

Different Cinematic Interpretations of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*: The Same Korean Identity¹

GÁBOR SEBŐ Visiting Scholar, Korea University (RIKS)

Abstract

The article examines the classic Korean folklore fable, 춘향전 (春香傳), *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Fragrance of Spring*), *The Tale of Ch'unhyang*, through the lens of three different successful movie adaptations produced in North and South Korea. Respectively, Yu Wŏn-chun and Yun Ryong-gyu portrayed *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1980) in its modest “Juche realist” North Korean film style, whereas Im Kwŏn-t'aek depicted his work, *Ch'unhyang* (2000), in a contemporary liberally and daringly revised version, while the romantic portrayal produced in North Korea by the South Korean film director, Shin Sang-ok, in *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), is performed from a human-oriented and entertaining perspective filled with musical ingredients and brave images of love. The study aims to demonstrate how the story is diversely interpreted through the two divided film cultures by highlighting differences between collectivism and individualism, noting also that all three interpretations emerge from similar roots of cultural and national identity.

Keywords: *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, North Korean cinema, South Korean cinema, Korean national identity

Introduction

The paper analyzes how movie adaptations of the same story filmed in South Korea and North Korea differ on one level, and unmistakably reveal cultural kinship on another level, looking at variations in Korean cinema history of *춘향전 Ch'unhyangjŏn (The Tale of Ch'unhyang)*. Im Kwŏn-t'aek's *춘향뎌 Ch'unhyangdyŏn (Ch'unhyang, 2000)* from South Korea, along with Yu Wŏn-chun and Yun Ryong-gyu's *춘향전 Ch'unhyangjŏn (The Tale of Ch'unhyang, 1980)* from the North are used as case studies.

All the re-imaginings have their own distinct narrative techniques in their visually contrasting sets and soundtracks. Still, regardless of the explored works' periodical, aesthetical, and ideological mismatches, the article simultaneously highlights the commonness of Korean identity, through the recognition of shared traditional cultural roots, and the estrangement between the two Koreas brought about by the division of the nation in the post-Liberation period. The main contrast is discernible in the various depictions of romance intermingled with political ideology. While Im emphasizes the direct expression of the two main protagonists' emotions from an individualistic perspective by depicting the couple's *amour*, the North Korean filmmakers emphasize the apotheosis of this, through a didactic approach, spouting messages of collectivism, focusing on Ch'unhyang's political awareness serving as an ideal model of the socialist heroine coupled with revolutionary spirit.

The study additionally unpacks the special combination of theatrical and cinematic compositions suggesting a common link and a cultural bridge between Im's *Ch'unhyang (2000)* and another popular movie alteration from North Korea, *사랑 사랑 내 사랑 Sarang, sarang, nae sarang (Love, Love, My Love, 1984)* directed by the abducted South Korean director Shin Sang-ok. Im transferred the original story into contemporary South Korean society with the target of reaching both young domestic and global audiences by a unique blend of traditionalism, through the use of Korean classic *p'ansori* performance staged in and utilizing young Korean spectators in scenes shot in an actual theater in Seoul, Chŏngdong (or Jeongdong) Theater, together with a modernity epitomized by the shape of cinema itself. Nonetheless, the tone of the two productions' soundtracks draws a clear divergence. Im achieved this duplexity not only through the pictures of the visual landscape, and the perfect synchronization between virtual illustration of the initial script and musical rhythm of the *p'ansori* narration, creating a perfect visual text for the conventional musical storytelling, but also through the use of daring images of the intimate scenes between Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong. Specifically, Im returns to the roots of traditional *p'ansori* artistic form. In *Love, Love, My Love (1984)*, Shin brings new elements of a Western-style musical

experimenting with a special hybridity of dance, theater, inventive music, and the visual illusion of cinema to advance entertainment and implement a new design of enjoyment among North Korean moviegoers.

Taken together, the essay attempts to collect a selection of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* variations made for the silver screens of North and South Korea, emphasizing their novel forms in terms of musical performances, their depictions of romance and entertainment, and the adjustment of the narrative into their own cinematic environments. Accordingly, the article aims to overcome the general misconceptions about North Korean film aesthetics, culture, society, and identity. The paper concludes that despite the obvious dichotomies among the movies studied, the contrast of individual vis-à-vis communal concepts due to their ideological division well acknowledged, the crossing points stress the common links between the two Koreas, underlining the shared legacy of traditional national identity.

The Symbolic Representation of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* in Korean Culture

The abiding classic 춘향전 *Ch'unhyangjŏn* has been a pure representation of Korean culture and identity, a true example of Korean ethno-national sensibility, on both sides of the Korean Peninsula. In total, there have been more than twenty (probably even more), film, animation and TV drama variants of the esteemed tale made in North and South Korea. The sheer quantity of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* adaptations stands as evidence for the reputation of the genuine story starting from the earliest era of Korean cinema. Not to mention that historical dramas (사극 *sagŭk*) and period drama pieces (시대극 *sidaegŭk*) have always enjoyed extreme popularity in Korean cinema and television histories. Most of the film versions have touched the hearts of Koreans through the decades, in spite of depicting different ideologies and political division.² This section focuses on the common characteristics of the folktale, as perceptible in the two Koreas' variations, and providing ample justification for the *two countries—one nation* concept. Thus, the Korean classic fables, like *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, 홍길동전 *Hong Kildongjŏn*, 심청전 *Shimch'ŏngjŏn*, 온달전 *ondaljŏn*, or 운영전 *Unyŏngjŏn*—particularly, ending with a tragedy—can be future joint cultural symbols for inter-Korean discussions, being shared by both nations, in which the common origins of Korean identity are preserved in spite of conflicting creeds and political ideologies.

Ch'unhyangjŏn, which literally means *The Fragrance of Spring*, is the Korean nation's most esteemed folklore tale stemming from shamanistic ritual performed in the Namwŏn area probably created during the Sukjong period (1661–1720) of the Chosŏn (Joseon) dynasty. The fable is based on the *p'ansori* artistic play of

춘향가 *Ch'unhyangga*.³ *P'ansori* is a traditional musical and theatrical narration of the Korean Peninsula performed by a singer (*sori kun*) or *p'ansori* artist (廣大 *kwangdae*, performer/peripatetic minstrel) and a drummer (*kosu*) as the accompaniment to the *p'ansori* artist providing the rhythm and guiding the narrative's mood and atmosphere.⁴ The classic performance has initially been a form of folk entertainment for the lowborn as the elite yangban class has embraced it only since the nineteenth century. *Ch'unhyangjŏn* has been shifted with the flow of time and new generations of Korean storytellers, as recognized in numerous movies, animated films, and theatrical, dance and traditional *p'ansori* performances.

The original legend begins with an undesirable woman who died unwanted and unmarried. By the practice of exorcism, her spirit is reincarnated in a beautiful body. The classic tale delineates the significant cultural resistance against the corruption of their noble oppressors who robbed and exploited the peasantry. The majority of the lower class, who created myths and legends, such as *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, dreamed of a classless society, yet they did not oppose the structure of the Korean kingdom, being loyal to the archaic traditions and values of Korea. As the word "folklore" concerns the traditional beliefs, myths, legends and customs of the commoners, the contents of these stories have been created for hunger for a quasi-utopian, but at least a fair and just, society for *hoi polloi*.⁵

The touching love story of Ch'unhyang Sŏng and Mongnyong Lee, which most of the Koreans know by heart, focuses on the couple's separation due to their social status differences and illicit marriage, which is prohibited by the laws of Chosŏn. Nonetheless, this is not the sole violation of the period's rule, the tale additionally includes Mongnyong's disobedient social manner to his father by violating filial piety (효도 *hyodo*) through premarital sexuality and the secret marriage of the couple. Therefore, breaking the period's social rules is rebelling against the principle moral code of the Chosŏn dynasty. The illegal marriage of our couple is *de facto* a criticism of the mendacity of the ruling class. The protagonists fight against corruption facing the public and the exploitation of the people, personified by the antagonist new magistrate, Pyŏn Hakto. He does not only unfairly torture people, but he also desperately yearns to make Ch'unhyang his personal concubine. Likewise, Ch'unhyang's mother, Wŏlmae, behaves unethically, despite not being part of the ruling class, by allowing the couple to marry, hiding her daughter from Hakto's guards, and attempting to bribe them to protect her daughter. This is not to mention the personal servant and maid Pang Cha and Hyang Tan who conceal their masters' romance. It is clear that characters from all social classes bear their own guilt or act immorally in a Confucian society where the people are obligated to keep strict rules and simply present their best selves to the community. The story, thereby, functions as a social-critical mirror

suggesting that keeping the expected omnipresent pure image of Korean society has been cumbersome for all social groups through the centuries. Recognizing the violation of these ancient sacred morals in Korean traditions is essential to inspect how different filmmakers from North and South depicted romance and relationship of the main leading figures. The major disparity between the versions of both sides is distinguishable in the various illustrations of love intermingled with political ideology.

Mongnyong Lee is suggested first as an ideal Korean male, coming from a respected aristocratic yangban family, who is diligent, well educated, and adept at sports like archery. Not to mention, he is fair and humble to those beneath his station, to the commonalty, and faithfulness (충실 *chungsil*) to his love, Ch'unhyang Sŏng. The female protagonist is a testament to the ideal standard of Korean beauty and shares a framework of moral values with Mongnyong, such as conjugal fidelity, maintaining her purity and being ultimately willing to sacrifice herself for their common love. Nevertheless, beyond the sugarcoated surface, the couple is forced to intentionally act against the social morals of the period.

Furthermore, exotic and mystical elements were included to balance and even dissolve the strife between conventional Korean society and the actions of the protagonists. The main potential conflicts with Chosŏn law and politics are disentangled by inserting spirituality, namely, in the form of fortune-telling, in the dreams of Wŏlmae about a blue dragon, or in the nightmares of Ch'unhyang in the prison, mentally preparing for her death.⁶ Although it is mainly Shin Sang-ok who emphasized the supernatural ritual basics of the classic tale most significantly among Korean filmmakers, it is undeniable that the original narrative has been strongly bent towards spirituality, the fortune-teller's dream interpretation "as a semiotic code to predict the future," standing in close relation to Korean shamanism, which is not solely relevant to the *Ch'unhyang*-story *per se* but also to the traditionalism of ancient Korean society.⁷ It is Mongnyong who must resolve these bad omens by finding and marrying Ch'unhyang to fulfill his social duty and political destiny through demolishing corruption and providing justice for the peasantry.

Scholars in the fields of languages and cinema, Keumsil Kim-Yoon and Bruce Williams point out, esteemed Korean folklores, for instance 심청가 *Shimch'ŏngga* (*The Tale of Shim Cheong*), 춘향가 *Ch'unhyangga* (*The Tale of Ch'unhyang*), or 흥부가 *Hŭngbuga* (*The Tale of Heungbu*), refer to the "contradiction of *han* (sadness and hope)."⁸ More directly, adhering to one's filial duty is an example of the origins of *han*. These social and family expectations are the roots of much of the social and personal anguish that is continuously endured by *han* within Korean society. Several scholars aimed to define the communal identical sadness of the Korean

nation. Hye Seung Chung describes *han* as “deep-rooted sadness, bitterness and longing prolonged injustices and oppression.”⁹ The scholar follows others asserting *han* had been ensued by foreign invasions of Chinese, Japanese and Western powers, the patriarchal Confucian traditions enforcing Korean women to be muted and objected by the male-dominated society. The feudal caste system during the Chosŏn-era, and later the modernization process of the military regimes in the twentieth century strengthened further these social discrepancies against the female. Moreover, Chung adds that experts like Ahn Byung-Sup and Rob Wilson allege “Korean melodrama hinges upon the national sentiment of *han*, a slippery and subtle term that, depending on context, denotes everything from ‘resentment’ and ‘lamentation’ to ‘unfulfilled desire’ and ‘resignation.’¹⁰ Chung even provides different translations of the word. The *han* is *hen* (hate) in the Chinese language, *kon* means bear a grudge in Japanese, and *horosul* implies sorrowfulness in Mongolian.¹¹ In the same monograph edited by the film scholar Kathleen McHugh and the anthropologist Nancy Abelmann, both Soyoung Kim and Kyung Hyun Kim use the term of “pent-up grief” for *han*.¹² The parallel with the analogous Japanese term *mono no aware* (the empathy or “bittersweet realization of the ephemeral nature of all things”), used for expressing the awareness of impermanence, is easily recognizable.¹³ The film historian of Japanese cinema, Donald Richie, calls the Japanese *mono no aware* as a “sympathetic sadness ... a serene acceptance of a transient world” or the film historian David Bordwell translates it to mean “the pathos of things.”¹⁴ The Japanese approach includes both short-term and longer, deeper sadness of life, whereas the Korean term mainly refers to the aforementioned deep-rooted sadness towards past history.

The Dawn of Diverse *Ch'unhyangjŏn* Film Interpretations

The social, moral, and political messages of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* received newfound recognition at the birth of Korean motion pictures (활동 사진 *hwaltong sajin*) during the Japanese occupation, the so-called Chosŏn cinema.¹⁵ The *Ch'unhyangjŏn*-boom, in accordance with the intensity of national resistance—arose from the cumulative nationwide feeling of the lost-nation wound—from the Korean side and “colonial nostalgia” from the Japanese side, has its roots in different reasons and served divergent goals in the roles of the colonizer Japan and the colonized Korea.¹⁶ The first movie version of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, which was also the first *sagŭk* produced, entitled 춘향전 *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Story of Ch'unhyang*, 1923) (Figure 1, on the left) directed by the Japanese Hayakawa Koshū Matsujiro (早川孤舟), which was followed by a 1935-version with the same title, directed by Lee Myŏngu, was the first sound and widescreen film in Korea that made the movie a cult classic



Figure 1 Left: The first sagük, the first movie version of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Story of Ch'unhyang*, Hayakawa Koshū Matsujiro, 1923).

Middle: The second version of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Tale of Ch'unhyang*, Lee Myŏngu, 1935)—the first Korean sound (talkie) film—starring Mun Ye-bong as Ch'unhyang and Han Il-sŏng as Mongnyong.

Right: The North Korean film icon, Mun Ye-bong, in her early role of Ch'unhyang in *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1935).

within the record of Korean cinema (Figure 1, in the middle). The leading role of Ch'unhyang was played by the later North Korean film icon, Mun Ye-bong (Figure 1, on the right). The Korean audience demanded a new variation, which was released again in the Korean language in 1941, titled *반도의 봄 Pando ūi pom* (*The Spring of the Korean Peninsula*, Lee Pyŏng-il, 1941), which was labeled as “pro-Japanese,” also regardless the fact that the film’s narrative solely used the *Ch'unhyangjŏn*-story as a frame.¹⁷ By that time, *Ch'unhyangjŏn* symbolized the first spark of “the hope and passion of Korean filmmakers.”¹⁸

The meaning of the story has been extended and intensified during these years, namely that Korea, via the metaphor of the vulnerable and tormented body of Ch'unhyang, had already suffered at the hands of foreign suppressors.¹⁹ Eventually, the character of Ch'unhyang started to personify the exploited Korean nation. The heroine’s last wish in prison is that only Mongnyong may take her body after her execution, allowing no other soul to touch it. In this way, Ch'unhyang’s corpse would symbolize the whole Korean Peninsula *per se*, enduring unfair hardships brought about by their exploiters.²⁰ *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, thereby, developed into an iconic national symbol, reinforcing both the nationwide movement for independence from the Japanese invaders, and underlining the collective national identity of all Korean people.

In the post-Liberation period after 1945, two sharply different variants began to emerge on the northern and southern sides of the peninsula. On the one hand, the tale served as a common link that connected members of the nation and epitomized national resistance efforts for an independent Korea before the division. On the other hand, *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* has gradually appeared

to represent the divided country since the Liberation era. The mere volume of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*-retellings is an example of how nationwide folktales and artistic works, signifying the common traditional treasures and the pride of Korean national identity at an earlier stage of Korean history, took different paths under divergent political-ideological conditions. These distinct translations are the direct outcome of the separated identities of the divided Korea.

Transforming Korean identity, recently traumatized by Imperial Japan, has produced spatial, ideological, and cultural gaps between the two Koreas. Both sides began to shape and create their own readings of pieces of history and culture, including literature, music, cinema, and dance, yet falling under the origins of the same Korean umbrella. The emergence of ideological competition was clearly detectable from a political point of view through the film varieties of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*.

The first main prominent South Korean versions, such as *춘향전 Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Tale of Ch'unhyang*, Lee Gyu-hwan, 1955), *춘향전 Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Love Story of Ch'unhyang*, Hong Sŏng-ki, 1961) and Shin Sang-ok's *성춘향 Sŏng Ch'unhyang* (Shin Sang-ok, 1961)—that emphasizes Ch'unhyang's yangban status by mentioning her family name in the title—experimented with portraying the hardships endured by Ch'unhyang from an individual and gendered perspective, focusing on personal human emotions. These South Korean examples form sharp contrasts with their northern counterparts, which are class- and community-oriented, as perceptible by the position of social classes, the central object of the story.

Lee Kyu-hwan's *춘향전 Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Tale of Ch'unhyang*, Lee Kyu-hwan, 1955) was created to revive and give an intense push for the post-war South Korean film industry, as film scholar Darcy Paquet notes.²¹ Kim Hyang made his variant, *대 춘향전 Tae Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Story of Great Ch'unhyang*, Kim Hyang, 1957) and An Chongwa shot *춘향전 Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Tale of Ch'unhyang*, An Chongwa, 1958), illustrating the Korean cultural hunger for many Ch'unhyang-stories after the Korean War.²² There was a course of Koreanization for both Koreas, starting from the post-colonial period and eventually the division of the nation in the same year (1945).²³ The era demanded abundant movie formats and cultural alterations of the classic story, thus, the cinema revolution and *Ch'unhyangjŏn*-fever did not stop in the 1960s and 1970s in South Korea.

Since the nation was first divided, there has been an ongoing competition for *Ch'unhyangjŏn* film remakes between North and South Korea. The question over which of the different adaptations are contenders has always remained the same: who is more loyal to the ancient and ethno-national Korean conventions, and who represents the truest, the most patriotic and the purest Korea?²⁴ The competition over Korean national identity is palpable to this day, despite the external factors,

such as the global ideological contest in the bipolar political arena induced by Cold War, and in spite of the ever-changing domestic priorities since the two nations' foundations (1948). Nowadays, North Korea attempts to keep pace with South Korean contemporary popular culture by imitating South Korean-style music, films, and TV dramas adjusted into its own media culture.²⁵

The Evolution of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* in North Korean Cinema

This part of the paper focuses on the two North Korean cinematic re-modelings of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* produced in 1980 and 1984. I aim to highlight the main differences in terms of the portrayal of romance, the notion of individualism contra conformity. Further, the section seeks distinctness in practices of music between the traits of Yu Wŏn-chun (인민배우 “People’s Actor” who also played the antagonist Hakto in the 1980-version), and Yun Ryong-gyu’s *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1980), representing softer and slower lyric song-based revolutionary opera-esque Juche realist patterns²⁶ vis-à-vis Shin Sang-ok’s more dynamic and more intense westernized musical-shaped original soundtrack,²⁷ in his liberally revised cinema, *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), shot four years later.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) produced at least three famous films from the esteemed tale of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*. The first one was released in 1959, 춘향전 *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Tale of Ch'unhyang*, Yun Ryong-gyu, 1959), which became highly attractive among domestic and global audiences.²⁸ The scriptwriter was Kim Sŭng-ku and the movie was recognized for its cinematography at the Moscow International Film Festival.²⁹ Nevertheless, the classic tale as a 창극 *ch'anggŭk* (Korean traditional opera performed on theatrical stage and accompanied by *p'ansori*), was played in Pyongyang even before the foundation of the country, in May 1948.³⁰

Following the Soviet-North Korean co-production of 형제/동방의 아침 *Hyŏngje/Tongbang ŭi ach'im* (*Brothers* a.k.a. *The Morning of the East*, Ch'ŏn Sang-in, Yun Ryong-gyu, 1957), which was shot in color and ultimately banned,³¹ Yun Ryong-gyu filmed his first *Ch'unhyangjŏn* picture in color, which was deemed sensational at the time.³² Unfortunately, the movie fell out of favor in North Korea after the purge of the leading actress, U In-hŭi, as she was found guilty of “gross immorality” and was publicly executed.³³ Thus, the earliest North Korean *Ch'unhyangjŏn* movie version is difficult to acquire outside of the country. However, the movie’s aesthetic qualities were domestically recognized, and North Koreans have remembered the film fondly throughout the decades as their attention might have been drawn to the romantic narratives, rather than to the repetitious political notes, similar to the perceptions of those Japanese journalists who had the chance to watch the movie

during their travel in the country, and who “were surprised how free it seemed of propaganda value.”³⁴ Nonetheless, these folk themes became completely absent from the silver screen of the mid-1960s and the 1970s until their rebirth in the 1980s.

In North Korea, the cinematic versions of traditional folk stories, like 불가사리 *Pulgasari* (Shin Sang-ok, and after his name’s removal: Chŏng Kŏn-cho, 1985), 심청전 *Shimch’ŏngjŏn* (*The Tale of Shim Cheong*, Kim Rak-sŏp, 1957, and Shin Sang-ok, 1985), 홍길동 *Hong Kil Dong* (Kim Gil-in, 1986), 온달전 *Ondaljŏn* (*The Tale of Ondal*, Man Ha-ung, 1987) and 립격정 *Rim Kkŏkjŏng I–V* (Chang Yŏng-pok, 1987–1989), gained high popularity among North Korean moviegoers as the period of the 1980s allowed these pictures to be retold in forms of visually pleasurable film productions using vivid colors, eye-catching flashy costumes, new types of soundtrack, brave adventure and action scenes coupled with fast cutting, thrill and fear of the monster projected on the North Korean silver screen for the first time, and even daring sexuality, spreading beyond the limits and visual habits of North Korean spectators. It is also true that none of these pictures could have been produced without the direct input of Shin Sang-ok in the mid-1980s.

This does not mean that Juche realist politico-ideological directives were completely excluded from these works, but political substances could be wrapped in more enjoyable forms and more fashionable compositions. Still, the North Korean audience followed these newly designed movie illustrations focusing more on the engrossingly delightful components, for instance, emotional romantic backdrops, eye-catching action sets and breathtaking special effects, rather than the deeper symbolical political notes.

During the Korean folklore renaissance of the 1980s, twenty-one years later of Yun Ryong-gyu’s film success with *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* (1959), the veteran director created *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* (1980), in a close collaboration with his younger filmmaker fellow, Yu Wŏn-chun,³⁵ rewritten for the screen by the scriptwriter of the first film, Kim Sŏng-ku, together with his colleague, one of North Korea’s most well-known film writers of the period, Paek In-chun.³⁶ The didactic words are associated with entertaining romantic and lyrical cinema. The character of Ch’unhyang is portrayed as a breadwinner and self-supporting heroine—as immediately represented by the introductory scene right after the opening title delineating Ch’unhyang at her weaving loom—who does not depend on Mongnyong’s appeal but works for the community while staying meek to viewers so far as showing her emotions to the hero is concerned. She is faithful by keeping her chastity for Mongnyong and directly rejecting the approach of the feudal and corrupt Haktŏ. Yu and Yun’s *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* (1980) accentuates the diligent worker and Juche-realist type of female idol, bringing not solely the Juche excerpts but also the “truly Korean” *sobak ham*, the innocence and

ethno-national purity.³⁷ The film further considers romance from the point of view of Ch'unhyang, a character the audience can connect to, filtering out the repetitive aphorisms of the previous era.³⁸

Shin Sang-ok's North Korean redesign, *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), went beyond the portrayal of love in the 1980-adaptation, highlighting the couple's courtship and gendered representation, stressing Ch'unhyang's vulnerable and erotic female beauty. It makes direct references to sexuality, including longing gazes of the male protagonist and antagonist, objectification of the female body, and daring physical contact between Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong.

The usage of the word love in a movie title was unusual before Shin's arrival in the country's film industry, but not unprecedented (even though he stated its opposite), demonstrated by the movie titles 미래를 사랑하라 *Mirae rül sarang hara* (*Love the future!*, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, Ch'ŏn Sang-in, 1959),³⁹ 사랑의 기적소리 *Sarangüi kijöksori* (*The Miracle Sound of Love*, 1975), the Kim Jŏng-suk-biopic 미래를 꽃피운 사랑 *Miraerül kkotp'iun sarang* (*The Love That Blossomed the Future*, Pak Hak, 1982), or 사랑의 노래 *Sarang üi norae* (*The Song of Love*, Rim Ch'ang-bŏm, 1982), and by Han Sŏrya's literary work, 사랑 *Sarang* (*Love*, 1960). Even though that Shin's film title directly recalls the most famous strophes of 사랑가 *Sarangga* (*Love Song*) from the original work, *Ch'unhyangga*, Shin was indeed the first to use a repeated emphasis of the term *love*, stressing the "first utterance of love."⁴⁰ It must have referred to the open amorous theme of the story, which even Shin was concerned about in the beginning. Still, as Kim Il Sung admired the movie, Shin's fears were unfounded.⁴¹ The portrayal of courtship is accomplished by intimate closeness and the erotic scene of undressing by the female character, which Shin had already used in his South Korean translation (1961) (Figure 5, bottom left), "exceeding commercial popularity" like his later North Korean revision.⁴² Sexuality is additionally embodied in the negative figure of Hakto, who is shown to be a perverted sexual predator, longing to touch the body of Ch'unhyang immediately while gasping rapidly and hysterically. In the light of these concepts, the entire narrative returns to the framework of the initial storyline, a fabulous love story, making the folktale fashionable and timeless on the Korean Peninsula.

In certain respects, the figure of Mongnyong in Shin's *Love, Love, My Love* (1984) follows the male-centered discourse and therefore the film breaks away from the traditional North Korean approach due to the fact that the previous version (1980) focuses on Ch'unhyang as the main dominant character. Furthermore, Yu and Yun delineated her as an independent and strong working heroine, while Mongnyong remained in the background, in sort of a supporting role, in Ch'unhyang's shadow. Conversely, the domination of the male protagonist as a fair reformer and idealized leader—echoing the transition of Kim Jong Il's succession period since

the Sixth Party Congress in October 1980—is stressed in a broader way in *Love, Love, My Love* (1984) at the cost of Ch'unhyang's sovereign status depicted in the 1980-variant. Adding to it, Mongnyong's active return in *Love, Love, My Love* (1984) invokes Shin's South Korean retelling from 1961. Ch'unhyang becomes passive again in Shin's North Korean remake, whereas Mongnyong represents the dominant active player. The South Korean director shatters this tendency by positioning Mongnyong's role to the fore and by objectifying Ch'unhyang. The facial expression and the lustful gaze of the actor Lee Hak-ch'öl illustrates masculine and charismatic features, whereas the focal point was Ch'unhyang's own charisma, acted by Kim Yŏng-suk, in Yu and Yun's work.⁴³

Ultimately, Shin hints to male-domination even from the very beginning: the title, *My Love*, stressing the subject-object correlation of possession, nodding to the vertical hierarchical dependence between the genders just as was done in his South Korean formula (1961). Shin's choice to use the possessive adjective in singular first person (내, my), instead of the plural first person (우리, our), was not accidental but used to underline the individualistic focus of Mongnyong on his partner Ch'unhyang, lessening the often used collective form on both sides of the peninsula, *ouri* (our), reflecting the shared national and filial identity. Similar to Shin's *Sŏng Ch'unhyang* (1961), Mongnyong is introduced mainly from low-angle shots, spotting him at a high position from the beginning, locating his residence on the top of the hills, while he is staring at Ch'unhyang swinging in the forest, placed directly below Mongnyong. Not merely the camera movement underlines the superior (male)—subordinate (female) relationship, but also the couple's first meeting at the tomb of Ch'unhyang's father, which is a rare moment in Korean cinema history.

Shin's North Korean variant (1984) contains the aforementioned rare sight where Ch'unhyang secretly visits the monument of her deceased father with her personal maid, Hyang Tan. When Mongnyong approaches the location with his servant, Pang Cha, the girls have to hide from the eyes of the male visitors. The scene underlines both the momentum of the couple's first encounter and the controversy coupled with social criticisms of Confucianism, namely that Ch'unhyang must hide and deny her aristocratic origin, despite her noble status inherited from her yangban father's bloodline. These themes of internal persistence and tacit rebellion are two of the central social conflict messages of the film, underscoring the social desire of Ch'unhyang to be considered a yangban but not a kisaeng (female entertainer), as Shin also highlights by using Ch'unhyang's family name in his South Korean version's title (1961). In this scenery, Mongnyong maintains the straightforward male gaze, which the girl cannot receive with her own gaze due to her constant embarrassment. The allegory appears in both of Shin's telling

illustrations, stating the female is expected to be faithful and self-sacrificing while passively waiting for the active male.

In the light of the previous arguments, *Love, Love, My Love* (1984) is not an exclusive story fastening solely on *her* (Ch'unhyang) record and stressing her self-determination against the unfair system, as is the case in *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1980). Shin's hugely different northern reconstruction of the film is rather about *their* (Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong's) common romance.

Regarding the elite yangban social class criticism, the 1980-model attempts to install propaganda class conflict elements through imagery of the *entire* noble yangban class exploiting the lower social groups, including Chunhyang. On the contrary, Shin's northern form (1984) and the southern versions only refer to Pyŏn Haktō (and his inner circle), as the main source of the social injustice and unfairness but do not attempt to criticize the necessity of the ancient Korean royal dynasties. The northern adaptations do not depict detailed images of a morally good and legally fair yangban character, like the father of Mongnyong, whereas the southern ones go the opposite direction, as they often begin with an opening scene of his portrait. Im Kwŏn-t'aek's *Ch'unhyang* (2000), as discussed in detail in the next part, can remind us of how the North Korean filmmakers tailored the story to bear their core political messages in the scene when Mongnyong exclaims "Our enemy is not a person. The enemy is the *class* that divides us."⁴⁴

Bringing the Traditional Folktale into the Modern Society of South Korea

This section of the paper follows the ballad of Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong adapted into the contemporary culture of South Korea reimaged by Im Kwŏn-t'aek. The aim of *Ch'unhyang* (2000) was to reach both young Korean and worldwide audiences of all ages through a cultural dissemination of Korean traditional artistic performance, *p'ansori*. Im was able to reach the special mixture of traditionalism and modernism in a stylish form via daring means of intimate pictures, and the perfectly synchronization of visual illusions and the rhythm of the *p'ansori* soundtrack creating a balance of music and images at the same time. The reader will be able to observe how the director of South Korean national cinema innovatively combined the components of at least two artistic fields, theater and cinema. First, theatrical pieces have been strongly involved using the classical play of *p'ansori*, shaping dramatic atmosphere by installing young viewers literally set in the Chŏngdong Theater. Second, the visual illusions of cinema are reflected in modern high-tech South Korean society. As the current filmic redesign of *Ch'unhyang* (2000) exemplifies, the national cinema of the South

became a gifted and powerful cultural force reflecting a traditionally conservative society in which social and cultural norms have understandably become much less timid and more liberal by the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Im Kwŏn-t'aek made his greatest domestic financial and critical success with the movie 서편제 *Sŏp'yŏnje* (*Sopyonje*, 1993) narrated in *p'ansori* for the first time in his filmography. In addition to the film being a box-office hit, it won six Korean Film Critics' Awards and the Grand Bell Award for Best Film. His aim was to revive the unique narration style in modern South Korean cinema, specifically in a technologically advanced digital arena. Im's novel creation of mixing the traditionalism of *p'ansori* with the technical modernity of cinema has created "Sopyonje Syndrome" (or *Sopyonje* fever), among Korean filmmakers.⁴⁵ These hybrid patterns have been continued in Im's ninety-seventh work,⁴⁶ *Ch'unhyang* (2000), to "recreate the popular operatic tradition, which originates from local culture, as a modern art form for a global audience."⁴⁷

Despite the resemblance of the revival of conventional cultural values, artistically symbolized by *p'ansori*, Im's two masterpieces are mutually distinct in locating the role and the visualization of the worldwide unique Korean musical performance. In the words of Lee, "*Sopyonje* rewrote Korean film history by generating a harmony between film critics and ordinary film-goers which helped orchestrate the successful realisation of the old tradition in a contemporary form,"⁴⁸ while *Ch'unhyang* (2000) "tends to silence the authoritative voices of the subjects"⁴⁹ as it mainly spotlights the visualization of *p'ansori*'s sound and lyrics, nonetheless, "largely dismisses *imyŏn*, that is, the inner dimension of the narrative,"⁵⁰ recalling the concept of Chan E. Park. The domestic box-office failure of *Ch'unhyang* (2000) may be located in the lack of representation of resentment (*han*) and excitement (*shinmyŏng* or *hŭng*) of the period.⁵¹ Despite the negative reception from South Korean audiences, the film scholar praises Im's work for its experimental creativity: the "reversed relationship between sound and image (...), the perfectly coincident rhythms between acting and music, the synchronised editing according to the dictates of the songs, and the visualisation of lyrics concerning beautiful landscapes and affectionate love, present new artistic experiences to a global audience."⁵²

Im's *Ch'unhyang* (2000) created an innovative mixture of traditional Korean nationalism, accompanied by *p'ansori*, and modernization via the tools of cinema and a bold depiction of eroticism. *P'ansori*, as an "intangible treasures of national culture," initially epitomized all social classes of Korea, from the nobility to the peasantry.⁵³ Moreover, the *p'ansori* narrator was typically a member of the lowborn, living as a street performer, who gained the respect of "the government as well as the society."⁵⁴

Im Kwŏn-t'aek has received more positive film critics than financial success with *Ch'unhyang* (2000).⁵⁵ The long static takes and landscape shots linger on the idea of national cultural heritage, preserving original Korean traditions and roots. It was done to purposefully contrast a period of the time when the film was made. It was the dawn of the age when the Korean identity was repressed by the computerized and virtualized world of modernization, countering its ancient Korean traditions, like *p'ansori*. Im illustrated this massive gap in culture and deeply-rooted conflict between the older generations of South Korea, who respected more the Confucian ethics, and Generation Z, who turned to the digital world.

Im, the nation's director, targeted nationwide young moviegoers and international spectators to advance Korean ethno-nationalism in virtue of a modernized dissemination of the almost forgotten Korean traditional art of *p'ansori*. As Lee mentions, the cultural approach of Im's contemporary "truly Korean" films, like *Sopyonje* (1993), 축제 *Ch'ukchae* (*Festival*, Im Kwŏn-t'aek, 1996), *Ch'unhyang* (2000), 취화선 *Ch' wihwasŏn* (*Painted Fire*, Im Kwŏn-t'aek, 2002) (and since then: 천년학 *Ch'ŏn-nyŏn-hak* [*Beyond the Years*, Im Kwŏn-t'aek, 2007]), attempts to show that "the current renaissance of Korean national cinema lies in his pursuit of creating a national identity (...) his persistent cinematic enquiry into the organ of Korean-ness encourages the younger generation of film-makers to redefine cultural tradition through new creativity and experimentation."⁵⁶ Eventually, these works did not encourage solely the generation of young filmmakers, but also called out to a younger cinematic public, represented by the high demand of Korean classic folklore contents in modernized film versions caused by the aforementioned "*Sopyonje* Syndrome."

Im's presentation of a young audience in the theater is obviously not a coincidence, but because of cultural educational purposes to raise awareness of the unique but, sadly, fading Korean cultural values. The film was intended to be viewed as a visual reading for the future Korean and global generations in an entertaining format. The catchy and trendy erotic scenes, the vivid colors, the perfect harmonization and editing of sound and image were created not only to delineate the deep and passionate (sometimes wild), love of *Ch'unhyang* and *Mongnyong* in the most realistic and authentic form but also to attract worldwide and national viewers, and to find a way back to traditional Korean treasures, having "influenced major trends in New Korean Cinema by urging his [Im's] audiences to think about what they have lost through processes of modernisation and political change (...) in response to the simultaneous cross-trends of globalisation and localisation in world film culture."⁵⁷

Im Kwŏn-t'aek's national cinema, counting *Ch'unhyang* (2000), as "truly Korean" for a cinematic reader, marked by Im's signature style of static shots,

long or extreme long takes, and long panoramic shots (pan) on the Korean scenery lionizing and celebrating the country's spatial beauty and Korean-ness that in Mun-yŏng Hŏ's words "can be a unifying concept in defining the collective identity of the people, regardless of their experiences of historical and social processes of Westernisation and modernisation."⁵⁸ As such, Im's aim was to call both the domestic and international audiences towards the kernel of Korean-ness, as Chŏng-nam Sŏ goes further.⁵⁹ *Ch'unhyangjŏn* and Korean-ness itself reveal the notion of the collective Korean beauty "as a universal aesthetic ideal," echoing the words of Chae-hyŏn Yi.⁶⁰ Manifold cinematic portrayals of the classic Korean beauty standards of *Ch'unhyang* are discernible opening from the stage of colonial cinema (Figure 1), through the North Korean film adaptations during the 1980s (Figure 3 and Figure 5), and closing with Im Kwŏn-t'aek's retelling from 2000 (Figure 2, Figure 4 and Figure 5).

Im's cinematic gem is a perfect example of hybridization between theater and cinema, on the one hand, and of modernity and tradition, on the other hand. Im has enabled the all-encompassing cinemagoers (both, inside and outside of the country), to use his film as an avenue to escape to the affectionate universe of *Ch'unhyang* and *Mongnyong*, depicted alongside the importance of conventional Korean values. The beginning of the movie immediately shows this polarity. The first sets during the opening credits portray the *p'ansori* singer Cho Sang-hyŏn, performing the introduction, accompanied by his drummer (*kosu*). The next cut, however, sharply turns to images of contemporary Seoul with modern buildings, cars, and crowds of running people. The film correspondingly ends up with cuts between the *p'ansori* narrator, signifying the traditional *past*, and the theatrical audience set in our *present* modern times, supporting an aesthetic ambience for the film. These opening and closing frames equivalently evoke the special mixture of tradition exemplified by *p'ansori* narrator and musical style, on the one side, and modernity, embodied in the contemporary theatergoers and cinema *per se*, on the other side. The two contrasting poles are reproduced differently in cinematographic terms.

At the beginning, the *p'ansori* narrating scene and the young viewers sitting in Chŏngdong Theater are sharply divided from each other. They are exhibited conjointly in the same frame only after the first five-minute-long opening sequence when the house (audience area) welcomes the singer and the drummer (Figure 2, top and middle). But until those moments, the two separated dimensions could hardly meet. In the backdrop when the narrator starts to discuss the length of the performance and introduces the location, the detached portrayals of the theatergoers and the singer allegorically keep mutual distance in two distinct spatial poles, traditionalism and modernity. The concluding part reveals the active



Figure 2 Rare meeting moments in Im Kwŏn-t'aek's *Ch'unhyang* (2000), depicting different spatial dimensions of the narrative in the same frame.

Top: Welcoming the audience by the *p'ansori* singer Cho Sang-hyŏn, displaying the two theatrical spaces of the *p'ansori* performers and the audience in the same frame.



Middle: Reunion of the two theatrical spaces at the end of the plot (and a couple of times during the movie).

Bottom: Superimposition of the three spatial arenas, the two theatrical and the cinematic virtual locations.



performer and the passive spectators in the same frame within a relatively short period of time, allowing the two spaces finally to reunite, after the cinematic plot finishes, played by the actual actors and actresses. Moreover, there is a rare moment when the close up of Ch'unhyang and the conjoined set of the theatrical audiences and the *p'ansori* performers are exposed in the same frame in superimposition film technique (Figure 2, bottom). This final meeting of the three dimensions, namely the private and non-virtual spaces of the *p'ansori* narrator and the audience positioned in the theater, and the public (virtual) space of the

classic tale's filmic performance, suggests that the approach of the traditional *p'ansori* towards the viewers of modern times has been successfully achieved by the finale with the help of the realistic acting of the film stars in the virtual space of cinema.

Im Kwŏn-t'aek set *Ch'unhyang* (2000) where *p'ansori* stemmed from, namely Haenam, located in Chŏlla Province, recruiting Haenam locals for the film shoot, an endeavor akin to another genre hybridization: Shin Sang-ok's *Love, Love, My Love* (1984). Both directors not only mixed the genres of musical presence and historical costume dramas, they additionally combined factors of theater and cinema into one. While the majority of the *Ch'unhyangjŏn* interpretations narrate the fable in simple oral and common language forms, Im sent the legend back in time in service of the cultural memory of *p'ansori*. Shin Sang-ok's North Korean hybrid genre of the romance-musical introduces a dynamic and westernized pop culture-esque soundtrack by echoing his beloved American musicals, such as *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964) or *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965). These themes are particularly detectable in the carefully choreographed mass dance settings, expressing collectivism and people's unity but not only from the North Korean perspective of socialist entity, but also the collective identity of belonging to one Korean nation, a sense of Korean national unity. These energetic crowd scenes are based on Korean folk dance elements, and catchy duets, that sounds and timbres stand in opposition to the tones of the repetitive strophes (stanzaic form) and slow tempo of the former off-stage structured lyrical North Korean revolutionary opera film and mainstream soundtrack forms.⁶¹

The earlier film music formats, performed for instance in *pangch'ang* (chorus), expressing the inner emotions of the protagonist and supporting "portability,"⁶² unmistakably indicates kinship with the notion of the Stephanie Donald's socialist realist gaze (leader gaze) concept also performing into an off-screen space.⁶³ Both, off-stage lyrical performance and leader gaze, enhance the full commitment and unconditional fidelity towards the Great Leader (*suryŏng*)-cult through the innermost mental state of the main character, effectively intensifying the omnipresent ambience of Kim Il Sung. By contrast, Shin's soft musical melody, the dynamic dances, the vivid and sharp colors of hanbok, flowers, and the nature promote the vital life of the Korean people in a liberated and joyful way instead of permanent veneration for Party rights and responsibilities, in accordance with unconditional obedience towards the Leader. Turning back to the pace of Im's cinema, even though the typical tempo of *p'ansori* is slow, it does not lose its dynamism. The intense love, emotions, and the hardships of the couple masterfully shape the movie's spatial trinity: the play of the actors' performances, the *p'ansori* narrator, and the theatergoers.

Both Shin and Im used theatrical details in their visual storytelling. Shin built massive ink-written sets in the movie's memorable love dance backdrop, also echoing traditional Korean folk dance motives, where the hero and heroine play hide-and-seek among human-sized paperboards (Figure 3), drawn to resemble humans, providing a three-dimensional illusion of sitting in front of a theatrical stage and palpably being part of the audience, "promoting the hybridity of all forms of arts," like painting, theater (dance and performance), and film, coupled with the new Western-style of music.⁶⁴

Likewise, the theatrical milieu has been utilized by Im. The leading divergence between Shin's and Im's applications, however, rests on the fact, while Shin solely (still, genuinely) composed the visual illusion of theatrical surroundings among film sets, Im shot these scenes *inside* an actual theater, openly depicting the theatrical stage with the *p'ansori* narrator and the drummer, and the house displaying the reactions of the technology-obsessed and digital-experience-demanding young spectators. The director, thereby, visually invites the moviegoers themselves to take seats in the theater portrayed in the film and brings them (us who watch the movie), to the visual space of the film, helping to unite with the theatrical public. The cinematic effect of "film in a film" (in this case, theater in a film), is quite impactful. The *mise en scène* in Im's work is complemented by the acclaimed *p'ansori* narrator artist, Cho Sang-hyŏn, who grows to be as crucial character in the movie as Ch'unhyang or Mongnyong. From the first cityscape moments



Figure 3 The love dance scene of Mongnyong (acted by Lee Hak-ch'öl) and Ch'unhyang (acted by Chang Sŏn-hŭi) in *Sarang, sarang, nae sarang* (*Love, Love, My Love*, Shin Sang-ok, 1984), combining the elements of dance, theater and cinema, providing the impact of a special combination of traditionalism (represented by sets and costumes) and modernity (symbolized by westernized musical-esque soundtrack, dance and the tool of cinema itself). The blend of collection of artistic variety (dance, music, theater, cinema, painting), cannot be separated but is presented within one single (and merged), performing space.

of the modern Seoul, where the young companion—as the major viewers of the theatrical house—arrives to watch the *p'ansori* performance, Im invents the cinematic-theatrical combination illusion in a two-in-one presentational setup. Im showcases the main figures of the theatrical show, the *p'ansori* narrator and the audience, like the main protagonists of the movie itself. The stylistic choice of the *p'ansori* narrative style is an effective artistic tool to emotionally influence both the theatrical young Korean audiences, shot in Chŏngdong Theater, and the actual cinemagoers (us). Im Kwŏn-t'aek succeeded in synchronizing modern Western cinematic techniques with tempo, speed, and Korean art of singing performance, hence, it became “the most ambitious project in Im’s directing career, and arguably his masterpiece.”⁶⁵

By contrast, Shin’s theater-cinema hybrid concept differs from Im’s triangle formula, where the artistic spaces are detached and the private (non-virtual) spaces of the narrator and the audience could merely meet throughout the movie but could mainly reunite in the last minute. In Shin’s design, the theatrical and the cinematic scenes are merged into one, being almost impossible to separate them. Figure 3 illustrates, the film actor and actress actually dance among theatrical sets,



Figure 4 Theater in cinema: Im Kwŏn-t'aek directly instills theatrical elements in *Ch'unhyang* (Im Kwŏn-t'aek, 2000), counting the straightforward portrayals of *p'ansori* narrator artist (top), Cho Sang-hyŏn, and the young audience (bottom), providing the impact of a special combination of traditionalism (represented by *p'ansori* performance), and modernity (represented by both, the cinema itself, and the young theatrical audience). The spaces of theater and cinema, in this adaptation, is palpably detached.



Figure 5 Intimate moments in different interpretations.

Top Left: The undressing scene in *Sarang, sarang, nae sarang* (*Love, Love, My Love*, Shin Sang-ok, 1984).

Top Middle: The gentle embrace of Mongnyong in *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), during the joy dance after the couple's togetherness as indicated by Ch'unhyang's different hairstyle and hanbok.

Top Right: Moderate depiction of romance in *Ch'unhyangjŏn* (*The Tale of Ch'unhyang*, Yun Ryong-gyu, Yu Wŏn-chun, 1980).

Bottom Left: Shin's first use of undressing in his South Korean adaptation, *Sŏng Ch'unhyang* (1961).

Bottom Right: Intimate moments of Im Kwŏn-t'aek's *Ch'unhyang* (2000), between the leading roles Ch'unhyang, acted by Lee Hyo-chŏng, and Mongnyong, performed by Cho Sŭn-gu.

thereby, the two spaces are unified into one hybrid shape, whereas the theatrical space is represented *only* by the *p'ansori* narrator and the audience in Im's work (Figure 4) but the cinematic depiction with the actual actors and actresses is implemented in a distant space. In the latter example, the two divided arenas of cinema and theater mainly meet at the concluding part, while Shin made his movie with a permanent combination of the two spaces.

Shin's *Love, Love, My Love* (1984) shocked the North Korean audiences with its brave images of courtship and the memorable undressing scene (Figure 5, top left)—recalling his South Korean version from 1961, depicted peeking behind from a transparent curtain (Figure 5, bottom left)—accompanied with Mongnyong's soft carnal breathing and Ch'unhyang's first silent moans of rejection. Notwithstanding, the tenderness of the lovers is plainly exemplified in the joy dance of the couple and gentle embrace of Mongnyong (Figure 5, top middle). Im's *Ch'unhyang* (2000) contains the most detailed and longest erotic portions of all the *Ch'unhyangjŏn* film adaptations. The sensual part starts with the characters' disrobing all the way

through to their love scene in the rain, not shying away from the protagonists' naked bodies, placing them on red and green silk blankets covers (Figure 5, bottom right) until the couple's final steamy farewell.

By contrast, *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1980), not surprisingly, has no explicit sexual references to the first night suggested. Rather, Yu and Yun show the couple spending hours together painting, hence, direct physical interaction and mutual gaze contact between the couple is completely missing (Figure 5, top right), as commonly accepted in North Korean social terms. Shin's golden mean was planned to satisfy the conservative taste of North Korean audiences by showing something newly erotic via daring touches and direct references to the sexual moments but also was able to remain within the still tolerable political threshold. It is a matter of choice who considers either the candidly visible sensual scenes, as clear in Im's work, or solely the sexual hints and allusions without showing any straightforward carnal images, as striking in both Yu and Yun's picture (1980) and Shin's more erotic musical (1984).

Conclusion

The classic folktale of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* remains one of the most beloved Korean love stories, typifying ethno-national Korean identity (Korean-ness/Korean essence, *minjŏksŏng*), national pride and cultural heritage. It is not exclusively a simple love story, but the fable is also a social criticism of the Chosŏn dynasty's unfair class system, reflecting later Korean national development and liberation process. During the lengthy decades of Korean history, Ch'unhyang's resistance has become to symbolize the independence movement against aggressive foreign invaders. Cinema has brought the legend to life in manifold forms helped along by technical improvements. Its fame is still undiminished in cultural transformations of the early twenty-first century. The changes and details of the fable vary and are shaped by the own tastes and perspectives of filmmakers, *p'ansori* narrators, singers, theatrical, and television broadcast directors.

The paper analyzed the massive differences between North Korean and South Korean *Ch'unhyangjŏn* movie translations of the same story, specifically focusing on the films of *Ch'unhyang* (2000) produced in South Korea, and *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1980) shot in North Korea. The most remarkable differences emerge in the illustration of Ch'unhyang. The major South Korean variants portray her as a vulnerable, shy, daydreaming kisaeng with full of sensitivity and erotic desires, who is subordinated by the male, positioning her as a passive character, being forever dependent on Mongnyong. Remarkably, Shin Sang-ok's vividly revised *Love, Love, My Love* (1984) does not share themes with its North Korean

counterpart, however, with Im Kwŏn-t'aek's redesign in terms of the portrayal of love and hybridity of assorted artistic performance styles, like theater, dance, music and cinema. Likewise, Shin could achieve a distinct perspective *in toto* into a much liberally reformist and progressive way, standing in clear contrast to Yu and Yun's moderate and purely innocent courtship illustration. Hence, Shin's remodeling demonstrates more parallels and resemblance with Im's composition but more distinctions with the earlier North Korean form.

North Korean cinema has been unfairly underrated, labeled mostly as homogeneous and simply propaganda cinema, an isolated virtual space within the global film chronicle. With a strong emphasis of the fact that North Korean cinema functions as political enlightenment for mass educational objectives *and* entertainment at the same time since its creation, Yu and Yun's *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1980) is correspondingly a plain example of this polarity. On the one hand, the film indicates simplicity and natural purity of the hard worker heroine struggling agony from the frequent humiliation by the exploiter noble class archetype, Hakto, throughout the whole movie. The deserved cathartic resolution of the long-term torment, and the glorious revolutionary victory appears at the closing frame mainly by Ch'unhyang's self-sacrificial martyrdom (although her life is saved in the final moment on stage, she has been literally prepared for her early death), and her own independent fight against the corrupt system, and partly by the last-minute savior figure of Mongnyong. On the other hand, the film has been memorable for the North Korean audiences due to its distant, yet true depiction of romance.

Ch'unhyangjŏn contains all the necessary ingredients the North Korean regime needs to exploit their populace, such as romanticized revolution (in form of winning over the corrupt and pervert magistrate, Hakto), resistance of the exploited peasantry, and a politically active heroine who is able to accept possible martyrdom sacrificing herself for the homeland, which are in contradiction to South Korean cinema's *Ch'unhyangjŏn* film versions after the national division. The North Korean model from 1980 follows this track by portraying the strong independent female character coupled with revolutionary optimism and political consciousness. The movie downplays the power of the male figure, far weaker than his South Korean counterpart, by emasculating Mongnyong vis-à-vis Ch'unhyang's strength. Not to mention, in support of Juche consciousness, Ch'unhyang is set up as a sovereign care-taker of her aging mother, working in the kitchen and preparing her food, which have been rarely illustrated in any of the earlier forms, including the original legend. The image of the working Ch'unhyang, wielding class consciousness, is depicted as a socialist exemplar that can easily suppress the erotic emotions for greater and lofty purposes. While the central thrust of the plot revolves around the lovers in the South Korean variants (*their* story), the North

Korean adaptation emphasizes the role of Ch'unhyang (*her* story). Nevertheless, the North Korean audience has been captivated by a novel and daring approach to love rather one meant to conceal political communication.

The paper additionally aimed to include those film portions from Shin's daring North Korean composition, *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), which show palpable dissonances with Yu and Yun's, or, in particular cases, with Im's versions. At the same time, the study revealed what and how the main connections and closeness had been interwoven among the examined works. Shin's work, *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), seems to bring traits of the two other analyzed works' characterizations of Ch'unhyang as Shin's *juste milieu* Ch'unhyang-figure follows the patterns of Confucian shyness and purity at first glance (as depicted in the earlier North Korean version), whereas later she gradually accepts the advances of Mongnyong by returning and requiting his physical contact and intimate gazes (as Im portrays her in a far more daring way). Concurrently, it is the antithesis of the previous North Korean *Ch'unhyangjŏn*-cinema, made by Yu and Yun in 1980, which focused on the politicized revolutionary romanticism of Ch'unhyang rather than the couple's courtship. The success of the earlier version, shot in 1980, primarily stemming also from the love plot, indicated the North Korean leadership that the moviegoers wanted to see less-politicized but more humanized romance with *real* emotions (but not over-acted implausible imitations) coupled with fun and immediate catchy melody. Shin went farther than simply a gentle hint to love. Considering these features, he was able to transform collectivism into individuality, a rarely deemed concept in North Korean cinema. Shin's work was one of the first (but most probably, not the very first) North Korean pieces that showed open and explicit sexual reference, including the erotic male gaze, objectification of the female body, moments of undress, and direct physical contact between both genders in a reckless way. Ultimately, only a very few directors were able to experience similar cinematic impact on both sides of Korea, something achieved only by Shin Sang-ok.

The article's other heavily underlined and important movie analysis was Im Kwŏn-t'aek's transliteration, *Ch'unhyang* (2000), that is the most overtly liberal translation via open portrayals of naked bodies and figurative language in forms, or erotic metaphors (both through *p'ansori* texts and cinematography), yet the film reawakens the roots of the story's genuine performance by masterfully hybridizing genres, and adopting traditional Korean narration of *p'ansori*. The film additionally attempts to comment on the growing social exclusion and isolationism of the age. The use of explicit sexual contents aimed to depict romance in the most realistic and humanized way, attracting global audiences and reaching young generations. Aside from that, the *raison d'être* of these brave pictures is to support social critical voices—thereby can be deemed as a rebellion (or at least,

an open judgment)—against the socially destructive and painful side of Chōson and Confucian social and moral laws (embodied in *han* and *hwappyōng*),⁶⁶ which not merely burdened and pressured the full contentment of the young couple's true love but also jeopardized Ch'unhyang's own life and survival. At the same time, the film thoroughly and genuinely details the positive results and traditional customs of the Chosŏn dynasty including education, poetry, and the practice of ancient religious shamanistic elements.

Im found success by using the Korean national treasure, *p'ansori*, and adapting this nearly-forgotten traditional performance into a twenty-first century treasure, a masterpiece that criticizes the modernization of the period, by mixing special ingredients of a theatrical play and a cinematic work, identical with Shin Sang-ok's *Love, Love, My Love* (1984). Yu and Yun's northern variant (1980) portrays Ch'unhyang as a revolutionary female protagonist trumpeting the North Korean socio-political values in a historical costume drama, complemented by the classic style of emotion-centered lyric songs.

As we have seen, *sagŭk* narratives coupled with their politico-ideological aspects have diversified over the decades on both sides of the Korean Peninsula. Still, one common link between the North and the South has not changed since the genre's birth during the colonial era. These national treasures, dreamed onto the silver screen, have consistently and purposefully maintained their fragrance of ethno-nationalism as the substance of traditional Korean collective identity. The timeless story of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* has been told and screened in abundant forms throughout the decades in the two Koreas and has remained one of the most leading Korean love stories, representing the heritage and pride of a shared Korean national identity.

Acknowledgments

The copyright owner of the North Korean movies, including the film stills, is 조선영화수출입사, *Korean Film Export and Import Corporation (Chosŏn yŏnghwa Such'ur ipsa)*. Reproduced in accordance with the following provisions of the Copyright Law of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (2001, as amended in 2006 by Decree 1532 of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly): Article 6 (Exclusion), Article 12 (Exclusion), Article 32 (Fair Use; particularly 32–3 [use for education/academia]).

The copyright of Im Kwŏn-t'aek's *Ch'unhyang* (2000) belongs to CJ 엔터테인먼트, *CJ Entertainment*.

The copyright of Shin Sang-ok's *Sŏng Ch'unhyang* (1961) belongs to 한국영상자료원, *Korean Film Archive (KOFA)*.

Notes

1. The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to Dr. Robert Winstanley-Chesters, Dr James B. Lewis and other members of the editorial staff of the EJKS, as well as the anonymous reviewers of the paper, for their scrupulous efforts and meticulous editing of the current article. The research behind this paper was accomplished during the author's Korea Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship period 2019/2020 at The University of Edinburgh. The contact e-mail of the author is as follows: gabor.sebo0526@gmail.com.
2. It is widely affirmed that *Ch'unhyangjŏn* film adaptations have enjoyed high reputation among Korean audiences in the two Koreas since the colonial era until our present, as Hyangjin Lee also states, "The popularity of the Ch'unhyang story among film-makers is obvious in both South and North Korea. Specific aspects of the folktale that have inspired numerous film adaptations (...)." Hyangjin Lee. *Contemporary Korean Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 74. She adds that the second adaptation of the story (1935) was also "the first commercial film made in Korea," bringing about "the perception of film as a popular entertainment among the general public." Lee. *Contemporary Korean Cinema*, p. 72. Likewise, Steven Chung underscores the popularity of the famous folklore story by its "rich cultural-historical text, both in its latent presentation of problems of gender, class, and political-ethics and in its enduring popularity and openness to adaptation and revision." Steven Chung. *Split Screen Korea: Shin Sang-ok and Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 191.
3. Lee. *Contemporary Korean Cinema*, p. 69.
4. Initially, the term *kwangdae* related to a masked performer; "later, to public entertainers." Peter H. Lee. "The Road to Ch'unhyang: A Reading of the Song of the Chaste Wife Ch'unhyang." *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture*, 3, 2010, p. 281.
5. As Hyangjin Lee also suggests, "The essence of the folk-tale embodies the popular desire of a Utopian society." Hyangjin Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," in *New Korean Cinema*, eds. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer (New York, NY: New York University Press/Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 63.
6. Shamanism has deeper foundations in Korean culture and identity than Chinese-originated Confucianism. Shin Sang-ok perfectly utilized these spiritual elements in his Korean folktale adaptations on both sides of the Korean Peninsula. In the South, Shin made movies based on folktale adaptations of *Ch'unhyangjŏn* entitled *성춘향* (Sŏng Chunhyang, 1961) and *심청전*, *Shimch'ŏngjŏn*, *The Tale of Shim Cheong*, under the title of *효녀심청*, *Hyonyŏ shimch'ŏng* (*Shim Ch'ŏng*, 1972). The revival period of Korean classics during the 1980s provided a unique opportunity for Shin to remake his own telling of these folk stories in the North as well, entitled *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), and *The Tale of Shim Cheong* (1985). In addition, his last North Korean movie direction (at the same time, the first and last monster movie in the DPRK), is about the legendary iron-eating monstrous creature, originally set in Songdo (now: Kaesŏng), *불가사리 Pulgasari* (1985). With regards to his North Korean *Ch'unhyangjŏn* direction, *Love, Love, My Love* (1984), Shin depicted dream-like hallucinations, nightmare scenes and spiritual images, originated from the original story's shamanistic rituals, including the ancient ritual ceremony to expel evil spirits (儺禮 *narye*), through abstract and surrealist voice distortions, realistic female screams, coupled with slow motion. The special video effects in the scene of Ch'unhyang's nightmares and visions of the broken mirror (symbol of the bad luck), scarecrow (linked to exorcist rituals), falling mountain, and typhoon on the sea (meaning of chaotic change of nature referring to apocalypse), bringing formalist and avant-garde elements, were rarely used before due to the principle of *juche* art excluding abstract and formalist contents. Hyangjin Lee also asserts this correlation in Shin's movies stating he "introduces supernatural elements into the film text (...) and Shin resorts to the indigenous folk beliefs, such as fortune-telling and dream sequences

that transcend the logic of naturalism and has a strong grip on Korean spiritual life” to resolve the potential problem of the couple, their publicly disapproved and secret marriage, including the sexual relationship at their first night, despite their social class gap. As Lee details, “Ch’unhyang’s involvement with Mongnyong is presented as predestined by forces beyond her control” from the beginning of the movie, when Ch’unhyang meets the blind fortune teller. Or, we should consider Wŏlmae’s strange dream in which “a blue dragon entering Ch’unhyang’s room thick with smoke and then flying away in the air, holding Ch’unhyang in his mouth.” In the prison-scene, these visions also haunt Ch’unhyang. As Lee finishes this argument, “The unearthly elements serve as an effective means to justify their unusual marriage: their meeting and marriage are the result of the play of inexplicable forces, and humans must obey the fate befalling them. These superstitious motifs are not non-existent in other films, but Shin utilizes them most heavily.” Lee. *Contemporary Korean Cinema*, p. 78.

7. Lee. “The Road to Ch’unhyang,” p. 360.
8. Kim Yoon Keum-sil and Bruce Williams. *Two Lenses on the Korean Ethos: Key Cultural Concepts and Their Appearance in Cinema* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2015), p. 45.
9. Hye Seung Chung. “Toward a Strategic Korean Cinephilia: A Transnational *Détournement* of Hollywood Melodrama,” in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre and National Cinema*, eds. Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005), p. 121.
10. Chung. “Toward a Strategic Korean Cinephilia.”
11. Chung. “Toward a Strategic Korean Cinephilia,” p. 122.
12. Soyoung Kim. “Questions on Woman’s Film: *The Maid, Madame Freedom*, and Women,” in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre and National Cinema*, eds. Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005), p. 190.
13. Kyung Hyun Kim. “Lethal Work: Domestic Space and Gender Troubles in *Happy End* and *The Housemaid*,” in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre and National Cinema*, eds. Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelmann (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005), p. 208.
14. Dave Afshar. “What Is Mono No Aware, the Japanese Love for Impermanence?” Accessed 27 January, 2021. <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/japan/articles/what-is-mono-no-aware-the-japanese-love-for-impermanence/>.
15. Chung. “Toward a Strategic Korean Cinephilia,” p. 122.
16. Korean cinema during the Japanese colonial period is mostly labeled as 조선영화 Chosŏn cinema (or colonial Korean cinema). At the same time, North Korea also refers to its own cinema under the same title, as 조선영화 Chosŏn film.
17. Nayoung Aimee Kwon. “Conflicting Nostalgia: Performing *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* (春香傳) in the Japanese Empire,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 73.1 (2014), p. 118.
18. Yoo Sungkwan (Korean Film Archive). “Korea’s Classical *Chunhyangjeon* (The Story of Chunhyang) Made into Film,” Accessed 12 June, 2020. <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/exhibit/wqwyhvsv>.
19. Yoo Sungkwan (Korean Film Archive). “Korea’s Classical *Chunhyangjeon* (The Story of Chunhyang) Made into Film.”
20. As Hyangjin Lee borrows the metaphor of the female body and the suppressed image of the Korean nation in the post-Liberation era from the work of David James and Kyung Hyun Kim, “The figuration of female characters as victims of oppressive Confucian patriarchy and social change envisages the female body as a metaphor for the post-colonial status of the nation (James and Kim 2002).” David E. James and Kyung Hyun Kim (eds.). *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002). Lee. “*Chunhyang*: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema,” p. 69. Furthermore, my hypothesis is also confirmed by Nayoung Aimee Kwon who wrote about

the Japanese theatrical interpretation of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, directed by Tomoyoshi Murayama accomplished with his Shinkyō Theater Troupe in 1938. The scholar indicates, the figure of Ch'unhyang "had been coded as a metonym for the lost nation itself while remaining a national 'tradition' to be protected from the infiltration of the foreign, the attempt to modernize it—especially at a time when modernity was often seen as synonymous with imperial Japan and the West—was met with strong opposition as being 'inauthentic betrayal.'" Kwon. "Conflicting Nostalgia: Performing *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (春香傳) in the Japanese Empire," p. 136.

20. As Kwon also points out, "It is not without significance that such gestures of simultaneous essentialization and exoticization of colonized Korea were contested over the female body of Ch'unhyang. Paralleling the fate of the eponymous tale itself, Ch'unhyang, its heroine, was appropriated for nationalist and imperialist desires. The body of Ch'unhyang became the locus of contradictory contentions for these critics." Kwon. "Conflicting Nostalgia: Performing *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (春香傳) in the Japanese Empire," p. 136.
21. Darcy Paquet. "Christmas in August and Korean Melodrama," in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema*, ed. Frances Gateward (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 45.
22. Lee. *Contemporary Korean Cinema*, pp. 72–73.
23. Koreanization swiftly transforms cultural sensibilities from defending Japanese colonial politics to radical Korean nationalism.
24. According to the official North Korean propaganda, the country has always preferred to be considered as the truest and purest Korea, overtaking the Southerners in racial chastity and holding a special position in North Korean culture and arts. Brian Myers, for instance, writes about the importance of white color in clothing and painting along with the snow-covered mountains (especially the sacred spatial location, Paektu Mountain), symbolizing the chastity of the North Koreans' bloodline vis-à-vis the "contaminated" South. Brian Reynolds Myers. *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters* (New York, NY: Melville House, 2011), pp. 60–61, 89 (pages from the e-book version). Tatiana Gabroussenko also discusses the portrayal of the southern brethren, through propagandist lenses of manifold North Korea literary works in the *northern paradise–southern hell* context, in her book *Soldiers on the Cultural Front: Developments in the Early History of North Korea Literature and Literary Policy* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), pp. 43–44, 96–99, 119–122.

In addition, there is a striking story demonstrating the above-mentioned North Korean notion. During the inter-Korean diplomatic talks between South and North Korean generals in 2006, the South Koreans explained to their northern counterparts that the farmers in the South were increasingly marrying women from foreign countries. A northern general declared "[o]ur nation has always considered its pure lineage to be of great importance, I am concerned that our singularity will disappear." The South Korean general named these mixed marriages as a "drop of ink in the Han River," lessening the significance of these separated cases. On the other side, the northern response affirmed that "[s]ince ancient times our land has been one of abundant natural beauty. Not even one drop of ink must be allowed." This obsession with national purity and superiority is reflected through many forms in North Korean culture and arts. The *Chosun Ilbo* and Digital *Chosun Ilbo*. "Two Koreas' Top Brass Resort to Racist Mudslinging," Accessed 31 October 2020. <http://web.archive.org/web/20060528101309/http://english/chosun/com/w21data/html/news/200605/200605170016.html>.

25. As Joseph Nye and Youna Kim refer to other sources and claim, "The Korean Wave has finally made its way into isolated North Korea despite tight controls set by the regime's authority (Kim 2007 and 2011). In recent years, cases of defections have continued to arise, while the means of access to the Korean Wave popular culture has expanded through the

- use of digital technologies and mobile phones in North Korea (Daily NK 2011b; Washington Post 2017).” Joseph Nye and Youna Kim. “Soft power and the Korean Wave,” in *South Korean Popular Culture and North Korea*, ed. Youna Kim (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 47. In the book referred to, several other authors, like Tahe Yong-ho, Weiqi Zhang, Micky Lee, Ahlam Lee, Sandra Fahy, Sunny Yoon, Elaine H. Kim, Hannah Michell, Kyong Yoon, Jahyon Park, Stephen J. Epstein, and Christopher K. Green, detail, from different aspects, how South Korean popular culture, including cinema, has attracted the North Korean population, mainly the so-called *jangmadang* (market places) generation, in recent decades.
26. In a nutshell, Juche (coming from the Japanese word *shutai*, meaning *subject/main body/main idea*—主體思想), stresses the importance to North Korea of political independence, national dignity and pride, the mastership of the people (subjectivity in thought), self-sufficiency in economics, and militaristic self-defense. It is most often (mis)translated simply as “self-reliance,” however, it was far from a real concept or theoretical construct at the beginning, but rather stressed the promotion of national characteristics of Korean traditions and priorities in the cultural policies of the DPRK, as could be perceived in Kim Il Sung’s first Juche speech, held on 28 December 1955. When Juche became the official doctrine of the regime, it functioned more as a pliable propaganda instrument for the successful isolation policy than a genuine, coherent ideology, which is also apparent in most of the North Korean movies through the indispensable elements of hailing Kim Il Sung himself (almost in every work) compared to the rare mentions of the word “Juche.” The role of Juche is overestimated and overthought by most outsiders, while the constant canonization of the *sur्यों*-cult (Great Leader/Kim Il Sung-centeredness/Kimilsungism) is mistakenly considered less. The main method of Juche realism (cultural and artistic extension of Juche) is “how to best represent ‘Korean essence’ (*minjöksǒng*), that was simultaneously nationalist and (socialist) realist.” Minna So-Min Lee. “In Search of Lost Time: Redefining Socialist Realism in Postwar North Korea,” Master’s thesis (University of Toronto, 2013), ii. [Abstract], p. 57. Travis Workman observes “the most important difference between juche realism and socialist realism, however, lies in its primary concern with decolonization and, therefore, the spectacles of decolonization produced through cinema.” Travis Workman. “Visual Regimes of Juche Ideology in North Korea’s *The Country I Saw*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Communist Visual Cultures*, eds. Aga Skrodzka, Xiaoning Lu, and Katarzyna Marciniak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 592.
 27. Consider the first North Korean musical (음악영화 *umak yǒnghwa*) was 금강산의 처녀 *Kūmgangsan ūi ch’ōnyō* (*The Mount Kūmgang Girl*, Chu Yǒng-sǒp, 1959). Yi Myǒngcha. *Puk’an yǒnghwasa* (Seoul: K’ōmyunik’eisyōn puksū, 2007), p. 206.
 28. Yi. *Puk’an yǒnghwasa*, 58, 60. Mark Morris. “Chunhyang at War: Rediscovering Franco-North Korean Film *Moranbong* (1959),” in *Korean Screen Cultures: Interrogating Cinema, TV, Music and Online Games*, eds. Andrew David Jackson and Colette Balmain (New York, NY and Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2016), p. 207.
 29. Yi. *Puk’an yǒnghwasa*, p. 58.
 30. Keith Howard. *Songs for “Great Leaders”*: Ideology and Creativity in North Korean Music and Dance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 150. *Ch’anggūk* was broadly played in the DPRK until 1964 when Kim Il Sung personally “attacked” this traditional cultural treasure. Howard. *Songs for “Great Leaders,”* pp. 149, 153.
 31. Tatiana Gabroussenko. “Brothers: the banned North Korean-Soviet film ruined by Juche politics,” Accessed 21 December 2020. <http://www.nknews.org/2019/08/brothers-the-banned-north-korean-soviet-film-ruined-by-juche-politics/>.
 32. Morris. “Chunhyang at War,” pp. 206–207.
 33. She was in fact a mistress of Kim Jong Il, but she became romantically involved with the son of a Ch’ongryōn-member (*General Association of Korean Residents in Japan*), which led to her public execution by firing squad in front of 6,000 people, including artists, intellectuals and

- her family members, most probably in 1980 or 1981. Morris, “Chunhyang at War,” p. 206.
34. Morris recalls the words of Takashi Monma, a Japanese researcher who had written a book on the history of North Korean cinema. Takashi Monma. *Chōsen minshu-shugi jinmin kyōwakoku eigashi: Kenkoku kara genzai made no zen kiroku* (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 2012), p. 256. Morris. “Chunhyang at War,” p. 207. The first color version of *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* (1959) was screened in China in 1962 also with a great success.
 35. The name of Yu Wōn-chun could be very familiar to the followers of North Korean films as he was a celebrated and honored film actor in North Korean cinema history as exemplified in 내 고향 *Nae kohyang (My Home Village*, Kang Hong-sik, 1949), and 신혼부부 *Shinhon pubu (The Newlyweds*, Yun Ryong-gyu, 1955). He performed the leading role of pastor *Ch’oe Haksin* in 최학신의 일가 *Ch’oe Haksin ūi il’ka (The Family of Ch’oe Hak-sin*, Oh Pyōng-ch’o 1966), and he also played the antagonist Hakto in the 1980-version of *Ch’unhyangjōn*.
 36. The premiere was in May, 1980 with a huge success at film theaters. Noh Chae-sūng. *Puk’an yōnghwagye: 1977–1988* (Seoul: Yōnghwa chinhūng kongsa, 1989), p. 57.
 37. *Sobak ham* 소박함 refers to Korean child-like innocence, pure naiveté, and a “greater spontaneity.” Brian R. Myers. *Han Sōrya and North Korean Literature: The Failure of Socialist Realism in the DPRK* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 54.
 38. North Korean audiences were captivated by the open approach to love rather than clinging to hidden political anecdotes. Despite the fact that it was much more “astringly regulated in terms of sexual expressions” than Shin’s version in 1984, the people felt Yu and Yun’s movie closer to real romance than usual propaganda works. Romance illustrated that the female protagonist’s primary role was of a lover and a war hero. Suk-Young Kim. *Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 225. Notably, *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* (1980) is an example of the softening cinematic period of the 1980s, mainly for the reason that it depicts romance in a tender manner compared to the mainstream. As Schönherr mentions, the movie was the “first effort to broaden the scope of the North Korean cinema again (...) Finally, people could see raw emotions on screen! Fantastical images of love, life and suffering and a final happy release.” Johannes Schönherr. *North Korean Cinema: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012), pp. 68, 70.
 39. A remake of 미래를 사랑하라 *Mirae rŭl sarang hara (Love the future!)* was made forty years later, in 1999 (directed by Chan Baek-yōn, leading with the *Hong Kil Dong*-star, Ri Yōng-ho, who plays the patriot guerilla fighter of the 1920s, Pak Kil-san, who temporarily loses his sight due to dynamite thrown by a Japanese fighter, is also brutally tortured in prison, and by the end, dies a martyr in a heroic way with his two fellow freedom fighters, executed by the Japanese.
 40. Chung. *Split Screen Korea*, p. 179.
 41. Shin Sang-ok. *Nan, yōnghwa yōtta: Yōnghwa kamdok Shin Sang-ok i namgin majimak küldŭl* (Seoul: Random House Korea, 2007), p. 211.
 42. Chung. *Split Screen Korea*, p. 192.
 43. Note there are three different actresses who use the name Kim Yōng-suk in a number of movies. Immanuel Kim. *Laughing North Koreans: The Culture of Comedy Films* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020), p. 118nn13.
 44. 00(h):54(m):28(s)–00(h):54(m):51(s) Im Kwōn-t’aek’s *Ch’unhyang* (2000) CJ 엔터테인먼트, CJ Entertainment, Accessed 25 October 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvG8y3bNmgg&list=PLQJRpfVI4uI5c-oW93UJYD8elbz4GVkWS&ab_channel=%ED%95%9C%EA%B5%AD%EA%B3%A0%EC%A0%84%EC%98%81%ED%99%94KoreanClassicFilm.
 45. As Lee examines, *Sopyonje* (1993) contributed in “revealing Koreans’ nostalgic sentiments and sense of loss.” She also recalls other scholars, such as Cho Hae-joang, praising the movie for being able to search new identity and a new culture for South Korea in a good historical timing. Lee. “*Chunhyang*: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema,” p. 74.

46. Some other sources refer to the movie as Im's ninety-ninth work. Shin-Dong Kim. "The Creation of *Pansori* Cinema: *Sopyonje* and *Chunhyangdyun* in Creative Hybridity," in *East Asian Cinema and Cultural Heritage: From China, Hong Kong, Taiwan to Japan and South Korea*, ed. Kinnia Yau Shuk-ting (New York, NY and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 167.
47. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," p. 70.
48. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," p. 74.
49. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," p. 69.
50. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema."
51. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," p. 74.
52. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," pp. 71–72.
53. Kim. "The Creation of *Pansori* Cinema," p. 152.
54. Kim. "The Creation of *Pansori* Cinema."
55. Although Im Kwŏn-t'aek's *Ch'unhyang* (2000) has not reached the expected domestic success at the box office, still, its cinematic importance is undeniable due to fact that it was the first South Korean movie to be nominated for Palme d'Or at the 53rd Cannes International Film Festival in 2000. As Lee points out, "By remaking the old tale, he attempts to entertain international as well as domestic audiences." Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," p. 66.
56. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," p. 65.
57. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," p. 66.
58. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema."
59. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema."
60. Lee. "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema."
61. The classic North Korean film songs are mostly performed whether in off-screen solo, couplets (*chŏlga*) or an off-stage singing chorus (*pangch'ang*, classified in male, female and mixed types) to be easily received and understood by the masses with clear and straightforward messages, accompanied by mingled practice of traditional Korean musical instruments in company with Western orchestral ones (*paehap kwanhydnak*, combined orchestra). Howard. *Songs for "Great Leaders,"* p. 159.
62. Howard. *Songs for "Great Leaders,"* p. 161.
63. The film scholar Stephanie Donald's concept emphasizes the hero's visibility not only through his personal struggle but mainly via the leader's omnipresent gaze towards the protagonist. Donald additionally states, the leader as group ideal can complete the character of hero as the primary object of identification, therefore, referring to "an off-screen space rather than a defined diegetic object, signalling the leader's political consciousness." The filmmaker aims for these moments noted to be shared by both the characters and the audience in "ecstatic communion." Jessica Ka Yee Chan. *Chinese Revolutionary Cinema: Propaganda, Aesthetics and Internationalism 1949–1966* (London & New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2019), p. 110. Chan's work refers to the manuscript of Stephanie Donald. *Public Secrets, Public Spaces: Cinema and Civility in China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), pp. 60, 62.

Andrew David Jackson and Travis Workman also follow Donald's thesis on "socialist realist gaze" to observe the role of the positive hero guiding the masses in *hidden hero*-movies of the 1980s' North Korean cinema. Andrew David Jackson. "DPRK Film, *Order No. 27*, and the Acousmatic Voice," in *Korean Screen Cultures: Interrogating Cinema, TV, Music and Online Games*, eds. Andrew David Jackson and Colette Balmain (New York, NY and Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2016), p. 165. Travis Workman. "The Partisan, the Worker and the Hidden Hero: Popular Icons in North Korean Film," in *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, eds. Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 151, 156, 159, 161.

In brief, socialist realism, emanated from the Soviet Union, influenced mostly the cultural doctrines of socialist countries during their developmental period, and North Korea was no exception. The concept was determined at the *First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers* in 1934 by the cultural ideologist, Andrei Zhdanov (first used in 1932), with the aim of “truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development.” Péter Kenéz. *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 157.

64. Kim. *Illusive Utopia*, pp. 40–41.
65. Among others, Hyangjin Lee and Shin-Dong Kim refer to the words of Chŏng Sŏng-il (2003) in their works. Lee. “*Chunhyang*: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema,” p. 66. Kim. “The Creation of *Pansori* Cinema,” p. 167.
66. *Hwappyŏng* refers to the long-term pressures of social frustration and resentment associated with death.

References

Sources in the English Language

- Chan, Jessica Ka Yee. *Chinese Revolutionary Cinema: Propaganda, Aesthetics and Internationalism 1949–1966*. London & New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2019.
- Chung, Steven. *Split Screen Korea: Shin Sang-ok and Postwar Cinema*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Donald, Stephanie. *Public Secrets, Public Spaces: Cinema and Civility in China*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000.
- Gabroussenko, Tatiana. *Soldiers on the Cultural Front: Developments in the Early History of North Korean Literature and Literary Policy*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010.
- Gateward, Frances (ed.). *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Howard, Keith. *Songs for “Great Leaders”: Ideology and Creativity in North Korean Music and Dance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Jackson, Andrew David, and Balmain, Colette (eds.). *Korean Screen Cultures: Interrogating Cinema, TV, Music and Online Games*. New York, NY and Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2016.
- James, David E. and Kim, Kyung Hun (eds.). *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002.
- Kenéz, Péter. *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Keumsil, Kim Yoon and Williams, Bruce. *Two Lenses on the Korean Ethos: Key Cultural Concepts and Their Appearance in Cinema*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2015.
- Kim, Immanuel. *Laughing North Koreans: The Culture of Comedy Films*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020.
- Kim, Kyung Hyun and Choe, Youngmin (eds.). *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Kim, Suk-Young. *Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010.
- Kim, Youna (ed.). *South Korean Popular Culture and North Korea*. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Lee, Hyangjin. *Contemporary Korean Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- McHugh, Kathleen, and Abelmann, Nancy (eds.). *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005.
- Myers, Brian Reynolds. *Han Sŏrya and North Korean Literature: The Failure of Socialist Realism in the DPRK* (East Asia Program). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.

- Myers, Brian Reynolds. *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*. New York, NY: Melville House, 2011.
- Schönherr, Johannes. *North Korean Cinema: A History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012.
- Skrodzka, Aga and Lu, Xiaoning, and Marciniak, Katarzyna (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Communist Visual Cultures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Stringer, Julian and Shin, Chi-Yun (eds.). *New Korean Cinema*. New York, NY: New York University Press/Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.
- Yau Shuk-ting, Kinnia (ed.). *East Asian Cinema and Cultural Heritage: From China, Hong Kong, Taiwan to Japan and South Korea*. New York, NY and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Sources in the Korean Language

- Yi, Myŏngcha 이명차. *Puk'an yŏnghwasa* (북한영화사 North Korean Film History). Seoul: K'omyunik'eisyŏn poksŭ 커뮤니케이션북스, 2007.
- Noh, Chae-sŭng 노재승. *Puk'an yŏnghwagye: 1977-1988* (북한 영화계: 1977-1988 North Korean Film World: 1977-1988). Seoul: Yŏnghwa chinhŭng konga 영화진흥공사, 1989.
- Shin, Sang-ok 신상옥. *Nan, yŏnghwa yŏtta: Yŏnghwa kamdok Shin Sang-ok i namgin majimak kŭldŭl* (난, 영화였다: 영화감독 신상옥이 남긴 마지막 글들, I was a Movie: The Last Writings of the Movie Director Shin Sang-ok). Seoul: Random House Korea 랜덤하우스코리아, 2007.

Source in the Japanese Language

- Monma, Takashi 門間貴志. *Chōsen minshu-shugi jinmin kyōwakoku eigashi: Kenkoku kara genzai made no zen kiroku* (朝鮮民主主義人民共和國映画史—建国から現在までの全記録 A History of DPRK Cinema: All Records from Foundation to Present). Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 2012.

Chapters of Edited Books

- Chung, Hye Seung. "Toward a Strategic Korean Cinephilia: A Transnational *Détournement* of Hollywood Melodrama." In *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre and National Cinema*, edited by Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelman, 117-150. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005.
- Jackson, Andrew David. "DPRK Film, *Order No. 27* and the Acousmatic Voice." In *Korean Screen Cultures: Interrogating Cinema, TV, Music and Online Games*, edited by Andrew David Jackson and Colette Balmain, 161-176. New York, NY and Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2016.
- Kyung Hyun Kim. "Lethal Work: Domestic Space and Gender Troubles in *Happy End* and *The Housemaid*." In *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre and National Cinema*, edited by Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelman, 201-228. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005.
- Kim, Shin-Dong. "The Creation of *Pansori* Cinema: *Sopyonje* and *Chunhyangdyun* in Creative Hybridity." In *East Asian Cinema and Cultural Heritage: From China, Hong Kong, Taiwan to Japan and South Korea*, edited by Kinnia Yau Shuk-ting, 151-171. New York, NY and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Kim, Soyoung. "Questions on Woman's Film: *The Maid*, *Madame Freedom*, and Women." In *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre and National Cinema*, edited by Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelman, 185-200. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005.
- Lee, Hyangjin. "*Chunhyang*: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema." In *New Korean Cinema*, edited by Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, 63-78. New York, NY: New York University Press/Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.
- Morris, Mark. "Chunhyang at War: Rediscovering Franco-North Korean Film *Moranbong* (1959)." In *Korean Screen Cultures: Interrogating Cinema, TV, Music and Online Games*, edited by

- Andrew David Jackson and Colette Balmain, 199–217. New York, NY and Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2016.
- Nye, Joseph and Kim, Youna. “Soft power and the Korean Wave.” In *South Korean Popular Culture and North Korea*, edited by Youna Kim, 41–53. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Paquet, Darcy. “Christmas in August and Korean Melodrama.” In *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema*, edited by Frances Gateward, 37–54. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Workman, Travis. “The Partisan, the Worker and the Hidden Hero: Popular Icons in North Korean Film.” In *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, edited by Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe, 145–167. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Workman, Travis. “Visual Regimes of *Juche* Ideology in North Korea’s *The Country I Saw*.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Communist Visual Cultures*, edited by Aga Skrodzka, Xiaoning Lu, and Katarzyna Marciniak, 589–608. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Thesis

- Lee, Minna So-Min. “In Search of Lost Time: Redefining Socialist Realism in Postwar North Korea.” Master’s thesis, University of Toronto, 2013.

Journal Articles

- Kwon, Nayoung Aimee. “Conflicting Nostalgia: Performing *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* (春香傳) in the Japanese Empire,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 73.1 (2014): 113–141.
- Lee, Peter H. “The Road to Ch’unhyang: A Reading of the *Song of the Chaste Wife Ch’unhyang*,” *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture*, 3 (2010): 256–376.

Website Articles

- Afshar, Dave. “What Is Mono No Aware, the Japanese Love for Impermanence?” *The Culture Trip.com* (1 May 2018) Accessed January 27, 2021. <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/japan/articles/what-is-mono-no-aware-the-japanese-love-for-impermanence/>.
- Gabroussenko, Tatiana. “Brothers: the banned North Korean-Soviet film ruined by *Juche* politics.” *NK News* (13 August 2019) Accessed December 21, 2020. <http://www.nknews.org/2019/08/brothers-the-banned-north-korean-soviet-film-ruined-by-juche-politics/>.
- The *Chosun Ilbo* and Digital *Chosun Ilbo*. “Two Koreas’ Top Brass Resort to Racist Mudslinging.” *Chosun Ilbo* (17 May 2006) Accessed October 31, 2020. <http://web.archive.org/web/20060528101309/http://english/chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200605/200605170016.html>.
- Yoo, Sungkwan (Korean Film Archive). “Korea’s Classical “*Chunhyangjeon*” (The Story of Chunhyang) Made into Film.” Accessed June 12, 2020. <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/exhibit/wqwyhvsv>.

Main Movie References

- Im, Kwön-t’aek 임권택, dir. *Ch’unhyangdyŏn* (춘향뎐 *Ch’unhyang*). Republic of Korea: CJ Entertainment (CJ 엔터테인먼트), 2000.
- Shin, Sang-ok 신상옥, dir. *Sarang, sarang, nae sarang* (사랑 사랑 내 사랑 *Love, Love, My Love*). Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: Shin Film Studio (신필름영화촬영소), 1984.
- Yu, Wŏn-chun 유원준 and Yun, Ryong-gyu 윤용규, dir. *Ch’unhyangjŏn* (춘향전 *The Tale of Ch’unhyang*). Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: Korea Film Export & Import Corporation (조선영화수출입사), 1980.