism of critiquing capitalist enhancements" (135) like those offered by the promise of modernization. The layering of chronology exposes that "homogeneous time translates disparate, non-coinciding temporalities into its own secular code because the persistence of supernaturalism often insinuates the limits of disenchanted chronology" (13). This generational interaction involving the recurrence of events works to undo the homogeneous space and the linear time consciousness, departing from "notions of progress and historical chronology" (151). In this way, contemporary shamanic horror films like *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* often complicate notions of a singular national culture at any given point in history through the overlapping and influencing of disparate ways of being. In effect, they offer a critique of modernizations' unifying mirage of progress. The inability of shamanism and modernization to coexist

in [contemporary] shamanic horror films reflects underlying tension of traditional national character at odds with post-colonial identity. The spatial implications portrayed in the film emphasize the interplay between different belief systems. Not only does this disrupt the perceived progress of modernization, but for the purposes of this study, further articulates the significance of spatial roots, tradition, and historical trauma as foundational to the contemporary syncretic horror film.

4.9 Conclusion

On its surface, *Svaha: The Sixth Finger* tells the story of a group of economically invested religious figures operating as the agents of powerful urban religious sects intent on rebutting the legitimacy of a syncretic rural spiritual group. At the end of the film, the syncretic group is in fact proven to be the only religious system that actually exercises agency. However, the underlying conflict is more indicative of the problematic political and religious narratives constructed around the dominant narrative of Korea's modernization. In its own way, the film offers a critique of religion's place in the authoritarian narrative of Korea's modernization. At the end of the film, the film's critique yields to the ingrained and nationalist authoritarian version of religious history which involves propagating the fear of an internal Other and a rejected sociocultural reshaping of how a nation views itself.

The impulse to return to a default nationalism is only exacerbated during times of economic stress or political upheaval like during the Choi Soon-Sil scandal and subsequent trial of former South Korean president Park Geun-Hye. Both exorcism cinema and road films depict the rise and fall of marginalized identities using contrasting ideas of identity and modernization. Similarly, the religious and folk traditions native to Korea, with their cultural heritage and historical significance, are not exempt from this pattern.

The same folk traditions celebrated and protected by law as intangible cultural assets conversely suffer under the unscrupulous judgment of modern eyes shaped by an ever-transforming religious landscape dictated by the voices of those who vilified the practices as regressive and backwards. The integration of traditional folk religious customs into New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Korea adds complexity to the historical process of labeling syncretic shamanistic beliefs as the "Other." These beliefs have frequently found themselves in opposition to authoritarian power due to their strong ideological connections developed during Korea's various modernization initiatives, first under Japanese colonization, and later Park Chung-Hee. This national discourse of modernization is inextricably linked to Christianity, Confucianism, and Buddhism through policy and has only increased as the nation westernizes.

Superimposing the religious world upon the spaces of the film, it is clear that the village featured in the film is precariously positioned. The village teeters between the religious influence of the economically powerful modern faiths and the nature-based and disorganized gray area of premodern religion and its adaptation within the paradigms of Korea's contemporary NRMs. *Svaha: The Sixth*

Finger portrays a multitude of religions interacting across times and spaces through the religious distinctiveness of these spaces and their interconnectedness through the infrastructure of modernization. From the driver's seat, the roads are unclear in direction, and the landscape blurs outside the car windows. The roads outside the city possess qualities of being both unique and lost, embodying an environment of "ambiguous imagining and emotional resonance" (Kendall 11), while simultaneously embodying rural characteristics of being backward and bucolic. The highway, like Korea's subverted religious history, becomes an unconstructed space; a hollow container awaiting the infusion of a yet-to-be-discovered history, or "vanishing authenticity" (Ivy 22) uncovered in Pastor Park's investigation.

Chapter 5 **Conclusion**

This thesis began by asking how representations of the urban/rural divide in recent Korean horror cinema relate to the traumas of history. And while it has addressed that question by describing particular instances of indirect allegorical expression which challenge the power of national narratives to regulate the meaning of collective trauma, the reasons for organizing these narratives around the countryside suggest more than just the conflation of the past with rurality. In short, reading sometimes-distant historical traumas 'into' contemporary Korean horror cinema allows for the very same allegorical confrontation which has been traditionally read into Korean national cinema by critics like Kyung-Hyun Kim and Jinsoo An. Kim and An have focused much of their work on the subject around the lingering emotional and psychological ties to coloniality, the nature of "political subject[ivity] in a cinema previously disfigured by state violence" (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Hallyu* 95). In doing so, they reveal the ideologies of proto-nationalism, capitalism, and ensuing neoliberalism which have shaped the realized potential of contemporary Korean cinema. The effect of shifting focus away from the tension between past and present toward understanding how these "traumatic events lodged in the past but whose echoes resonate in the present" (Lowenstein 177) is, as I have intended to demonstrate, significantly impacted by several factors related to the interaction between tangible physical geography and a less tangible yet equally crucial cultural geography. Not only does this interaction influence how places and identities are produced, but it also creates new meanings around how people make sense of such places.

The chapters in this thesis analyzed specific ways in which contemporary depictions of rurality are instantiated by horrific transformation (or lack thereof), be it gender, governance, or religion, each exposes another face of rurality as a projection of urban anxieties. I have endeavored to reveal cultural and geographic equivalencies created as part of the creation and expression of nationalist character and group identity, which bind the traumas of history to the contemporary national subject. Whether that subject is an allegory for the victims of systemic human trafficking and rape, the father figure whose tyrannical grip on his village is exposed by the generation once removed from dictatorship, or a pastor whose job it is to expose and erase evidence of the power of homegrown folk religion, each individual expresses a traumatic locality through which the experiences of the nation can be filtered and re-experienced by domestic audiences differently than their international counterparts.. By engaging with the Asian gothic world, in which "history is reduced to its 'locality' rather than expanding toward grand totality" (Park Chan-Kyong, Asian *Gothic* 460), I have hoped to open some of the doors of this traumatic locality.

In addition to the larger overarching theme of this thesis regarding the urban/rural divide in Korean horror cinema, there are some additional red threads that connect the chapters of this thesis around broader sociocultural discussions in Korean film studies. Gender is one such thread that more deeply connects the chapters of this thesis. Introduced in my second chapter, "Rape Revenge and the National

Body in Bedevilled," the symbolic organization of the nation around gendered nationalist tropes carries throughout the remaining chapters. Rurality's interaction with or appropriation as the symbol of femininity, in the case of the women portrayed in *Bedevilled* and *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, or masculinity, in the case of the authority imposed in *Moss* and *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, demonstrate the malleability of rusticism to convey multi-layered and oftentimes contradictory meanings around the spaces of horror. While the wavering of genders attached to rurality is perhaps another layer to how rural representations are produced as a conduit for the social identities of those occupying, embodying and moving through them. The relationship works in both directions as genders and rurality inflect and amplify one another around identities of nation, time, and traumatic memory.

Another important thread running through this thesis is how the spatial and temporal qualities of Korea's rural palimpsest contribute to formulating a cinematic countryside so haunted, violent, and grotesque. I have attempted to show that this occurs not only through the gendering of urban and rural spaces but also of time. Whether it be the grotesque *urbanoid* males of the forlorn countryside or the westernized urban males of Seoul polluted by the alienation of the modern condition, masculine and feminine representations are similarly under constant negotiation. The often-contradictory representations of gender, particularly as it relates to violence or quite simply horror, reflect an unease with the oscillations of gender characteristics and their perceived Otherness that clash with the present. While westernized versions of masculine and feminine traits were once portrayed as threats to the traditional conservative social order of the post-war period, more contemporarily, it is the threat of the regressively portrayed traits of conservative culture that I have shown, throughout this thesis, as disrupting the progressive nature of modernity and modern culture as portrayed in Korean cinema. Benedict Anderson has discussed the temporal paradox of the nation: the "newness" of the nation as a political form contrast starkly with its felt "antiquity," its "immemorial" reach (Anderson 5, 11). In her analysis of the relationship between the time and gender, Bliss Cua Lim suggests that the contradictions of national time, that nation is both recently invented and eternal, can be "dissembled through the logic of gender" (Bliss Cua Lim 181). According to Lim, the sexualization of national-historical time does several things at once: "naturalize social hierarchy under a heteronormative division of labor and familial asymmetries of power; metaphorize teleological development under the evolutionary family of man; and, finally, sexualize archaic, traditional aspects of the nation as feminine, while its progressive tendencies are masculinized" (181). In terms of the application of national-historical time in Korean horror cinema, I suggest that the simple application of such an assertion is complicated, not only by Korea's conflicted national-postcolonial history, but also by the rate and compression of its modernization which has been a featured element of my analysis.

In the introduction of this thesis, I posited the question: What are Korea's contemporary urban anxieties concerning the retrogressive aspects of rurality? And how are they expressed through constructs of space? This is another node that further connects the chapters of this thesis is the organizing of the nation around both incorporating and distancing itself from the traditions closely associated with rurality. In *Svaha: The Sixth Finger*, the contradiction between the backwardness of

the past existing alongside the present centers on “the sublime fear and awe from local traditions, ancient history, and natural phenomena’, and thereby poses ‘a strange fascination that unconsciously refutes the modern” (Park Chang-Kyong, *Asian Gothic* 1). However, *Moss* and *Bedevilled* organize the nation and symbolism as spatially and temporally isolated from the moral and societal structures that might contain their deviant behavior. Just as politics are the spatial projection of power, the environment is either a geographic obstacle to inclusion in modernization, in *Moss*, or a placeholder symbol of the failure of the nation to protect its borders, in *Bedevilled*, both position rurality as a space essentially represented as a repository for the failures of were once positive idealizations of national identity which have fallen out of favor.

A more abstract connection running through this thesis is Korea’s place as a force within the transnational media landscape and the growing foreignness and othering of once-ordinary cultural practices and, more specifically, the people who populate the rural areas. Shared by all three of the films included in this thesis, the portrayal of those living outside metropolitan Seoul are not necessarily depicted as uniformly uncivilized, in the way many Hollywood and European examples categorically dismiss rural populations as regressive, physically or mentally malformed, and/or cannibalistic. Their status as temporally arrested and therefore bound both culturally and economically by their spatial circumstances present a population unwilling or unable to embrace the benefits of the contemporary Korean lifestyle. They represent the history and traditions so deeply ingrained in Korean identity and social organization as to be non-excisable in the same way the accumulated traumas of history compose *han*, one of the unique sensibilities and defining characteristics of the Korean character.

Local trauma resulting from Korea’s rapid modernization and repressive Cold War politics is an overarching theme throughout much Korean Cinema. In particular, the Korean War, the nation’s split into North and South, military dictatorship and revolution culminating in the Gwangju Uprising, and numerous other socio-political disasters have and continue to compose cinematic accounts of local trauma. However, the rural as a location or origin of horror is less about the locations of the historical traumas themselves and more concerned with the compartmentalizing of contemporary fears, which constantly seem to threaten to destabilize the progress of Korea’s compressed modernity. Along the periphery of Korea’s rise to international economic and media prominence are fears of a collapse. Due to previous failures “attributed to the personal, political and administrative mistakes of the previous state leadership, a grave society-wide pessimism about renewed long-term economic and social development is haunting South Koreans” (Chang, *Compressed Modernity and its Discontents* 31) which is reflected by the fears invoked by rurality which often horrifically portrays the coexistence of modern life with that which seems a continuation of the pre-modern.

Beyond mere urbanoia, the rural-urban divide is constituted at the collision of heritage and modernity, the intersection of nationalism and internationalization, gender and geography, and syncretism and secularism. In the footsteps of Robin Wood, filmmaker Park Chan-Kyong uses the term “Asian

Gothic" to describe the symptomatic return of ancient grotesque images as a symbol of 'the repressed' or traumatized local others. More than a mere return of the repressed, the urban/rural dynamic illustrates the uniqueness of Korean modernization as a function of the similar articulation of urbanoia and the gothic modes, which invests the traumas of history within "our incurably sick modernity" (Park Chan Kyong, *Asian Gothic* 5). Consequently, the urban-rural divide which characterizes these films exposes the local modernity which allows the horror to return "not merely as a physical trauma but more as a pathological symptom" (Park Chan Kyong, *Memories* 56). The historical traumas allegorized in the films for this thesis are those which remain unresolved. However, they are just three manifestations of larger pathological symptoms which haunt the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st century. Structural collapses like the Seongsu bridge in 1994 and the Sampoong department store in 1995, the bombardment of Yeonpyeong island and sinking of the Korean battleship ROKS Cheonan in 2010, the Sewol Ferry disaster and Goseong Soldier Rampage in 2014 continually emphasize the toll of accelerated modernization and the gaps of progress left unfilled or at the very least left unaddressed.

While the overwhelming international focus on Korean film remains largely centered around transnationalism and the genre-bending successes of filmmakers like Bong Joon Ho, Park Chan-Wook, and Kim Jee-Woon, as well as the prominent Korean directors who have flourished in the festival circuit like Hong Sang-Soo and the late Kim Ki-Duk, the gaps in scholarship I have attempted to engage with are the films which garner little attention outside of Korea. Genre films make up the vast majority of domestic releases in Korea and offered me a wealth of localized representations of rurality and horror from which to draw. During the earliest period of sifting through what has already been written and what I could possibly contribute to the conversation concerning Korean horror cinema, there were some researchers and writers, many of whom I have quoted or built my own workaround, which provided me with the fertile analytical ground. Literature concerning cinematic representations of modernization, tourism, and allegorical renderings of the past influenced this thesis to some degree. However, it is their common ground, localization and rurality which have been of the utmost interest of this thesis and the area in which this thesis contributes to Korean film scholarship.

While the chapters in this thesis have covered three more significant issues attached to the urban/rural divide, they represent a small subsection of films that deal with the rural as a space of horror. Moving forward, there are a multitude of directions the urban and rural divide and its many-faceted use in horror cinema should be applied as part of further study on the subject. Within the scope of my own thesis, there were a significant number of potential chapters that unfortunately didn't make the cut in the planning process. The series of topics continues to interest me because each offers new ways of understanding the role rurality continues to reflect the abject history of the Korean peninsula. Films like *Chaw* (*Chaw*, Shin Jeong-won, 2009), *Sector 7* (*Chilgwanggu*, Kim Ji-hoon, 2011), and *Okja* (*Okja*, Bong Joon-Ho, 2017) use and distort elements of the animal horror genre to confront both past and impending concerns over resource scarcity. Space as an exploited and exploitative commodity or

domain for the procurement and sale of natural resources is a particularly apt and fascinating take on spatial studies and Korean horror.

The heritage horror film is another of cinematic horror's stalwart sub-genres that would further the conversation about time and rurality in relation to trauma. In this case, it bears mentioning that Korean heritage horror films often portray contemporary anxieties projected upon the distant past, not unlike science fiction. *Monstrum* (*Mihwagin Dongmul: Uri, Aiel*, Heo Jong-ho, 2018), *Rampant* (*Changgwol*, Kim Sung-hoon, 2018), and the Netflix television series *Kingdom* (2019) are three such examples in which contemporary tensions play out over the various pre-colonial monarchies. While more traditional heritage horror films like *The Wrath* (*Yeogokseong*, Yoo Young-Sun, 2018), *The Silenced* (*Gyeongseong Hakgyo: Sarajin Sonyeodeul*, Hae-young Lee, Lee Hye-young, 2015), the widely analyzed *The Wailing* (Na Hong-Jin, 2016), and the folk tale adaptation *The Piper* (Kim Gwang-Tae, 2015) rely on rurality and time to "represent previous generations and their practices, either in period where the films take on a sense of the uncanny, or in the present where tradition itself becomes a source or unease and anachronistic horror" (Scovell 82).These films are a further expression of this generational interaction, which through further study could illuminate interesting Cold War parallels with American horror cinema in the waning days of America's urbanization in the years between World War II and the postmodern shock of the Vietnam War. To borrow from Emmanuel Levy's lexicon in his analysis of the American horror genre in the 1960s, he discusses how small towns and the countryside were increasingly portrayed as environments of "contestation and decay" (Levy 102), often embodied in the local population. "The motifs of disenchantment and disintegration were expressed in individuals' loss of control.... Protagonists of small-town films have gradually lost their sense of identity and worth." (Levy 102) By the 1970s, the trajectory of small-town movies, into which category films like *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) fit, collapses into "nostalgia, paranoia and revenge" (Levy 102). In the liminal spaces of the Sawyers' Texas farm or an Appalachian riverbank, the rural evokes a sense of delicate balance being out-of-whack. For Levy, the order once represented in small-town life disintegrates when the "balance between the bizarre and the ordinary" finds itself on the brink of "the ever-present threat of chaos" (Levy 102). The seemingly idyllic, acrimonious, and hobbling toward an inevitable demise is the true horror of the rural. In Korean horror, important themes carried by the rural towns and villages are not the" inverted frontier myths, notions of a hopelessly corrupt and festering society, questions of civilisation and its discontents" (98) posited by Levy. But instead, the pervasive fear is one of time, of being left behind by progress.

The ever-present fear of falling behind, economically, culturally, and especially technologically is a theme explored ad-nauseum in Korean cinema and television's many time-travel narratives that also portray the chrono-politics discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis. In chapter 4, I applied Virilio's concept of chrono-politics in relation to Korea's transportation infrastructure, building from his assertion that "politics is less in physical space than in the time systems administered by various technologies, from telecommunications to airplanes, passing by the tGV, etc...[t]he distribution of

territory becomes the distribution of time," (Virilio 115). However, this could be expanded upon to include methods beyond transportation, to other ways of creating of mobility in modern space realized through a revolution of speed and of acceleration by mobile machinery. Virilio calls the "dromocratic revolution" (Virilio 111). For this kind of mobility revolution, space becomes the essential medium not only for politic means but also the mastery of time. Such an analysis could be applied to contemporary Science fiction time-travel narratives like *Alienoid* (*Oegye+in 1bu*, Choi Dong-Hoon, 2022). This could also be examined in other films that use technology to reshape the experience of time like *The Call* (Kol, Lee Chung-Hyeon, 2022), which I have previously written about regarding analog technologies like tape recorders and land-line phones, and films like *Ditto* (*Dong-kam*, Seo Eun-Young, 2000) which uses technology, in this instance the radio, to connect lovers from two different distant periods or places.

Films about travelling, time travel or otherwise, are fundamentally about audience access and connecting with characters through affect. This is a topic very briefly touched upon in this thesis but bares more critical attention. Youngmin Choe's *Tourist Distractions: Traveling and Feeling in Transnational Hallyu Cinema* is a valuable non-horror book on the topic, however, an analysis of film tourism as it relates to Korean horror cinema would prove to be an interesting expansion on the concept. A number of small budget, found-footage-style films have been released in recent years, the most recognizable being *Gonjiam: Haunted Asylum* (*Gonjiam*, Jung Bum-Shik, 2018) has sparked interest in paranormal tourism to the real-life location of Gonjiam (Gonjiam Psychiatric Hospital in Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province).

This interaction between the imagined-rural spaces in Korean cinema and the real-rural spaces of Korea unfolds the not only alters perceptions of real and locales, but also builds an accumulated cultural memory with multi-layered meanings from which contemporary audiences draw and film-makers filter. In this way, films can refer to cinematic landscapes as geographical, but also as metonymic and metaphoric dimensions, conscious and unconscious symptoms of memory and history, and as stated in Film and Landscape, "Cinematic landscapes can therefore be landscapes of the mind, offering displaced representations of desires and values, so that these can be expressed by the filmmakers and shared by audiences" (Harper & Rayner, 2010, p. 21). It is this mixture of subjectivities that allows for my readings of the cinematic as heterotopic and therefore approachable from various methodological frameworks.

There is also a particular subset of films that rely on place in the more traditionally gothic sense. Westerners might identify this subgenre as the rural haunted house film built around claustrophobia and memory loss. *Spider Forest* (*Geomui Sup*, Song Il-Gon, 2004) directly references the 1926 Na Woon-Gyu film *Arirang*, and *Bestseller* (*Beseuteuselleo*, Lee Jeong-Ho, 2010). As the topic of innumerable Korean television dramas and films, the amnesiac trope has been extensively written about in Korean film scholarship. However, the role of *sageuk* (television drama) themes of "forgetting preferred to remembrance, the postmodern fascination with amnesia, and the superficiality

of a pure object that flattens every traumatic bit of history" (Kyung-Hyun Kim, *Remasculinization* 211) which are mainly related to space and rurality as a temporal placeholder and is another related sub-topic which warrants exploration.

During the editing of this thesis, Louisa Koo published a short chapter in *The Spaces and Places of Horror* called "National Cinema, Trauma, and Melodrama in the Korean Zombie Film *Train to Busan* (2016)" in which she suggests the train itself is an allegory for the 2014 Sewol Ferry disaster which is a symptom of the failure of regulation associated with compressed modernity. However, other examples of the emerging transnational genre of apocalyptic zombie survival like *#Alone* (*Honja,* Il Cho, 2019) or the Yeon Sang-Ho sequel to 2016's *Train to Busan* (*Busanhaeng)*, *Peninsula* (*Bando,* 2020) offer distinctly localized iterations of the zombie trope in which the decade specific cultural tensions woven into the layers of meaning within George Romero's zombie films are Koreanized to reflect contemporary concerns over public housing policy, urban sprawl, declining birth rates, and an increasingly isolated post-university generation.

Although this thesis is limited in scope by the focus on horror cinema, there is some site (both real and imagined) specific cinematic representations of space in Korean cinema worthy of deeper exploration. The DMZ, Jeju Island, and Haeundae all rely on the use of attached and widely understood cultural codes that would render fascinating and fruitful explorations each as sites of horror. While the aforementioned filmmaker Park Chan-Kyong also merits a deeper study. His films blend the contemporary with the gothic to create new meanings around the particular cities, which are the focus of much of his work. Along with his city study films, *Anyang Paradise City* (*Anyang Paradise City,* 2011) and *Bitter Sweet Seoul* (*Dalkomhan Seoul,* 2014), his opulently haunting film *Manshin* (Manshin, 2013) similarly portrays a rupturing of the traditional and modern with ancient cultic and shamanic imagery and syncretic liminality sharply contrasts the urban megachurches of Seoul. This contrast between the archaic and muddled practices of the periphery of modernized society rings the cacophony between the past and the present.

An important and understated facet of returning the repressed to the symbolic order that takes place in Korean horror cinema is that despite the violence, blood, and evil portrayed, the films of this study "collectively deny tropes of victimization by focusing on narratives of struggle and allowing Koreans to prevail" (Gateward 202) in some small measure. Vengeful spirits get their vengeance. Crooked Confucian patriarchs are served their just desserts. Spiritual ills are always at least partially resolved. In his study of film and the Holocaust, Elsaesser points out that films dealing in history reveal a "typically postmodern hubris, namely the faith that the cinema can redeem the past, resolve the real, and even resolve that which was never real" (Elsaesser 166). The historical traumas portrayed through Korean horror cinema "provides Koreans with the opportunity to refight the battle and emerge with its national pride intact" (Gateward 202-203). Through these reconstructions and replayings of traumatic history through symbol, allegory, and memory, the contemporary critique of very real horrific events is never simple and always fraught with contradiction.

Rather than describe Korean horror cinema as responding to a particular event of historical trauma, I have aimed to demonstrate that these horror films interrogate the constructions of rurality that ground conventional narratives of trauma and national identity. National trauma cannot be fully represented in a single way that addresses the vastness of experiences and associated memories. Instead, rurality is offered as a site for closing the distance between the past and present, the self and the nation, nationalism, and internationalization, which suggests that the mythologies which compose the nation and the national self are far more nuanced and unnatural than any single cut and dry depiction of trauma can possibly articulate.

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