

**The Politics of Korean Queer Cinema:
Investigating Korean Queer Films in Politics,
Economy and Queer**



Ryu, JaeWook

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Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree at this or any other university. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated. Many of the ideas in this thesis were the product of discussion with my supervisors, Gary Bettinson and Jonathan Munby.

Excerpts of this thesis have been published in the following conference manuscripts and academic publications.

Ryu, JaeWook and full qualifications

Lancaster University, UK

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Abstract

This thesis discusses various issues around queer in the Korean film industry, looking at different perspectives, such as gender, politics, and economy. In particular, this thesis may be the first that investigates Korean queer films in various domains. Unlike earlier research looking into Korean queer films, this thesis focuses on exploring a variety of contexts and texts related to queer. Just beyond film analysis, in a tour approach, this thesis deals with multiple perspectives from politics, the economy (including film industry analysis), queering, queer films and alternative movements, such queer film festivals and the queer pride parade. Indeed, it will examine the context of production (industry, director and politics), texts (queer films, genre and queering non-queer films) and circulation (film festivals and the place of queer in queer culture). These are all related to further understanding the meaning of queer film making in Korean society.

First of all, this thesis explores the political role of film in Korea by looking at political Korean film history including various issues that the Korean film industry has faced. This thesis also provides evidence about why Korean films are so political. Second, to further understand the Korean film industry it investigates the economic particularity of the Korean film industry. Third, this thesis investigates several non-queer films in terms of queer reading. By analysing films with a possibility of being viewed in a queer reading, it discusses various discourses from film texts. Fourth, this thesis hypothesises that there are certain ways to represent queer in contexts around

the heteronormative film industry. Thus, to further understand Korean queer films and to seek implications about the political purpose of queer film making in Korea, this thesis looks into them. Lastly, this thesis looks into alternative perspectives about queerness in Korea in addition to focussing only on Korean films. Therefore, this thesis deals with alternative perspectives including the queer film festival and the place of queer in Korean society.

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Introduction

Whilst studying in the USA, I noticed that my gay friends from Asian countries were struggling with closet matters in their family. For example, one of them had been arranged by his family to get married to a woman as soon as he returned to his mother country. This was because his family had found out that he was gay. I still remember his voice crying over the phone. Due to his marriage, I had begun to be interested in Korean Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (hereafter LGBT) rights in Asian countries, especially South Korea. As a Korean, I am more interested in Korean queer culture. However, resources related to Korean queer people are few and far between. I already know that a homogenous country such as Korea is slow in embracing and accepting radical new ideas. In particular, homosexuality was never considered as a subculture before 2000 to the best of my knowledge. Consequently, I gradually became interested in Korean queer films because my lecturer in the Korean film school was KimJho-GwangSoo, who is a famous gay film producer and director.

Compared to queer film history of western countries and Asian countries like Japan, China, Thailand, and so on, the emergence of Korean queer films was very late. Since the first Korean queer film, *Broken Branches* (1995), was introduced as a commercial Film in the Korean film industry, the number of Korean films and indie films dealing with homosexuality as a subject has increased gradually.

Considering Korean films related to sexuality overall, especially hyper-masculinity during the military regime, I can find several interesting points in terms of

them as a chronicle. First of all, there is an important moment in 1993 when the military regime ended. Second, the first queer community was organized with young educated people who had studied abroad. Lastly, the first international film festival was held in 1995 and three years later, the first Korean queer film festival was held in 1998. Indeed, when I explore the Korean film history, although the 1990s was the period of recession, there were many experimental attempts to promote the Korean film industry. In particular, many educated scholars and cinephiles who studied abroad, brought a new vitality to the Korean film industry. Furthermore, interests by film critics increased in the early 1990s. Also, many famous Korean film critics were produced during this period. Surprisingly, these filmmakers, producers, film critics, and political activists, during the 1990s have several common features, having experienced high-school life under the dictatorship regime in the 1970s and protesting for democratization against the military regime in the 1980s. Moreover, they are the first generation of baby boomers since the Korean War. Based on these findings, I chronicle how Korean queer discourse has become possible in the Korean film industry in terms of politics, economy, and gender.

1. Terminology Between Queer and Dong-Seong-Ae, and Class-matter

In Korea, revealing homosexuality is still difficult and, therefore, a sensitive matter. Beyond the lack of debate about homosexuality in Korea, Korean society still treats homosexuality as a criminal sexual behaviour in terms of juvenile¹ protection

¹ Juvenile in Korea means a youth under 19 years old in the Korean age system.

(Yun, Jin-Suk, 2003). Based on the law for juvenile protection, homosexuality in the Korean law system is regarded as an abnormal sexual behaviour, thus, it does not seem to be long to sexuality. In spite of much educational information via the internet against prejudice and misunderstanding about homosexuality, Korean society still seems to worry about discussing issues of homosexuality.

As in ancient Greece, homosexuality can be found in Korean history. Although it is not revealed directly in history, homosexuality nevertheless existed in Korea. For example, almost 1500 years ago in the ancient Silla dynasty, the Hwarang group, which was organized by young teenage boys for elite education, showed a trace of homosexual behaviour between boys (Park, Jae-Min, 2013). Likewise, from this Silla tradition, in the Goryeo dynasty, which was a kingdom between 913 and 1392 just after the Silla dynasty, during King Gongmin's era, homosexuality was not a taboo for high ranking classes. Homosexuality during the Goryeo dynasty was regarded as another sexual taste or sexual behaviour in society (Goryeo, 1272). Furthermore, even in the Chosun dynasty, which was ruled by strict Confucian norms, a man from the highest ranks asked his king if he could marry a boy he loved, even though his request was denied and he lived alone for his entire life (Sillok, 1436).² Although homosexuality in Korean history is still marginalized, historical evidence supports the view that homosexuality has always been a part of Korean society. Indeed, homosexuality has existed since the Korean War, although homosexuality was not revealed in mainstream society. In fact, homosexual behaviour can be found to exist in

² In addition to request for gay marriage in the Chosun dynasty, homosexuality was seen in the lives of court ladies, who lived in the palace as women of the King. Lesbian sexual history is found in the Annals of the Chosun dynasty, where some women who had no opportunity to meet the King made lesbian love (Sillok, 1436).

Korean modern history as it has occurred through male prostitution for men and also in Korean terms used to describe homosexuality (Cho, Song-Pae, 2011).

Many Korean students who had studied abroad began various discourses surrounding homosexuality since 1993, and consequently discussion about these issues has increased gradually. In particular, they were interested in AIDS in Korea. They organized a homosexual community for Korean LGBT and began to share various discourses related to homosexuality against Korean masculine society. The first organization for gay and lesbian people was KiriKiri, which was organized in 1994. Although Korean gay and lesbian people had not maintained their alliance for a long time because of the masculinity problem for gay men, this homosexual organization was an important first step to attempt to reveal Korean homosexuality issues. Since 1994, this brought a change to Korean gender discourse in seeking alternatives to Korean heteronormative society. However, these communities were still restricted by fear of prejudice and misunderstanding, so their activities were practiced in secret until 1995 (Park, Jin-Hyung, 2008). Since then, many queer communities have emerged in university campuses and have attempted to be visible in mainstream society. Their activities were more related to cultural events, such as screening queer films to the public as a political movement (Park, Jin-Hyung, 2008). Furthermore, through cyberspaces like the internet, they attempted to produce and share Korean queer discourses and began to reveal their identity. Meanwhile, in order to identify themselves, they needed to deploy the terms Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual, and Bisexual, because they had no proper meaning to represent and to refer themselves as human beings and members of society (Park, Jin-Hyung, 2008).

The meaning of the word 'Dong-Seong-Ae' expresses similar concepts of homosexuality as seen in western cultures. In fact, the term 'Dong-Seong-Ae' itself was derived from a Chinese character, and thus, in the translation of this Chinese word, it directly portrays sexual and physical love between people of the same sex. 'Dong' implies 'same' in its Chinese form, while 'Seong-Ae' indicates behaviour to pursue sexual desire. Consequently, 'Dong-Seong-Ae' also sounds to include sexual behaviour or physical love to fulfil a sexual desire towards another person of the same sex. Furthermore, the Korean terms that refer to LGBT identity, 'Dong-Seong-E-Ja' or 'Dong-Seong-Yoen-E-Ja', define the people in sexual relationships with same sex in order to pursue sexual desire. That is to say, these Korean terms seem to imply negative meanings to describe homosexuality and these may serve as misunderstandings, prejudice, and wrong images towards homosexuality. In addition to these Korean terms to refer homosexuality, there are also many specific Korean terms used by homosexuals to describe themselves. For example, the word 'Pogal' refers to gay men, which is the backward reading of the word 'Kalbo' meaning prostitute in Korea (Suh, Dong-Jin, 2001). In order to deny traditional values such as marriage or a general romantic love between heterosexuals, Korean gays used this term to refer to themselves (Suh, Dong-Jin, 2001). However, this word restricts their identity to a self-degradation, although they used this to counter the Korean hetero-society. However, the term 'Pogal' was interesting politically as a way to put their position as an oppressed minority having erotic identities, because it was the first term invented to distinguish themselves from the Korean hetero-society (Suh, Dong-Jin, 2001). In addition to 'Pogal', Korean terms like 'Sik' derived from 'Sik-sung' (taste in food) to describe sexual desire, literally referred to other men as a sexual food, so this

word is used for Korean gays to seek out their sexual partner for one night (Cho, Song-Pae, 2011). In addition to this term 'Sik', is 'Kull-mo-ta' (starving) means a situation for gay men without sex for a long time, is widely used (Cho, Song-Pae, 2011). Of course, these expressions exist in heterosexual society, but, in the isolated homosexual world, their activities are restricted in terms of sexual intimacy or emotional support between homosexuals. In other words, these terms to describe sexual taste or behaviour seem to self-degrade them.

After the invention of this term, 'Pogal', Korean homosexuals invented another term, 'I-ban', to replace 'Pogal'. This word reflects a new consciousness of the Korean homosexual community to represent their different identity from heterosexuals. According to Suh Dong-Jin (2001), this word is an ambiguous term used to differentiate homosexual from heterosexual. Literally, 'I-ban' was derived from 'Il-ban', which means 'universal', 'dominant' or 'general', and is used to describe heterosexuals. In the homophonous meaning of 'Il-ban', it is referred to as the first class. On the other hand, 'I-ban' means second class, in order to reveal its social relationship with the dominant first class, homosexuals (Suh Dong-Jin, 2001). Thus, this term, 'I-ban', shows its difference of social class and reflects them as a unified social group, unlike 'Pogal'. Indeed, literally, this term 'I-ban' based on a Chinese character, means they admit a difference between themselves and general or 'normal' people, 'Il-ban'. Of course, in addition to these words, "Pogal' and 'I-ban', the English words 'homo' and 'gay' have also been used broadly (Suh Dong-Jin, 2001). However, as in other western countries, these words sometimes are used by heterosexuals in Korea for insulting homosexuals, because these refer to their manifest

identity (Suh Dong-Jin, 2001). So, usage of homo and gay terms in Korea seems to tend to introduce their sexual orientation.

In terms of social class, interestingly, queer people in Korea seem to admit that socially they do not live in mainstream society, but are marginalised. In fact, the issue of gender class in Korea is associated with gender inequality between males and females based on hyper-masculinity. I will explain hyper-masculinity in Korea later. In terms of post-colonialism and liberal individualism along with equality and freedom, identifying a class matter is to recognise the dominance of a specific group or organisation. As in Korean society gender issues between males and females seem to focus on income inequality or the high barriers of political participation, class matters are seldom considered as a main issue. However, as Korean homosexuals refer to themselves as second class, they aggressively reveal irrational gender discrimination in terms of class matters. Revealing discrimination in this class matter between heterosexuality and homosexuality can expand the gender discourse against heteronormativity.

The geographical location of the residences of Korean homosexuals is generally not different to that of heterosexuals. However, like the invention of the new term, 'I-ban', Korean homosexuals identify the place where they live, as 'It-Chok-Se-Gye' ('this side of the world'). This term means 'gay world' and includes a contemporary notion of homosexuality and homosexual culture (Cho, Song-Pae, 2011). In other words, by identifying their world they laid their political and cultural groundwork for homosexuality. Through revealing and admitting differences from heterosexuals in 'I-

ban' and 'It-Chok-Se-Gye', Korean homosexual communities and homosexuals attempt to reveal themselves in mainstream society.

In fact, when considering the many terms used to describe homosexuals in the Korean language, most of them are derived from sexual behaviours or situations in which homosexuals feel sexually desire. In terms of the Korean language's ability to portray homosexuals, homosexuality seems to imply negative images to non-homosexuals, which imply homosexuals are perverted or not normal. So, away from the negative images, Korean homosexuals and homosexual communities needed to integrate all terms into one word to define themselves without any prejudice and self-degradation. Thus, they prefer to use the term 'queer' or English terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual in order to distinguish their manifest identity. Furthermore, 'queer' seems to integrate all these LGBT terms and expands its meaning towards homosexuality beyond identity. In particular, usage of 'queer' to reveal homosexuality and identity is found in the Korean pride parade, which was held in 2014. As the Korean LGBT members insisted, "We are queer" in the parade, 'queer' was introduced as an official term to identify LGBT people in many media. Although 'queer' is still a very ambiguous definition (Jagose, 1997), ironically, 'queer' in Korea seems to be a universal homosexual concept that includes identity, culture, and politics. Furthermore, in Korean society, the English language seems to have a superior power, because of the obsessive use of English education in globalization (King, 2008). Usage of the English term 'queer' in Korea seems to be a good strategy because of its ambiguity as a not settled concept.

In fact, defining Korean queer cinema is very important in this research. But the most important part of conducting this research is to clarify the meaning of queer in Korea. As explained above, using queer in Korea is still ambiguous for Koreans. Still, many Koreans use their own Korean terminologies to express their identity. But they recognise themselves as queer to refer to universal LGBT. Thus, in here, I will use queer as universal terminology, including homosexuality and LGBT identity. Thus, Korean queer cinema means Korean films which have a theme to deal with queer. However, all films with the theme of queer can not be Korean queer cinema. Thus, I will look into what Korean films can be Korean queer cinema.

2. Hyper-Masculinity : A Dominant Power

Defining Korean masculinity means understanding the roles of gender within Korean society and tracing the history of Korean economic development since the 1970s. Since the Chosun dynasty (1392–1897), masculinity in Korean society has been based on Confucian values, such as Chung, loyalty to the state, and Hyo, respect for parents. According to Ling (1997):

Post-colonial Asian states resort to hyper-masculinity to counter their historical feminization by the west by simultaneously denigrating anything smacking of the feminine.

However, in Korean society, hyper-masculinity was not intended to exclude the Korean female, but the advent of hyper-masculinity in Korea includes more complicated issues related to modernization, industrialization, and economic development. In terms of Confucius' values, Korean women were included to maintain the patriarchy system, by reproducing the next generation. Although there

was an inflow of feminization from the West after the Korean War, Korean society was still a very solid masculine state based on Confucian values. This does not imply Korean women were only excluded to enhance masculinity against feminization by the West. According to Moon Seungs-Sook (2007), to make the Korean nation strong, the invention of hyper-masculinity was unavoidable to promote rapid industrialization and modernization using Confucian values during the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, in terms of western values, such as liberal democracy and individualism, this approach to hyper-masculinity seems contradictory with regard to western and traditional values, such as Chung and Hyo. However, Korean society tended to look at capital and technology only, rejecting westernized values, and focused on economic development. (Cho, Sung-Pae, 2011) Indeed, with the patriarchal structure in Korea, hyper-masculinity was emphasized in the Korean school system as a national value to protect the Korean nation against communism, emphasizing military values such as obedience and regulation, because achieving economic development would make a strong nation that could threaten North Korea. Thus, hyper-masculinity has become a ruling value in Korean society with the combination of military and Confucian values. This implies there were no spaces to discuss gender until the end of the military regime, since during this period Korean society focused on economic development, ignoring other social problems not related to the economy.

Hyper-Masculinity in the Korean Film History: Through Films since the 1970s

In order to seek a trace of queer in Korean movies, understanding sexuality through the various Korean contexts is necessary. It is because queer in Korea is closely related to various Korean contexts, such as Korean history, politics, circumstances like rapid internet technology development, and trendy changes like liberalism or globalization. Korean society until 1993 was regarded as a hyper-masculine society based on the military regime, which lasted more than 30 years. According to Ashis Nandy (1983), hyper-masculinity is the psychological reaction as a response to the masculine process of colonialism. In terms of post-colonial Asian states, hyper-masculinity is a reaction to counter their feminization by the west and to denigrate the feminine, and thus, they adopt the masculine process of colonization (Cho, Song-Pae, 2011). Through hyper-masculinity during compressed-modernization, which is Korea's rapid industrial modernization, the Korean military regime exploited it to build a powerful Korean military nation and to pursue rapid economic growth (Cho, Song-Pae, 2011). In particular, during the Park Chung-hee dictatorship, hyper-masculinity refined a country as a patriarchal nation and was used to exclude the political participation of women (Cho, Song-Pae, 2011). In other words, in order to build a strong nation, women and men who acted feminine seem to be excluded. As I already mentioned above, there were no consideration of other genders except males with hyper-masculinity in Korea during the modernisation and industrialisation. I will give more examples about how men acted feminine in Korean films were excluded in the further chapter. According to Suh, Dong-Jin (2001), 'gay' was originally not used to refer to gay men but rather for effeminate men and

transsexuals. Thus, in Korea, homosexuality was not a considerable matter until the mid-1990s.

Indeed, with globalization and liberalism, after the military regime ended, the Korean film industry faced big changes. The first non-military regime, the Kim Young-Sam regime, relocated the Korean film industry from a service industry to the manufacturing industry and held the first international film festival in Busan in 1995. Gradually, the atmosphere surrounding Korean society focused on free economic activities, producing various discourses, and attempted to disconnect old conventions derived from military regimes.

During the military regimes, Korean films were regulated by the Korean film law legislated in 1962, which was a censorship law to examine Korean films. This law consisted of two systems, the pre-license system to check a scenario before production and the pre-rating system to rate a film (Park Chang-Seok, 2013). This censorship towards Korean films regulated the freedom of expression and enabled to punish people for violating the Korean film laws. Furthermore, Korean film law had a right to edit or to cut films' footages, if the films were figured out to contain a harmful message about nation. There are many cases to violate the Korean film laws; expressing communism, obscenity, resistance against dictatorship or military regime, and so on. In fact, there was not a clear standard to deliberate a movie in terms of the Korean film laws until this film law was revised in 1996, when the Korean constitution court ruled an unconstitutionality of the Korean film law restricting the freedom of expression. For example, in case of *Seven Female Prisoner-7 인의 여자포로*(1965), the director, Lee. Man-Hee, was in jail for forty days, because he

depicted a nice North Korean soldier saving a Korean female nurse being raped by the Chinese army in movie (Kim, Hyung-Suk, 2013). In fact, the Korean government exploited this censorship system through the Korean film law to control the Korean film industry in order to promote national values based on modernisation and industrialisation, justifying military regime. This implies that via censorship most of Korea's popular movies, such as national policy movies, anti-communism movies, hostess movies, Korean romantic teenagers' movies (called high-teen movies³), showed a typical masculinity in Korean society.

Firstly, the Korean government during the dictatorship regime encouraged the production of national policy movies related to Korean history, anti-communism, and Korean national policies to defend the national governance system. National policy movies were usually produced to reinforce or to educate hyper-masculinity and sometimes they include newsreels to announce government policies for modernisation and industrialisation. I will explore how the Korean government exploited films as the media with national policy film production system in a further chapter. Indeed, many national policy movies dealing with Korean history since 1970 were produced, and they portrayed explicitly strong male leaders in Korean history. For example, in many movies such as *King Sejo* (1980), *The Great General: Lee Soon-Sin* (1971), *A War Diary of Lee Soon-Sin* (1977), *King SeJong* (1978), and so on, many great leaders protecting Korean land and developing culture were illustrated as heroes. These Korean heroes in movies could not accomplish their victory or patriotism towards the country without the people (Kim, Won, 2013). This means, politically, these movies

³ High-teen movie is referred as a High school teenager movie in the Korean film industry.

were used to maintain national ideology for the military regime, attempting to create cohesion between country and people. Likewise, Korean anti-communism movies dealt with national security against the communism of North Korea, in order to reinforce the military regime's methods of exploiting national security threats. These movies, related to national security, directly revealed characters with hyper-masculinity who pledged their loyalty to the military regime through anti-communism. However, people, here, does not mean Korean women, because in most national policy movies, Korean women existed outside Korean society.

Secondly, although many movies dealt with Korean women's lives (called hostess movies), hostess movies are controversial to analyse in terms of masculinity and feminism. As a matter of fact, many female characters in hostess movies were abandoned by Korean masculine society and lived in marginal areas, selling their sexuality to males. On the one hand, these female characters can be read as victims of Korean patriarchy, represented by masculinity, and expose violence by irrational masculine society. So, this is the reason why many Korean hostess movies are revalued in order to figure out Korean females' reality in terms of feminism, because, to some extent, these movies criticize Korean masculinity. On the other hand, although these hostess movies attempted to expose Korean female reality by the oppression of Korean masculinity during the military regime, female characters were sexually subjugated and used to reinforce patriarchy by showing their separation from family (Kim, Won, 2013). Finally, hostess movies reveal a crisis of safety for women away from masculine society and threaten national ideology by expanding the implications of masculinity. In *The Golden Days of Young-Ja* (1975), Young-Ja, a young woman who is away from Korean masculine society, was illustrated as a raped

woman not protected by society, and she was forced to return to her family to recover her life. Even though she was abandoned by Korean masculine society, her only choice was to return to home, to a masculine society.

Lastly, there were popular high-teen movies that dealt with teenage love and school life during the military regime. In particular, in the dictatorship, high-teen movies were used to educate young students by reinforcing the military regime (Bae, Kyoung-Min, 2004). During the 1970s, throughout the compressed modernization and rapid economic development, many university students gradually began to criticize the military regime, separating themselves from the older generations and pursued youth culture⁴ within public culture (Bae, Kyoung-Min, 2004). However, because of marijuana usage in universities, youth culture, unfortunately, disappeared in 1975. Although youth culture was eliminated, it left a lesson for young high school students. It was a cultural activity. Film in Korea was the only culture product that young Korean high school students could consume. High-teen movies were relatively free from censorship, because they could easily be used to reproduce national ideology to educate young students, so the genre was invented and stayed popular until the early 1980s. Korean high-teen movies during the 1970s are regarded as ‘teen-clean’ movies⁵(Park, Min-Jung, 2002), so they have not been treated as important texts in

⁴ Youth culture in Korea means the cultural phenomenon occurred during the 1970s. This youth cultural movement was influenced by May 68 revolution in France and this impacted on the Korean culture in contemporary period. College students led the Korean youth culture and they revealed their resistance against the dictatorship regime with acoustic folk song music in order to deliver resistant messages (Kim, Chang-Nam, 2008).

⁵ Teen clean movie is referred as a movie dealing with teenagers’ life and love living in the white USA family as a sub-genre movie of teenpics, which used to deal with teenagers’ rebelling, between the 1930s and the 1940s (Neal, 2000). In particular, this movie genre has a feature to describe a healthy school life of teenagers excluding any sexual scenes in film.

Korean film history. However, high-teen genre movies can serve as evidence of political, social, and economic changes during this period. Later, high-teen movies evolved in cooperation with other genres, dealing with contemporary social matters.

In most high-teen movies, boys and girls are not fixed in gender, which means they are genderless in movies, although they are interested in other genders. They are still young boys and girls who put more value into their friendships than romance. In *Yalgae* (1976), Dusu, a male character, says to his girlfriend that we can be good friends, then he returns to his best friend to keep boys' friendship. In fact, before the 1980s, teenage dating was seldom allowed for young students in Korean society, even though it was a casual meeting. They were the first baby boomers after the Korean War and the first generation to experience rapid economic development and modernization. Matters of their individual lives were integrated in familism and nationalism through social compromise forced by the nation. They also imposed understanding of sacrifice by their parents' generation, and social problems of the younger generation were eliminated or no longer considered (Bae, Kyoung-Min, 2004). A forced understanding of the sacrifice of the older generation meant violence to impose the young or next generation's sacrifice in maintaining hyper-masculinity. In most high-teen movies, girls do not have any self-decision over their future. Although they are alive and exist in a movie, their meaning of existence disappears in familism which is reproduced by Korean masculine values. In *I Really Like You* (1977), Ji-Young, a female character, says that she wants to have a happy family after she graduates from college (Park, Min-Jung, 2002). Finally, high-teen movies illustrated the ultimate purpose of Korean hyper-masculinity, in which women have to belong to a family. In spite of this gender discrimination, every character seems

happy, and most problems are perfectly solved within the family, school, and Korean society. Nevertheless, high-teen genre movies have a large influence on later school movies dealing with the lives of young students living in Korean society. Although high-teen movies during the 1970s only touched the surface of social conflict between older and younger generations, these attempted to show patriarchy issues, gender inequality, school violence, and school life forced by military education. In *I Really Like You* (1977), Ji-Young also said that her father is paternalist, and she will not get married like her father (Park, Min-Jung, 2002). At the end of the movie, Ji-Young and Jin promise each other to make a better Korea for the next generation. This seems a typical and predictable end of a teen-clean movie. Although this ending represents what Korea pursues, it also implies that they cannot change their situation but must rather acknowledge themselves to be the next main generation in Korean society. So, it serves to show whatever can be possible in the future.

Most students studying during the 1970s went to college in the 1980s and became a major generation for democratization against the military regime. Some of them went abroad to study and brought back new ideas and thoughts that they could not study in Korea. When they came back between the late 1980s and early 1990s, as important members of Korean society, they already headed a new trend in Korea, and they began to look into old problems which Korean society had never considered. The queer movement and organizing homosexual communities in the 1990s were part of their activities. In the Korean film industry, film criticism related to the Korean society was not popular or systematic, because of the censorship and control by the Korean government. As mentioned above, film criticism towards Korean society might be impossible. However, after the end of the military regime, many Korean

researchers and students who studied abroad attempted to settle down film criticism from western theories to the public in the early 1990s and, gradually, it became common in the Korean film industry. Indeed, finding a trace of 'queer' attitudes in the Korean film industry before the 1990s seems impossible, but, in terms of hyper-masculinity, film is an important media to show the possibility of queer against hyper-masculinity as a counter idea after the late 1990s, because of the Asian economic crisis (called the IMF crisis in Korea), which started in Thailand in 1997 and had an impact on the Korean economy. Many Korean workers lost their jobs, and many Korean companies were bankrupted during the IMF period. Korean society panicked and many Koreans despaired during the IMF crisis. The near state default revealed serious problems of hyper-masculinity. Thus, in order to find new alternatives to be able to overcome many problems of hyper-masculinity, many ideas and theories including queer, feminism, and so on, were suggested and various discourses were introduced. Indeed, patriarchy and hierarchy represented by hyper-masculinity in traditional Korean values were attacked by various discourses, so Korean society had to admit its failure was caused by rigid economic structure derived from hyper-masculinity (Park, Hye-Kyoung, 2011) Many politicians and owners of big companies who did not predict the IMF crisis resigned and the legend of hyper-masculinity, which had brought a huge economic development since the military regime, seemed to end.

With the IMF crisis, in the Korean film industry, the crisis of hyper-masculinity can be read in many Korean films. In particular, some Korean films revealed nostalgia for traditional strong male characters representing hyper-masculinity and the despair of patriarchy. In *Happy End* (1999), unlike a conventional patriarchy, a male character

was described as a social victim after losing his job during the IMF crisis, while his wife had an important role in his family as a matriarch. Although this movie seems to tell of a failure of patriarchy, in fact, it portrays hope for the recovery of masculinity through killing a wife representing matriarchy. In *Kiss Me Much* (2001), the film also tells of a crisis of patriarchy caused by huge debt. This film describes how a husband and wife take a risk and how they manage irresistible sexual offer from their old friends in order to repay a huge debt. The film's main point is that the husband does not want to lose his dignity, while the wife is willing to sell her sexuality to protect her family. This movie remains controversial for its debate about the wife's sacrifice forced by hyper-masculinity. Although her sacrifice was her own decision, she was violated, was almost in the same condition as being raped, and lost her dignity. In this movie, it does not matter whether they keep their family from an economic crisis or not, because their family seems fine; hyper-masculinity seems to be about not losing power, and the country, Korea, seems to overcome their crisis. However, this movie indirectly reveals a failure of hyper-masculinity and criticizes it for not taking any responsibility for failure. In addition to these two movies, in *Marriage Is a Crazy Thing* (2002) and *A Good Lawyer's Wife* (2003), the characters attempt to destroy the traditional Korean family structure represented by patriarchy. Beyond telling of the failure of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, they describe male characters like eunuchs, who could not control even their sexual behaviour. Indeed, although there were still some Korean films which recalled their nostalgia for hyper-masculinity represented by rapid economic development, the Korean film industry attempted to portray a change of gender role, criticizing Korean hyper-masculinity.

Since the IMF crisis, many Korean movies have dealt with changed male characters in terms of hyper-masculinity. This does not imply that most male characters in movies give up their masculinity. However, they compromise their masculinity by adapting to a changing social environment. Before the IMF crisis, most male characters represented hyper-masculinity with power, controlling a narrative, solving a problem, and facing the ending of the movie, and they, traditionally, look like strong men without any feminine characteristics, who represent traditional Korean male values. However, after facing the national crisis, they hide their masculinity behind their pretty faces, gentle gestures, tender voices, and imperfect features, so that people can sympathize with their understandable sorrow or failure in terms of the historical or political context in movies (Jo, Hup, 2004). For example, in *The Letter* (1997), *A Love Story* (2000), *Bungee Jumping of their Own* (2001), and *One Fine Spring Day* (2001), male characters have the same characteristics, already mentioned above. They do not worry about revealing their weaknesses in movies, rather they are willing to tell of their failures. This seems to attempt to make a change through the reflection of hyper-masculinity.

According to Sun Jung(2010),

Soft-masculinity is a hybrid product constructed through the transcultural amalgamation of South Korea's traditional Seonbi masculinity (which is heavily influenced by Chinese Confucian wen masculinity), Japan's bishōnen (pretty boy) masculinity, and global metrosexual masculinity (2010:39).

In fact, this soft-masculinity was defined in terms of a new transformation of South Korea masculinity since the popularity of Korean culture has expanded in other

Asian countries, in particular, Japan. Thus, soft-masculinity of Sun Jung (2010) usually focuses on the phenomenon of Korean masculinity as a changed masculine image from the past. Nonetheless, the concept of soft-masculinity is very important to explain a change of hyper-masculinity since IMF crisis. Unlike Sun Jung (2010), rather, I see that soft-masculinity is to attempt a severance from old images of Korean men as strong, scary, and dominant, this enables people to embrace a changed, new masculinity. According to Sun Jung (2010), Seonbi masculinity in Chosun dynasty, which influenced on a current soft-masculinity in Korea is non-national masculinity to pursue a gentle and cultured mentality. Indeed, many characters in films after IMF crisis have this Seonbi masculinity based on Confucian values. However, Sun Jung does not explain how Seonbi masculinity influenced on hyper-masculinity to regulate the Korean society.

In fact, the perspective of Sun Jung about soft-masculinity focused on the change of image of Korean masculinity is closely associated with consuming image which can be changed for customers, especially women, in terms of economy. This implies gender image can be worn and removed like Doane claims (1982). Nonetheless, Sun Jung does not suggest any political perspective about soft-masculinity related to hyper-masculinity, while focusing on a phenomenon of change of Korean masculinity in Asian cultural market. In terms of hyper-masculinity, when Korean men take off their shirts, when they show their shirtless bodies, and when they are willing to implement their sacrifice, new masculinity, soft-masculinity, with a perfect masculine body is revealed. This may imply Korean society still could not give up the last vestiges of masculinity.

In spite of an inveterate obsession with the fantasy of masculinity, this change in male characters brings a positive influence to make a space in traditional consumer behaviours and gender image. Between the 1970s and 1990s, those who consumed subjects of gender images were mostly females, however, after the crisis of hyper-masculinity, male images could be consumed as well (Jo, Hup, 2004). Beyond the economy, the change from hyper-masculinity to soft-masculinity implies gender image and perception intentionally can be changed on its own purpose. Thus, soft-masculinity provides many opportunities to explore other gender discourse, including queer. Although soft-masculinity in Korea is derived from hyper-masculinity, this proves that image and perception towards queer can be changed through films like hyper-masculinity.

Hyper-masculinity represented in a Hostess Film

Hyper-masculinity in Korean films might not be seen as a serious issue in allowing gender discourse before film criticism was accepted openly in Korea. In terms of a highly controlled society, analyzing Korean society via film criticism was not always possible, thus, film criticism was not popular before the military regime, although there were many attempts to look at Korean society through film criticism. However, since the end of the military regime, many criticisms and new perspectives about Korean melodrama genre films, called hostess films, have come out in terms of feminism. In fact, many film critics have looked at these hostess films portraying Korean women's lives and love during the dictatorship and military regime as a possibility for Korean feminist film to reveal Korean women's reality. Although many critics have never mentioned hyper-masculinity with regard to these hostess films,

their perspectives towards these films point to masculine issues related to hyper-masculinity.

Young-Ja's Heydays (1975) is the most famous Korean hostess film to depict the hyper-masculinity issue. This film tells of the life of Young-Ja, a female character, and how her life was destroyed then recovered. The features of melodrama as a genre, based on the concepts of love and family values, draw strongly upon femininity. The melodrama genre hinges on women's experiences and is based on domestic and familial duties. Gledhill (1987) suggests that women's roles in melodrama are modes of representation of a sense of 'realism', categorized based on elite male opinions.

This film's first scene shows Young-Ja about to be arrested for prostitution. However, in the next scene, the audience can see women being arrested only at the police station. This scene reveals the reality of Korean gendered society, which was controlled by masculinity because in terms of hyper-masculine society, Korean males seem to have an indulgence. Chang-Su, the male character who falls in love with Young-Ja and who is a masseur at a public bath, happens to meet Young-Ja at the police station, the policemen release her, trusting his support for her, because of their respect for his military record in the Vietnam War. Even though he had been arrested for fighting, in this film, Chang-Su is still a respected guy regardless of his crime. The Vietnam War was an opportunity for Korea to borrow money and to get some investment from the USA; thus, Korean males who had done their military service during this period were portrayed as heroes contributing to the Korean economy. In Korea, military service for Korean males is a very important issue, and military spaces are always associated with gender issues related to prostitution. Many places for

prostitution, such as inns or motels near a military base are important spaces for sexual crime and isolated from the Korean legal system, meaning that the Korean law system is seldom interested in what happens there.

Three years ago, when Chang-Su was an ironworker, he fell in love with Young-Ja, a housemaid in a rich family. Young-Ja said she did not want any relationship with any man because she had just arrived in Seoul, the capital city of South Korea, to make some money for her dream to take care of her family. However, her dream to make money was destroyed after being raped by her employer's son during Chang-Su's military service period. Although she was raped by her employer's son, she was thrown out of the rich house.



Figure 1. Young-Ja's face with mud by a car

In this scene, after she was expelled from the rich house, her face was covered with mud by a car. This alludes to her tragic future.

Young-Ja wants to learn a skill, such as sewing, or to become a beauty therapist, thus, allowing her to be more independent. However, it was very hard for a single Korean woman to live in Seoul at that time. In spite of her efforts not to work in a

tavern as a hostess, she could not afford to pay her rent. After realising, she has only a few coins left after paying her rent, her laughing stupidly in the film illustrates her despair. In Korean society, there was no protection for women away from their families or patriarch at that time. This film illustrates the reality of Korean women during the modernization and industrialization. Although Korean women were raped by men, if those women were not in a safe place, such as a family or marriage system, raped women were considered to deserve blame or judgement by others. In the hyper-masculine view, the only safe place for women in Korea was provided at home with family and within patriarchy. Korean women living alone or away from their family during this period seldom had a chance to build a career. Thus, Young-Ja's only choice was to become a hostess to sell her smiles to old Korean guys in a tavern.

Although Young-Ja works in a tavern as a hostess talking with old Korean guys, she still keeps her dignity until she loses an arm. This film shows how many Koreans were injured physically or psychologically in the process of industrialization. In particular, when Young-Ja lost one of her arms, this film shows the crowds attempting to ride a bus. At last, Young-Ja decides to be a prostitute, not to make money, but to save her life. When she decides to be a prostitute, she asks her bawd, who provides housing for Young-Ja while she was still a worker in a sewing factory, to find a guy who does not care if a woman has only one arm and whom she could cuddle. Her monologue shows that she needs a man who can cuddle her, implying that she admits her choice to come to Seoul was wrong. Indeed, this film tragically illustrates the fall of one Korean woman at that time. Although she did nothing wrong, this film seems to show that every consequence is caused by her and is her fault.

When Chang-Su and Young-Ja happen to meet each other at the police station after his three-year military service, Chang-Su does not mind her past or her losing an arm. This male character, Chang-Su, seems to be a saviour trying to get her out of prostitution. He visits her every night to protect her from other guys and pays her money. Even when he finds out he has a sexually transmitted disease, syphilis, from Young-Ja, he takes her to the hospital to cure her disease, although he slapped her cheek as soon as he found the disease. This film seems to show that only males can fix and cure everything. Indeed, after meeting Chang-Su, Young-Ja gradually changes her attitude towards life, which used to be hopeless, and dreams of a future with him.

The place where Chang-Su works and lives is the boiler room in the basement of a public bath. His place looks very dark and dirty, however, he always dreams of getting away from the dark and humid boiler room, and his goal is to have his own tailor's shop, then to make his own family and have many kids. His dream seems no different from Young-Ja's. However, Chang-Su, as a Korean male represents hyper-masculinity in this film, thus, he might chase his goal without serious threat, unlike Young-Ja. To marry Young-Ja is the first goal he plans in a linear process, however, for his co-workers in the public bath, Young-Ja's past is a serious conflict in this film. Indeed, his co-workers ask Young-Ja to leave Chang-Su.



Figure 2. Public bath scene, Chang-Su washes Young-Ja's body

She says she is not such a woman as Chang-Su thinks, but is so dirty. This scene might be her confession of her sins of prostitution, losing one arm, or rape, although even she is the victim of males or Korean society. The public bath where Chang-Su works and lives is the most interesting space in the film, because Chang-Su washes and cleans Young-Ja's body for her in the public bath. In fact, during *ByoungJaHoRan* (1634), the name of the war in which the Chinese Kingdom invaded during the Chosun dynasty, many women were raped or caught for human traffic to China. When some women returned to Chosun, the males did not welcome and accept them, calling them prostitutes for China. Although women were victims of war, males did not protect them; in Confucian terms, they had to be blamed and judged. Thus, many women during this period committed suicide or were forced to leave their families. However, the Chosun king, InJo, proclaimed a special law for women who returned from China, which was a purification law. The law decreed that the sins or faults of women raped by the Chinese would disappear if they bathed in a stream or river as the King proclaimed. In this film, likewise, Young-Ja being bathed by Chang-Su means her past and sin could be cured by him. This implies Korean women could

be restricted within hyper-masculinity. Despite her past being cured by Chang-Su, she decides to leave him.



Figure 3. Young-Ja and two men, Chang-Su and her husband.

After several years, Chang-Su, who has achieved his goal to have his own tailor shop, hears news of Young-Ja and goes to see her. He finds Young-Ja happy and with her own family, a daughter and husband with a crippling disability. Indeed, this film shows her happiness can be possible in a family structure, although not with Chang-Su. In the last scene, Chang-Su and Young-Ja's husband goes to the city centre, riding a motorbike and she stares at them with a happy smile. At last, her heyday can be achieved by men and hyper-masculinity. With the last scene of two guys going to the city centre, this film seems to show that the modernization and industrialization represented by tall buildings and wide streets in Korea do not belong to Korean women.

Hyper-Masculinity Issues in *Just Friends* (2009)

Hyper-masculinity in Korean films during the dictatorship and military regime limits characters' gender roles. In particular, military service for Korean males is a very important education to transmit hyper-masculinity to the next generation. Thus, many Korean films usually reveal if male characters do their military service. If it is believed they do not finish their military service, they would not be treated as an adult in the film. This implies being an adult in Korea means to take a part in Korean economic activities. By contrast, female characters in Korean films are also restricted in their role by hyper-masculinity to support a patriarchal system. Their final goal is to marry and make a family in film. Thus, they have to return to Korean males to be happy, even if they were away from males for a while. Indeed, many films and hostess films based on the melodrama genre show many female characters returning to their family or males. If they continue to attempt to chase their goals in masculine society, their only film ending is in tragedy. Therefore, there is no space to discuss other gender discourses in addition to hyper-masculinity during this period. Indeed, films in Korea have an important political role in suggesting and reinforcing hyper-masculinity to Koreans in many ways.

Just Friends (2009) is a short film of 30 minutes, produced by KimJho-GwangSoo, a gay director in Korea. In fact, this film was invested in by one of the biggest gay rights organizations, ChinGu-Sa-I, which literally means between friends. Many Korean queer and feminist films tend to have some investment from non-profit organizations or civil rights organizations. This film's production budget was invested in also by these organizations. I will explain how queer films are associated with

many political organizations and civil rights movements and how queer films have an important role in different places in addition to the Korean film industry in a further chapter.

Just Friends is a comedy based on melodrama. When this film begins and finishes, it adopts features of the musical genre to avoid making the queer subject serious. Every character in the film sings and dances together, to tell a brief story of queer love. Indeed, their song in the first scene suggests that this film is not a serious movie. However, *Just Friends* (2009) provides many issues related to homosexuality, such as the military, religion, and family. Furthermore, this film even seems to challenge hyper-masculinity.

The main background of this film is a military base, where Suck goes to visit his lover, Min-Su. Before Suck meets Min-Su, Suck has to fill in an application form to meet his lover. This film shows the moment when Suck attempts to have a relationship with Min-Su by filling in a form. At first, he wrote the word boyfriend in the blank space, but then rewrote friend, crossing out the first word, boyfriend, with a pen. This scene reveals the reality of homosexuality in Korea, in particular, in the space of hyper-masculinity. The conflict of this film starts when Min-Su's mother visits her son on the same day. Sexual behaviours between Suck and Min-Su in an inn near a military base are not important in the film. The most important point is when Min-Su's mother finds out her son is gay when she happens to witness them having sex in the inn. In terms of patriarchy and the military, having sex in an inn near a military base may mean a secret sexual behaviour nobody minds, because there is a place for prostitution. However, finding out about gay sex near a military base implies

a reality that there are many homosexuals in the military. To do military service, Korean males have to have their physical and psychological condition checked before military service. Here, homosexuality is still treated as a mental disorder in the Korean military (Lee, Sang-Kyoung, 2010, You, Ji-Eun, 2006). Although homosexuality is regarded as a mental disorder in the Korean military, the grade of mental disorder for homosexuality does not affect Korean males in their military service. Thus, revealing homosexuality in a mental examination in the military might be impossible. Therefore, the Korean military has never considered homosexual issues because of no data on homosexuality in the military system and the Korean military may not admit the existence of homosexuality in Korea (You, Ji-Eun, 2006). After Min-Su's mother figures out her son is gay, she depends on praying to God in a Catholic Church. In the film, as Jesus smiles at her, she seems to understand a love of her son. However, as the anti-queer movement usually occurs in Korean churches, this, intentionally, stimulates Korean churches, revealed in the smile of Jesus. As soon as Min-Su is on vacation from the military, he goes directly to see Suck.



Figure 4. Kiss in front of stature of General Lee, Soon-Sin.

Min-Su with a military uniform does not look like he is worried about coming out in public in the film. Min-Su and Suck walk around the streets without fear, holding hands. They kiss each other in SeJong-Ro in front of the statue of General Lee, Soon-Sin. This scene is related to challenging hyper-masculinity because of the place where they kiss each other. SeJong-Ro is a very important political place in Seoul and is very close to Chung-Wa-Dae, the House of the Korean President. There are many government offices near this place. Furthermore, SeJong-Ro is the street of hyper-masculinity, located in the statue of General Lee, Soon-Sin, and a symbol of the Korean military. Their kiss in SeJong-Ro reveals homosexuality in Korea in opposition to hyper-masculinity, wearing a military uniform. This film attempts to show that they will not hide behind Korean masculine society. Despite this film's shortness, it suggests many issues in a comedy genre based on melodrama. Although *Just Friends* (2009) provides no new solutions or perspectives about homosexuality, the purpose of this film seems to be a continuous challenge towards Korean gendered society. Looking into several Korean queer films, several common features are found out in these types of films. First of all, most of them are based on the melodrama genre with conventional film making. Secondly, the backgrounds in films are closely related to spaces such as a school, military, and workplace, which happens to easily cause discrimination towards homosexuality. These places are associated with education to produce a gender prejudice, including homosexuality. Lastly, they reported violence of the Korean society based on hyper-masculinity towards homosexuality. In fact, two gay directors, KimJho-GwangSoo and LeeSong-HeeIl draw homosexuality in a different way with these three features. Most films of KimJho-GwangSoo tend to show a happy ending for homosexuality. However,

LeeSong-HeeIl directly portrays a reality of which homosexuality has to face in Korea, revealing violence. Including in these films, I will explore how the Korean queer directors' deal with the homosexuality issues in their films with three features further in the chapter. Investigating why they produce queer films and how they deliver their messages is very important. In particular, finding their gender perception in films against hyper-masculinity can be possible, and also an understanding of their perspectives.

Hyper-masculinity still works in Korean society. Exploring hyper-masculinity in Korea is to understand Korean gender society and trace Korea's economic development. The Korean film industry also has been influenced by hyper-masculinity in various ways. Moreover, Korean films were used politically in Korea based on hyper-masculinity. Sometimes, Korean films are exploited for a certain political purpose and use their political possibility to report a better future and change. In further chapters, I will deal with these issues in depth.

3. Queer in the Korean Film Industry

Comparing Korean queer cinema to American queer cinema does not seem to be necessary. This is because up until now there had been no concept or definition of manifest Korean queer cinema, and most Korean movies dealing with 'queer' have only started production since 2000. Nevertheless, briefly looking at American queer cinema can be meaningful to help explore features of queer movies.

In terms of film spectatorship, watching a film for queer people is a process of exploring their desires and to seek their identity (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). Queer

people are not a passive subject hailed by a film, but they are an active subject interacting with text, engaging with it as a flexible subject. So, queer people watch films to explore their identity, comparing the characters' behaviours, costumes, and words. For example, in the 1930s, American lesbians insisted that they use movie stars for empowering language to define themselves (Weiss, 1992). Unlike heterosexuality, queer people could not be identified by the social system. So, they needed to invent their own language through film (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). Since the early 1900s, film has been the most popular public culture, and it enabled queer people to seek a life of queer. Indeed, film can be a cultural text for queer. Thus, queer people have to seek various methods and develop their strategies from mainstream films in order to explore their queer symptoms through appropriation or queering. An oppositional reading of queer symptoms in films is associated with ambiguity. Ambiguity enables people to read films in various ways and to interact with them in their own way. If there are specific characters not defined as heterosexual and homosexual, through an oppositional reading with ambiguity, queer spectators can reconstruct the message or meaning in a queer way and look to themselves in films, getting rid of any ruling message or meaning (DeAngelis, 2001).

In queer cinema, cross-dressing in comedy genre films is the most common feature in which to read queerness (Russo, 1987). Through cross-dressing, the boundary of traditional sexuality was ambiguous and convention based on heterosexuality was denied within ambiguity. Thus, a character's desire for it represented diversity in the portraits of gender (Mennel, 2012). This enables queer people to explore and to read their desire in their own way. Likewise, showing an unfamiliar character from a traditional gender role is another way to reveal a trace of

queer. For example, as film deals with a character like a sissy, who is a boy or man who violates or does not meet the standard male gender role, it casts doubt on traditional male values and role (Russo, 1987). Although this sissy was depicted as an abnormal character in the comedy film genre, it also attacked conventional and traditional sexuality values. In fact, queer cinema usually attempts to differentiate from conventional filmmaking and narrative. According to Mennel (2012), in a conventional love story, heterosexual couples face a happy ending, while homosexual couples occasionally deny a happy ending and accept a tragic conclusion. Meanwhile, not revealing any queer traces, film could be read for queer as homosexuality text. This is associated with fantasy for queer people within a single-sex group to be able to see manhood or sisterhood (Russo, 1987). When queer people watch these films dealing with manhood or sisterhood, they can see the characters that they desire. This enables them to dream their homosexual fantasy.

In this case of Korea, gender identity in Korea usually has been strictly regulated in dominant heteronormative way by family, school, military, government, and so on. Heterosexuals might not be willing to explore their identity through media like films, because an ideal role model for heterosexuals has already been introduced in the family and school. In spite of this strong heteronormative environment, films in Korea were exploited to reinforce heteronormativity with hyper-masculinity. As mentioned above, films in Korea have been used as a political purpose for the government. In terms of spectatorship, heterosexuals in Korea might reconfirm their ideal role model in films and reinforce their gender role. In contrast to heterosexuals, queer people in Korea might not have any chance to be educated their sexual identity in a heteronormative system. Thus, films for them might be the only way to explore their

sexual identities. According to Cho, Song-Pae (2011), theatres in Korea were a popular meeting place for queer people. While watching films together, they might share their identities, exploring characters for their role model in films. This implies that regardless of heterosexuals and homosexuals, spectatorship to explore their sexual identities is universal. Thus, queer spectatorship for queer people can be universal, because there have been many Korean films dealing with sissy, brotherhood, and sisterhood, although these films could not have been read as a queer subject before 1993.

In contrast to these features of queer cinema, New Queer Cinema⁶ radically denies a familiar representation of homosexuals and radically attempts to break this familiar representation (Aaron, 2004). Likewise, with queer cinema tradition, New Queer Cinema completely refuses conventional film making, pursues an avant-garde tradition of queer filmmaking, and its aesthetics covers a range of 'imperfect' cinema including independent films and silent films from the 1920s. Also, New Queer Cinema is associated with the AIDS/HIV crisis, pursues involvement in queer political activism, and aggressively deals with identity issues (Mennel, 2012).

In the Korean film industry, the first queer film was *Broken Branches* (1996). Before this film was released, there were several foreign films, such as *The Crying Game* (1992), *Philadelphia* (1993), *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), and *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), which dealt with homosexuality.

⁶ Term of New queer cinema was firstly used by B. Ruby Rich in 1992 to define a new queer film making movement in the early 1990s.

However, as these films were only introduced as art films, which won prizes in famous overseas film festivals, these did not seem to reveal queer in marketing when released. For this reason, they did not bring any issues of homosexuality to the Korean gender society at that moment (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). When *Broken Branches* (1995) was released, the Korean media introduced this movie as the first Korean queer film dealing with homosexuality, comparing it to new queer cinema, which led queer trends in world queer cinema at that time (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). Although this first Korean queer film was not well made, in Korean society and the Korean queer community, this film brought various arguments about whether *Broken Branches* (1996) was a queer film or not. In fact, *Broken Branches* (1996) tells about the male character Jeong-Min's life between the 1950s and 1990s. In terms of patriarchy, this movie explores how Jeong-Min goes through modernization, heterosexual family structure, and homosexual relationships via the three episodes in three different times in which he lived.

While High-teen films flourished in the 1970s, during the 1980s high-teen films seemed to disappear. However, since 1989, new high-teen films⁷ dealing with school violence, suicide, and education issues have gradually reappeared. Unlike the high-teen movies of the 1970s, new-high-teen movies have evolved, focusing on real life and consideration of high school students. Furthermore, in *Happiness Is Not From School Marks* (1989), the high-teen star, Lee Duk-Hwa, who starred in many series of high-teen movies during the 1970s, came back to new high-teen movies as a teacher, representing an unchanged school system under hyper-masculinity. He had already

⁷ To distinguish between high-teen films produced in the 1970s, I define new high-teen film as a high-teen film produced since 1989.

experienced his high school life in the 1970s, attempted to achieve democratization in the 1980s, and came back to school as a teacher in 1989. Unlike the happy school life that he experienced in the 1970s, he falls into despair because a student of his commits suicide. The high-teen movie genre in Korea was barely considered an important text to read any trace of social change, however, in terms of the first generation to face rapid political, economic, and social changes, high-teen movies are one of the most important texts. In high-teen movies, each character reveals their issues and considerations and exposes irrational circumstances of the Korean system beyond education problems. In contrast to other Korean movies, high-teen movies could easily avoid censorship by the government because of the features of a genre dealing with teenagers as a teen-clean movie to simply deliver a positive message of healthy school life. So, it could be possible to attempt new challenges. For example, although characters in high-teen movies all seem to be heterosexuals, through cross-dressing⁸, sports activities, and travelling with friends, movies portray ambiguity of gender between teenagers and suggest queer traces. Later, this high-teen movie has evolved again since the late 1990s, with the IMF crisis. In *Memento Mori* (1999), within the horror genre, this film directly illustrates the kiss and love of lesbians in a girl's high school. Also, this film represents school violence, Korean education problems, and discrimination and prejudice towards lesbians. In addition to this film, *Memento Mori* (1999), *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* (2000), *Like A Virgin* (2006), *Antique* (2008), *Suddenly*, *Last Summer* (2012), and *Night Flight* (2014), adopted the context of high

⁸ In *Yalgae* (1976), Dusu attempts to cross-dress in order to sneak out into the girls' high school.

school students or the background of a high school, to illustrate queer matters and attempted to communicate with spectators about queer identity.

The crisis of hyper-masculinity in the late 1990s was an opportunity for queer people. Subjects such as cross-dressing, which seemed impossible in the Korean film industry, become possible. In *I've Got Dibs* (1999), in order to be a roommate of ChaeYong, a female character, whom Junhyuck, a male character, has loved since he was 12 years old, he decides to pretend to be a woman. To hide his sexuality, JunHyuck attempts cross-dressing. Basically, this film is a comedy based on heterosexuality, to achieve heterosexual love. However, although this film concludes with heterosexual love, until JunHyuck reveals his real identity, the friendship between two women overwhelms heterosexual love. Their friendship can possibly be read as lesbian love. Indeed, since the IMF crisis in 1997, with various gender discourses in the Korean film industry, a diversity of content about sexuality has emerged. In addition to this phenomenon, a representation of new masculinity derived from the crisis of hyper-masculinity in films serves another possibility for queer people to consume male images represented new masculinity. Before 1997, in Korean movies, some male characters who did not represent their masculinity, who were feminine, or who were abandoned by society, are referred to as a failure. Korean queer people might not agree with images represented by these characters and could not consume these images to identify themselves. However, the emergence of male characters with pretty faces, gentle gestures, and tender voices, unlike the previous hyper-masculinity, suggests new masculinity and allows queer people to consume these images positively. In fact, new masculinity includes imperfection. It seems not to worry about acquiring a feminine image. It might be a dangerous view to address

that accepting other sexualities' images is related to imperfection for new masculinity. However, because male characters do not give up their strong masculinity, represented by muscles behind their clothes, and hide their dominant power leading to a narrative behind each sequence, in fact, they just compromise their masculinity in movies. Even though soft masculinity seems not to apologize for the failure of hyper-masculinity, soft masculinity can be consumed in terms of queer and queer content can be accepted gradually in the Korean film industry.

In accordance with this change of masculinity, the failure of hyper-masculinity in Korea provides a new possibility to open queer readings. Some Korean films, which were just analysed in a typical way through masculinity or feminism before queer theory was introduced, can be read in a new way through queer reading. For example, in *the Pollen of Flowers* (1972), this film depicts political criticism towards the Blue House, Chung-Wa-Dae, where Korean presidents have lived. Indeed, this film directly describes the place where all characters live as a blue house using a pure Korean word. The Chung-Wa-Dae literally means a blue house in Chinese. Before queer theory was introduced and homosexuality was not recognised in Korea, this film portrays homosexual sex between male characters—HynMa and DanJoo. In fact, this film was mainly regarded as a political film representing symbolism as it used satire about the dictatorship regime. Thus, watching this film through a queer reading might be impossible before the 1990s.⁹ However, this film criticises irrational values such as gender inequality and materialism derived from hyper-masculinity, showing a class relationship between characters. Despite showing homosexual sex and jealousy, the

⁹ Until when *the Pollen of Flowers* (1972) was invited in section for 'Remembering Queer Korea' at the San Diego Asian Film Festival in 2014, this film was not regarded as a queer film in Korea.

reason why this film was not open to a queer reading is because of the absence of perception about queerness. Likewise, in *Lovers' Concerto* (2002), a friendship between female characters Kyoung-Hee and Su-In can be read as lesbian love although the male character Ji-Hwan is involved in their friendship. This film depicts pure love between friendships based on a triangle relationship. Basically, in spite of the hetero-normative love story, the relationship between Kyoung-Hee and Su-In overwhelms the friendship because they choose friendship rather than love towards the male character. Although with the death of Su-In this film seems to appear to support heterosexual love because true love is based on the friendship between Kyoung-Hee and Su-In, and because Ji-Hwan is represented by a soft-masculinity and does not have any choice, as he is excluded in every decisive moment. Indeed, with the emergence of a soft-masculinity, a queer reading seems to be possible. I will further explore the possibility and significance of a queer reading through a failure of hyper-masculinity in another chapter.

Unlike the new queer cinema trend, Korean queer films, including Korean indie queer films, seem not to deliver a radical message against discrimination and prejudice about queer. In particular, revealing AIDS/HIV issues in Korean society is almost impossible, even in the film industry. Thus, to seek an attempt at breaking a convention in film making in Korean queer film seems hard. So, Korean queer movies in the mainstream film market tend to focus on using subjects that are already well known or able to portray contemporary normal everydayness in the Korean context, within conventional film making through features or similarities of other genres. For example, *King and the Clown* (2005) and *A Frozen Flower* (2008) bring their ideas from real Korean history, while *Boy Meets Boy* (2008), and *Like A Virgin* (2006)

describe boys' everyday life, adopting similarities of comedy and drama genres, whereas Korean queer films in the indie film industry seem to be more interested in LGBT rights related to queer politics. However, it is also hard to find an experimental movie breaking a convention. The reason that Korean queer filmmakers could not challenge the breaking of convention may be associated with political and economic contexts, such as a censorship issue related to sexuality, screen quota caused by the FTA (Free Trade Agreement) with the USA, and oligopoly issues of distribution channels.

As exploring Korean masculinities above, the history of gender in Korea is significantly related to a change of masculinity. This change of masculinity in Korean society provided a chance to look into gender. Traditionally, masculinity was regulated in sexuality. However, with economic, political, social and historical matters, masculinity should transform in these contexts. Ironically, gender studies could be possible for the advent of hyper-masculinity. Understanding meaning of hyper-masculinity helps to understand the meaning of queer because, likewise, queer in Korea can be defined in a dynamic interaction between politics, economics, and society. As I already mentioned, queer includes homosexuality and LGBT identities. An advent of queer politically began with the end of the military regime and socially Korea started to open our society to other countries. Likewise, economically, the younger generation had less burden to develop South Korea, compared to the previous generation. Thus, the advent of queer in Korea can be explained in these contexts. I will explore queer and Korean queer films in further chapters alongside with these contexts.

Chapter outline and Methodologies

The ultimate purpose of this research is to look into politics and specific features of Korean queer cinema in political, social, and economic contexts with the failure of hyper-masculinity in South Korea. Thus, This thesis discusses various issues around queer in the Korean film industry, looking at different perspectives, such as gender, politics, society and economy. Unlike earlier research looking into Korean queer films, this thesis focuses on exploring a variety of contexts and texts related to queer. Thus, this research will use the multi-dimensional approach. Just beyond film analysis, this thesis deals with multiple perspectives from politics, the economy (including film industry analysis), queering, queer films and alternative movements, such queer film festivals and the queer pride parade. Indeed, it will examine the context of production (industry, director and politics), texts (queer films, genre and queering non-queer films) and circulation (film festivals and the place of queer in queer culture). These are all related to further understanding the meaning of queer film making in Korean society. Thus, this thesis employs multi-dimensional methodologies. In employing multi-dimensional approach, this thesis combines archival method, textual film analysis, discourse analysis and case studies. Exploring Korean queer cinema is associated with the transformation in Korean politics, economy and gender matters. Thus, the advantage of this methodology is linked to each different methodology in one research. In particular, in terms of overdetermination and intertextuality, this methodology enables researchers to see all the different aspects of the Korean film industry.

The first chapter presents a political perspective of the Korean film industry, Thus, this chapter will use archive methodology. This method is useful when looking at the history of politics around the Korean film industry. By looking at various types of political pressure and regulations. Rather than focusing only on the political history to oppress or manipulate the Korean film industry, the first chapter will look at various aspects, such as the rating system, blacklist, whitelist and political interaction between films and Korean society. The first chapter will demonstrate that queer filmmaking can be a political, participatory activity. Based on this assumption, this thesis argues that queer film making in Korea has expanded its influences on Korean society, underpinning many events, such as queer film festivals, pride parade and queer studies in academic.

In order to further understand the Korean film industry, the second chapter investigates the structure of the Korean film market, regarding the economy. The purpose of this chapter is to show how filmmaking can be conducted as a particularity of the Korean film industry with regard to the power of capital. Thus, this thesis offers insights into the topic of queer cinema in South Korea. This chapter will explore how the Korean film market has been dominated by several large Korean companies that have their own film production, investment and distribution businesses in a vertical integration system. Thus, this chapter will use case studies, dealing with various secondary data. From collecting data to analysing data, this chapter, this chapter is to show economic considerations behind Korean filmmaking. And the second chapter will observe the political economy surrounding queer films in terms of filmmaking, engaging with the production process, as well as distribution and exhibition.

The third chapter will investigate several films in terms of queer reading. There are many films that can be read in a queer way, such as cross-dressing and bromance in specific genre films. By analysing films with the possibility of being viewed in a queer reading, the third chapter will discuss various discourses from film texts. Thus, this chapter will use textual film analysis and discourse analysis in multi-dimensional methodology. The purpose of this queer reading chapter is to show a possibility of the queer reading of several Korean films dealing with cross-dressing and bromance. Without directly confronting a prejudice about queer subjects, queer reading politically enables Korean audiences to expand the meaning of gender, including queer beyond hyper-masculinity.

The fourth chapter will investigate queer films and queer directors. Likewise, this chapter will use textual film analysis and discourse analysis, using secondary sources. The aim of this chapter is to further understand Korean queer films and to seek implications about the political purpose of them and queer film making in Korea. This chapter hypothesises that there are certain ways to represent queer characters in contexts around the heteronormative film industry. From different queer aspects, the fourth chapter will argue that queer filmmaking and queer films in Korea have a political purpose and goal to change the perception of queer in the Korean gendered society. Thus, this chapter will use It is a political and economic challenge to the heteronormative film industry with its traditional values of hyper-masculinity.

Throughout previous chapters, many arguments related to hyper-masculinity are mentioned. Korean films are exploited for a certain political purpose and attempt their political possibility to report irrationality for a change and better future. Thus, the last

chapter will explore how queer films can play an important role as a counterpart in the public sphere by providing alternative possibilities for the queer movement beyond queer film making. In many various places, queer films cooperate with many organizations to announce a positive image towards queer for their own purposes. Knowing what organizations and civil right movements in associated with queer films in Korea can help to provide new insights into the current position of queer films in Korea. In order to know alternative perspectives, this chapter investigates queer film festivals, queer community, anti-queer movement, Korean-indie forum, and so on. Thus, this chapter will use archive methodology and discourse analysis, using secondary data.

Chapter One. Political Particularity of Korean Cinema

Although the end of the direct use of film to influence and control the Korean public might have ended with the end of military regimes in 1992, film is still being regulated in the name of more invisible or less visible powers. While early 1990s signalled a moment when homosexuals could come out, and a ‘queer community’ could be forged, filmmaking that represented their interests. Their interests necessarily had to critique the legacy of hyper-masculinity and the use of sex and sexuality on screen is to reinforce heterosexual and patriarchal norms. As such, freedom of expression laws has not led to the full liberalization of the screen in South Korea.

After the Korean war, going to the cinema or watching films in a community centre or public square was one of the only chances to see Korean and world news. Films for Koreans provided a channel to acknowledge outside factual news, beyond entertainment (Park, Jong-Sung, 2008). Before a film started, there was a propaganda film, called DaeHan News until 1994, produced by the government. Its purpose was not only to provide useful information and news regarding Korean circumstances but also to deliver political messages to the public to support the regime’s agenda (Ham, Chung-Beom and Jeong, Dae-Hoon, 2013). DaeHan news played an important role in mobilising people during the SaeMaUl movement within modernisation and industrialisation under the Park Chung-Hee dictatorship. This indicates why film has been influential from the perspective of national politics. Thus, many regimes, before the first civilian administration, attempted to regulate creative approaches, including

film, to manipulate people towards their political agenda (Ham, Chung-Beom and Jeong, Dae-Hoon, 2013). Through this political regulation and policies, film was censored due to guidelines issued by government organisations, Korean Media Ethical Organisation. Throughout Korean film history. In spite of this censorship, film was able to provide a political backlash via which to criticise military regimes and dictatorship in a roundabout way, through creative activities. Although there were strict guidelines for film-making to censor the contents, many film directors and writers attempted to include a political message or criticism in various ways to avoid censorship. In the film's style or the representation of characters, they strove to hide their political standpoint in symbolism or metaphors behind the narrative. Although there was no guarantee that their efforts could fulfil their political purpose via filmmaking, the implication is that it raises a question about the meaning of filmmaking. This subliminal approach seems to be traditional in the Korean film industry.

Indeed, the meaning behind filmmaking in Korea cannot be explained without the involvement of politics. Thus, looking at Korean film politics, it is very important to understand the meaning and purpose behind queer filmmaking in Korea. In particular, although it seems that there has been no censorship since civilian administrations, there is still invisible censorship and regulations within the industry. Indeed, Korean governments between 2008 and 2016 compiled a blacklist of people who worked in the culture industry, including film directors and writers. These secret official documents, generated by two regimes, prove that intangible censorship and regulations are still operating in the Korean film industry to politically manipulate Korean audiences in the same manner as conducted by the military regimes.

Furthermore, several directors and producers who produced queer films were on the blacklist due to their support for queer rights (Gwak, Woo-Sin, Kim, Yun-Jeong, Yu, Ji-Young, and Son, Hwa-Sin (2016). This means that queer filmmaking was regarded as a political stance against the government agenda or direction. In terms of gender politics, exploring these political circumstances with governments' attitude and perspectives concerning the Korean film industry could also help to find out a meaning for queer film-making in Korea. Thus, this investigation could provide insights into how filmmaking deals with gender issues in Korean society throughout queer film-making.

1. The Purpose of Queer Filmmaking in Korea

In relation to the governments' attitudes and perspectives, many queer people were able to reveal their existence in society, although it might be difficult to declare their identity in public. Likewise, tackling homosexual issues in the Korean film industry is started occurring not long after the regimes' demise. Especially, queer filmmaking in Korea is just beginning to reveal its existence following this political change.

Korean society might focus on how to socially accept sexual minorities in their political direction rather than discuss various social issues with sexual minorities (Park, Jong-Sung, 2008). This is politically based on human rights with no basic understanding of sexual minorities. Although media and films have dealt with homosexual issues, Korean society tends to present political opinions. In fact, the social perception of homosexuality in Korea is that it is abnormal behaviour to pursue a primordial sexual desire. Rather than considering the real issues related to identity

and equality, Korean society looks at their distorted image of sexual perversion. Indeed, this perception is based on misunderstanding and ignorance about homosexuality. According to Park Jong-Sung (2008), there is no criticism about a lack of policies and discussions concerning how to integrate or to embrace sexual minorities in society, but there are many distorted perceptions towards homosexuality related to anal sex between males, rubbing vaginas between females, perverted cross-dressing and heterosexuals' deviant behaviour. These distorted perceptions, thus, have contributed to sustaining prejudices towards homosexuality.

Unlike other Western countries and some other Asian countries, South Korea is a very conservative country and prohibits pornography. Indeed, the Korean government and society strictly control and regulate all pornographic content in terms of obscenity (Yun, Jin-Suk, 2003). Judging whether sexual content in art, including film, is obscenity is very ambiguous: however, South Korea attempts to judge it in terms of criteria like obscenity. Interestingly, although Korean society entirely forbids pornographic or obscene content, sexual images relating to women's bodies seem completely acceptable. In particular, between the late 1970s and early 1990s, there were many hostess films and erotic films blatantly revealing women's sexuality. In fact, film and sexuality have been naturally combined in a relationship incorporating a hidden desire for power and capital (Park, Jong-Sung, 2008). Like pornography, which encourages primordial sexual excitement in physical sexual behaviour, these hostess films and erotic films present a sexual fantasy to audiences, especially males, in cinemas. Interestingly, sexual expressions concerning the female body in these genre films were sometimes obscene, showing only a part of a female's body in a close-up shot without any reason and meaning. In particular, erotic genre films called

ero-film in Korea were politically used as 3S policies, which refers Sport, Sex and Screen(film) business to guide people to be distracted in political interests, in 1980s during the military regime. Jun Doo-hwan's military regime attempted to support the production of ero-films (Jeong, Tae Soo, 2017). These ero-films, thus, show how sexuality in filmmaking could be politically employed and supported with capital. Showing extreme female sexuality, ero-films practice their political purpose in sabotaging people's interest in the military regime. They can continue making a huge profit, taking advantage of sexuality in filmmaking.

Exploiting female sexual images in ero-films and hostess films has invited considerable criticism from many sources, including feminists. In particular, hostess films were regarded as a bad genre film to Korean females and to support values of hyper-masculinity, degrading women's social position. Now, however, many critics and film researchers are looking at this genre of film as a vehicle to criticise a society led by hyper-masculinity and to pressurise other genders. Understanding that this genre of film was invented for a specific political and economic purpose to guide Korean audiences to a right-minimisation and reduced political interest, feminist critics can use these films to describe women's lives in Korea to promote women's rights and gender equality (Yu, Gi-Na, 2004). Re-evaluating hostess films and ero-films, feminism in Korea attempts to describe the life of Korean females pressurised by hyper-masculinity. Obviously, feminist films are very political: however, the Korean film industry is a very difficult market in which to produce feminist films, due to a predominantly masculine production environment. Indeed, it is hard to find many Korean feminist films in the mainstream film market. However, these hostess and ero-films provide new political perspectives, exploring contemporary women's lives.

Generally, when discussing gender films, it used to mean feminist films. Korean gender films also used to focus on feminist movies, concerned with women's rights and their social position in an androcentric society. According to major assumptions, gender is socially constructed to oppress women in a patriarchal system. Feminist films reveal their politics in films (Humm, 1997). Feminist films reject gender stereotypes, suggesting a new insight into the meaning of gender. Based on women's experience, feminist films tell of their lives subjected to masculine values, problematising traditional masculine values. Thus, feminist criticism is a practice examining the representation of women's role in film, exploring conventional roles as a wife, girlfriend and mother (Haskell, 1973). Hostess genre films, thus, suit such feminist critics, although they are not feminist films. In particular, between capital and masculine values, the feminist theory can see how hostess films could politically represent Korean women for patriarchal and hyper-masculine purposes during the compressed modernisation of Korea. Thus, these questions why these representations of women were politically exploited, maintaining a gender stereotype.

Queer films in Korea seem to depict their marginalised lives. They do not talk about their sexual orientation or preference in films. They just demonstrate that queer people in Korea are the same people as other citizens living in Korea. Due to the lack of familiarity in talking about homosexuality in Korea, even the term 'queer' is unknown. Thus, revealing the existence of queer is a political challenge to confront many prejudices. In particular, the queer image seems to be regarded as pornography to describe perverted sexual behaviour (Park, Jong-sung, 2008). According to Park Jong-sung (2008), homosexual behaviour was not associated with queer people but is the perverted behaviour of heterosexuals who attempt to pursue deviant same-sex

sexual behaviour. This wrong perception might sustain prejudice and reproduce a distorted image of queer in Korean society. In order to fix this distorted perception towards queer, queer films might have to be political to deliver information about queer. Unlike other Western countries, the Korean queer community began only in the early 1990s. Although there had still been a queer community behind society, Korean queer people seldom revealed their existence. Indeed, due to a lack of resources, it is hard to investigate how Korean queer people could establish their own community before the 1990s. Korean society was not ready to embrace the queer existence and attempted to get rid of their traces. For example, there was one Korean poet, Ki Hyung-do, who died in a gay cinema in 1989. He left remarkable poetry, seemingly describing his miserable gay life in Korea. The academic Korean literature world has still attempted to deny analysing his poetry in a queer way and his mother, who owns the copyright of his poetry, does not allow the publishing of his work with a gay theme (Jang, Jung-II , 2015, Sin, Jun-Bong, 2018). This example shows how Korean society attempts to deny queer existence.

According to Blasius (2001), politics is related to a problematisation, questioning power relations in society by social movement, and it produces knowledge about the meaning of the phenomenon as political, exercising and submitting to power relations. In gendered society, dominated by hyper-masculinity, revealing the existence of queer might be a political challenge to expose a power of hyper-masculinity in heteronormative values. Queer filmmaking involves politics, problematising gendered power by hyper-masculinity. In the same way that feminists looked at hostess genre films to criticise hyper-masculine norms in Korea, queer filmmaking can employ political practice to reveal a power relation between heteronormativity and hyper-

masculinity, criticising queer ignorance. Politically, queer filmmaking might have a purpose to provide knowledge about queer to Korean society through queer representation and its attempt to recognise queer.

Indeed, queer film-making in Korea is a challenge to powers in various stages beyond gender. In the Korean film industry, queer film-making copes with an ambiguous regulation about sexual expression due to the ignorance of queer. From this ignorance, queer film-making has to confront the power of hyper-masculinity to support a heteronormative society. Furthermore, in terms of capital, queer film-making has to overcome a power of capital in the Korean film industry because queer film is not a popular genre to attract enough investment. Thus, queer film-making challenges the power of capital in the mainstream film market, criticising the capitalised Korean film industry through several big private companies. To secure a diversity of film in the Korean film industry, queer film-making strongly relates to the indecent film industry. This implies its freedom from the regulation of capital and power and enables queer film-making to expand its influence on the mainstream film industry. Indeed, many queer film-makers have worked at Indie Forum, which is the organisation promoting the Korean independent film industry. It organises the Korean Independent Film Festival and conference for Korean indie-films every year and attempts to publish indie-film magazines. In particular, one chairman was LeeSong-HeeIl, a gay director who started his career in the independent film industry. He was able to cross to the mainstream film industry for his queer film-making. LeeSong-HeeIl said the Indie Forum can help to secure various experimental films that the mainstream film industry cannot accommodate (Kang, Suk-Yun, 2000). This means that independent films can suggest alternative perspectives to the Korean film industry

and act as a counter sphere against the regulated mainstream film industry by government powers. Queer film-making, thus, is one practice to challenge the powers not only in the gendered society but also in the film industry.

Indeed, queer film-making in Korea has expanded its influence on Korean society, organising many events, such as queer film festivals, pride parades and queer academic studies. Through producing queer films, there is an attempt to produce various discourses related to queer and enable queer people to address gender issues beyond queer, criticising issues from gendered society by hyper-masculinity. Revealing oneself as queer in Korea might be a political purpose to attract interest in gender equality, embracing negative and positive reactions. With increasing interest in queer via queer film-making, queer people in Korea can gradually reveal their existence and start to speak out about discrimination and prejudice. Likewise, queer film-making provides a new opportunity to look at already existing texts or situations in a queer way or perspective. This enables expansion of the meaning of gender beyond the gender binary.

This chapter discussed why Korean cinema features politically in Korean film history. It dealt with the political potential of queer film-making in some ways, because there must be singularity to Korean queer films, unlike other countries' queer films. Thus, the next chapter will look at the Korean film market situation to examine particularity and the meaning of queer film-making in terms of economy, because filmmaking cannot be free from capital.

2. The political history of Korean cinema

Korean cinema is closely related to Korean political history. This relationship occurred because it was controlled by government policies and because of international situations, such as cold-war diplomacy and neo-liberalism. In particular, during the Park Chung-Hee dictator regime between 1960 and 1980, film played an important role in mobilising the new rural community movement for modernisation and was also used as propaganda to maintain the regime (Jo, HeeYeon, 2010; Ham, Chung-Beom & Jung, Dae-Hoon, 2013). During this period, film was controlled by the Korean Bureau of Public Information until it was relocated to the Korean Film Department under the Korean Information Service (Ham, Chung-Beom & Jung, Dae-Hoon, 2013). The National Film Production Centre usually produced newsreels, culture films¹⁰ and many various series of fiction films about contemporary lifestyle (Ham, Chung-Beom & Jung, Dae-Hoon, 2013). The purpose of the National Film Production Centre in producing these films was not only propaganda but also to inject their political agenda and to eliminate the public's critical thinking. Newsreels called DaeHan News, and cultural films usually dealt with domestic and international news and the regimes' important policies, such as the 5-year plan for economic development, anti-communism, birth control or rural modernisation. These newsreels and culture films were always shown first, before the main film started, attracting the audience's attention. In particular, as short films, culture films contained the

¹⁰ A culture film is an independent film with a shorter running time than a feature film and a longer running time than newsreels. Culture films address various subjects, such as nature, industry, science and culture for the purpose of education and enlightenment.

government's political agenda in a fictional narrative. This mandatory screening system was adopted in 1940 during the colonised period, by Japan, but after independence, this system was eliminated. However, in early 1960, Park Chung-hee's regime adopted this system for their political purpose as propaganda, and this lasted for almost 3 decades lifestyle (Ham, Chung-Beom, 2014).. In particular, Park's dictatorship legislated law to prescribe a role for culture films.

In addition to this national policy to produce political content, the government regulated the number of private film production companies in the private sector through a registration system and licence system (Ham, Chung-Beom & Jung; Dae-Hoon, 2013). Anyone with a plan to produce a film had to submit the film-making proposals, including the scenario. This was obviously censorship to check the contents in advance before the production stage. Indeed, since the Korean film law was legislated in 1962 by the Park Chung-hee dictatorship regime, the Korean film pre-review system had a role to censor films as a pre-license exercise (Han, We-Soo, 2003). In this pre-review system or pre-license system, the government could allow films that would comply with its guidelines (Park, Yu Hee, 2012). This implies that scenarios which could not be approved in the pre-review system had no chance of being produced in the Korean film industry. Although their scenario was approved via the pre-review system, films had to be examined before cinema release. In addition to this censorship towards Korean cinema, the government attempted to force private film producers to make films dealing with pro-government content. During Park Chung-hee's dictatorship regime, there were only a few private film production companies with a license to import foreign films and distribute them to the Korean film market. In order to distribute foreign films and maintain their license, they

mandatorily produced films with content to support the government agenda within a given guideline (Han, We-Soo, 2003, Park, Yu Hee, 2012).

Before 1999, the performance Ethics Board's deliberation system, which had exercised strong regulation concerning film content, no longer had any power to restrict the freedom of expression (Yecies, 2008).¹¹ In 1996, the Korean constitutional court examined and judged that the pre-license system was unconstitutional because of its potential to curtail freedom of expression. In particular, the Korean constitutional court declared that it was censorship to regulate the film industry. Thus, this constitutional court decision led to a reform of the law from the pre-license system to the pre-rating system. These laws to encroach the freedom of expression had been changed after the 9th revision. However, although the Korean constitutional court ordered a change of law to encroach the freedom of expression, the Korean government administrative organisation states that pre-examination and the rating system is necessary to regulate harmful content in terms of juvenile protection (Choi, Seung-Jun, 2009). Indeed, the rating system, which is operated in many countries, such as the USA, Japan, France, the UK and so on, is a pre-control to regulate audiences' age-related viewing. Thus, the rating system might not be seen as censorship. However, in Korea, the Korean Media Rating Board in the government administrative organisation still has an important role regulating film releases, practising the pre-examination of films, including foreign productions (Yang, Young-

¹¹ Prior to 1996, the Motion Picture Law, which took effect in 1962 under the Park Chung-hee military dictatorship, required all film-makers or producers to obtain script approval in the pre-production stage from the Ministry of Public Information and to provide their final cut of the completed film to the government. It forced all film-makers and producers to register all their films, whether domestic or foreign, via government permission (Yecies, 2008).

Chul, 2008). The rating system for juvenile protection in Korea has introduced controversial issues related to censorship because, with ambiguous standards related to examining lascivious films, the government administrative organisation could award an incorrect rating for political and social reasons. In spite of the nullification of censorship law, this pre-rating system has affected many film producers and directors because the rating classification system seems to force self-censorship to check a level of expression, considering the examination by the Performance Ethics Board or invisible power (Yecies, 2008). In fact, this forced self-censorship could be a potential threat to regulate freedom of expression. With the controversial issues of rating-system, the Media Rating Board was established in 1999 and takes over the screening system for rating films from the Performance Ethics Board.

These controversial rating issues are confined not only to Korean films but also encompass some foreign films due to violence and obscenity in sexual expression in film. In 2006, film importer World Cinema instituted an unconstitutionality suit to change the rating of the movie *Battle in Heaven* (2005). Based on the Korean rating system, *Battle in Heaven* had a restricted screening rating, which means its release was curbed in the Korean film market. Also, in 2007, Sponge, another film importer, tried to cancel the restricted rating of the movie, *Short Bus* (2006). Due to their expression of obscenity, these two movies had no choice but to cut the scenes relating to the sexual expression that the Korea Media Rating System regulated. Later, the Korean constitution court ordered the Korea Media Rating Board to cancel their restricted rating because of the right to watch movies. However, the court stated that the rating system was not a violation of the constitution (Yang, Young-Chul, 2008).

Likewise, the Korean rating system operates in the same way as other countries, such as the USA, the UK, France, Japan and so on. However, the screening of movies unexamined by the prior film review system is restricted, and if a film violates the law, according to articles about fine and imprisonment in Korea, it could be punishable. In addition to the aforementioned cases, foreign films such as *Tokyo Decadence* (1992), *Happy Together* (1997), *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), *Kill Bill Vol.1* (2003), and *The Wayward Cloud* (2005) raise significant questions about the Korean censorship system and issues regarding the portrayal of obscene and violent content in public (Brian, 2008).

In Korea, an R-rating is similar to the USA X-Rating or R18. However, X-rating is a grade that the CRA¹² do not classify. X-rated movies can be shown in independent distribution channels or art-houses (Park, Chang-Seok, 2013). In contrast to R-rated movies in Korea, CRA is a self-regulated organisation and does not classify X-rated movies directly. It is not involved in the screening of X-rated movies. On the contrary, despite Korea having a grade for under-18 films, an R-rating is a violation of the right to be able to watch, buy and read sexual content. The Korean government regulates Korean adults. Films awarded a grade of limited screening, delayed ratings, or an R-rating, have to wait for re-examination or are obliged to cut scenes with issues via self-censorship for re-rating if they are to be shown in the Korean market (Park Chang-Seok, 2013). Han Wee-Soo (2003) points out that giving a film an R-rating based on subject, language, violence, crime behaviour, sexual behaviour and so on is ambiguous and impossible to objectify under the law.

¹² Classification and Rating Administration

The Korean film *The Dirty Mop* (1986) dealt with Buddhist art painting and was noted for the cutting of 13 scenes from the entire film. The Korean Performance Ethics Board required the scene in which the main character, JungKwang, tries to commit suicide by fire, to be cut because of the possibility of incendiarism. Also, some scenes depicting the military dictatorship were cut for political reasons.

When *Happy Together* (1997) was introduced to the Korean market, the Korean Performance Ethics Board did not allow it to be imported because of its subject of homosexuality. They explained that it would negatively affect public sentiment and perception of Korea. Even though this movie received more than 30% of its production budget from Korea, it was simply banned. The decision encouraged a discussion about the issue of censorship and arguments erupted in the press and among the public (Lee Jooran, 2000). Consequently, a year later, it could be released without some of the opening scenes that had portrayed homosexuality.

Likewise, the Korean queer film *Stateless Things* (2012) was permitted release after cutting the scene showing male genitals. The Media Rating Board awarded it an R-rating due to the obscenity in sexual expression. Ironically, in the case of *Thirst* (2009), there was no problem with the under-18 rating in cinema chains, despite the film exposing the protagonist's genitals. Like *Stateless Things*, many Korean queer films are likely to receive an R-rating due to ambiguous standards in judging what constitutes obscenity.

The documentary film, *Red Hunt* (1996), dealt with the Jeju uprising, which was a communist revolt on Jeju Island in Korea, from April 3 1948, to May 1949. It shows that 80 per cent of the genocide victims in the Jeju uprising were civilians and that

they were killed as scapegoats by the Lee SeungMan regime (the first Korean regime after the Korean War) and the USA army because of bad judgement (Kim Nan-Ju, 2013). Due to dealing with red Communism and screening it to the public in 1997, those individuals concerned were prosecuted by the Korean National Security Laws. In spite of the National Security Laws, the Korean Human Rights Organisation and religious organisations tried to screen the movie. However, the Korean police department sent police to stop the screening (YeonHap News, 1997). College students and religious people, who had tried to screen the film, were prosecuted. As the Korean Supreme Court judged in 1999 that the *Red Hunt* was not a communist film but a documentary film concerning the human rights of Jeju victims, people who were prosecuted were found not guilty (Kim, Bum-Soo, 1999). However, in the Korean National Security Law, screening movies related to communism is still illegal.

Based on the real assassination of the military dictator, Park Chung-Hee, *The President's Last Bang* (2005) was filmed in 2005. On 31 January, in 2005, only three days before the film's scheduled release, the son of Park Chung-hee, Park Ji-man, prosecuted *The President's Last Bang* and sought to have the film banned. Park Ji-man argued that the opening scene and closing credits of archival footage showing his father's funeral ceremony could undermine his father's achievements and debase the dignity of his death (Dong-A Ilbo, 2005). The Korean Seoul Central Court accepted his complaint and ordered parts of the film to be cut (Brian, 2008). This lawsuit case between the filmmaker and Park Ji-man may not seem to be a censorship issue. However, Korea's largest distributor, CJ Entertainment (a sister company of Samsung) suddenly refused to distribute the film and withdrew its investment. As the way of expression of *The President's Last Bang* towards Park Chung-Hee seems to

deconstruct the symbolic and mythical aura of Park Chung-Hee's economic development, it might impact on the Korean economic world and the political life of Park Geun-hye, the daughter of Park Chung-hee, as chairwoman of the centre-right opposition party in Korea at that time (Brian, 2008). Most of the biggest companies, including Samsung, Hyundai, LG, KIA and so on, benefitted from the Park military regime, it may have been highly taboo for them to see the film focusing on the dark side of the Park Chung-hee regime and his assassination (Brian, 2008). For them, maintaining a good political relationship with the conservative party may be an obvious choice for further benefits. This case is a good example demonstrating that there is a relationship between censorship and politics.

After the dictatorship ended with the assassination of President Park Chung-hee, the hope for democratisation was eliminated by the Jun Doo-Hwan military coup. During almost ten years of the Jun Doo-Hwan and Noh Tae-Woo military regime, the screen¹³ was regarded as part of the 3S-Policy to render Koreans into an ignorant mass stupidly guided towards sports and the sex industry (Lee, Min-Sup, 2001). In the early 1980s, in order to exclude citizens' political participation, the Jun Doo-Hwan regime created the professional Korean Baseball League and succeeded in influencing people to lose interest in the unjust military regime (Lee, Min-Sup, 2001). The regime encouraged the sex industry which signalled the beginning of a flood of pornographic films, called erotic film or ero-film in Korea, with a combination of screen and sex (Kim, Keun-Ho, 2000). This shows how Korean cinema was exploited by Korean politics and is manifest evidence of why it is political.

¹³ Screen is referred to as a film in Korea.

Indeed, the Korean film law, itself, was censorship to implement a pre-review system, such as a pre-licence system to control the content of films. The Performance Ethics Board's deliberation system before 1999, which had exercised strong regulations regarding storytelling, no longer had any power to restrict freedom of expression (Yecies, 2008). While it has been revised nine times since then, the Korean constitutional court judged that the pre-licence system was unconstitutional in 1996, due to the censoring of such freedom. The pre-licence system, therefore, revised the pre-rating system. Although the Korean constitutional court banned all censorship of freedom of expression, it has announced that pre-examination for obscenity and violence by the government administrative organisation is not censorship because this is necessary for juvenile protection (Choi, Seung-Jun, 2009). Through the rating system, which is already implemented in other countries, such as the USA, the UK and Japan, etc., the Korean Media Rating Board as a government administrative organisation conducts a pre-examination of films including foreign productions (Yang, Young-Chul, 2008). The Korean rating system for juvenile protection, however, causes controversy related to censorship because it is operated by a government administrative organisation. This shows that a potential threat by an invisible power – government - still exists in the Korean film industry.

Censorship of Korean queer cinema is associated with homosexuality and juvenile protection. In terms of harm to youth, the standard for juvenile protection includes homosexual content. The expression of homosexuality in Korea's cultural industry is not considered as a matter for censorship (Noh, Jae-Hyun, 2008). In spite of the recommendation of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, suggesting anti-discrimination for homosexuality, the censorship issue for queer films is still

controversial because of the ambiguity of obscenity and juvenile protection standards. In Korea, furthermore, homosexuality is still considered as abnormal and queer films are regulated strictly as an obscenity, regardless of content, or the way sexuality is expressed. For example, there was a request for the Korean conservative politicians and the Korean Christian Association to get rid of the content against homosexuality discrimination in Korean high school ethics textbooks in 2013 (Nam, BitNaRa, 2013). This implies that Korean society is sensitive to references to homosexuality and worries about it having an impact on the young. Research on the Media Rating System of queer films released in Korea shows that white queer films have received a relatively generous pre-examination. In contrast, Asian queer films, including Korean productions, are likely to be restricted by standards such as obscenity, violence, politics and the style of sexual expression of homosexuality. In addition to strict standards, according to LeeSong-HeeIl, a gay director making a queer film in Korea needs to employ self-censorship to pass the rating system (Im, Geun-Jun, 2007). The film, *Suddenly, Last Summer* (2012), which depicts a pure love story between a male teacher and his male student, was rated 18 and older, despite there being no sexual scenes in the movie (Jo, Soo-Kyoung, 2012).

The Korean cinema is meant to be a part of political and historical representation for Koreans, as well as entertainment. During the dictatorship, as propaganda, it announced national events as a function of political incitement and had the political power to raise a social problem. In order to maintain the dictatorship and the Yushin Constitution between the 1960s and 1970s, the Korean government exploited films to justify the regime, using them as political incitement, and censored them where film makers or producers criticised the regime through their films (Seo, Kok-Sook, 2008).

Furthermore, with the double limitations of pre-censorship and post-censorship, the Korean government was involved in the whole Korean film production process (Seo, Kok-Sook, 2008). Although strict censorship existed, there were still efforts to criticise the regime and Korean society in the Korean film industry. During this period, to show the gap between rich and poor (such as income inequality) and to describe the poor environment of the Korean workplace, the Korean comedy genre adopted comic characters, who were fired (Seo, Kok-Sook, 2008). Although each character was powerless to change the reality of their poverty, films could show the irrational and cruel social problems Korea was facing. Under the freedom of expression controlled by the government, periphrasis about social and political problems could be one of the ways to avoid censorship (Seo, Kok-Sook, 2008). For example, all-male protagonists in *Salsalri*, *You Do Not Know It* (1966), *Horse-year Bride* (1966), *A Man and a Gisaeng* (1969) and *Male Secretary* (1969) were fired from their jobs in the early sequence, and the films showed that they suffered hardship in life. All male protagonists in the films chose to be a prostitute for a living. Jobs such as a secretary, hairdresser or club dancer were regarded as suitable only for women during this period. Hiding their identity or pretending to be female via cross-dressing, they make fools of the male bosses who fired them before revealing their true selves. In the censorship process, directly criticising social issues and a certain person or organisation, such as the upper class, might be possible. However, in the comedy genre, male protagonists expose bosses' underhand attitudes and behaviour. This means the Korean comedy genre during the Yushin period or during the dictatorship was a compromise, revealing and delivering a political message. In a roundabout way, these films could reveal their political criticism. Likewise, avoiding

censorship in Korean queer cinema is closely related to the representation of homosexuality. Similarly, Korean queer films need to compromise on their level of expression and how they reveal homosexuality. Precisely in order to successfully pass the pre-rating system and be able to distribute their films, many producers have had to learn how to negotiate the Korean film industry. Interestingly, during this dictatorship period, many films exploited cross-dressing to avoid censorship and to reveal their political and social criticism in the comedy genre. Regarding the negotiation of queer expression, this could be related to a queer reading and queer films in chapter 3 and chapter 4.

3. The Social and Political Impact of Korean films

Films do not need to be political. However, in a specific political history to regulate or to promote the film industry, Korean cinema naturally tends to reveal political messages in films. In particular, many Korean feature films successful in the Korean box office attempted to expose social or political issues to bring about social change. Likewise, they have criticised invisible censorship towards the overall cultural industry beyond the film industry. In a history of Korean cinema, many film directors such as Bong, Joon-Ho, KimJho-GwangSoo and LeeSong-HeIl used to say that film has to contain a critical voice to provide a new insight to audiences. Their perspectives of filmmaking in Korea imply that film can report social problems and solve them, enlightening people. As a media, obviously, film might have a function to deal with real social issues, but all films in different genres do not need to take responsibility to tackle real social and political matters. However, Korean cinema seems to be obsessed with dealing with actual social and political matters to criticise Korean society: many

successful Korean films in the Korean film market seem to deal with these issues in various genres.

South Korea took first place in the world in 2016 for moviegoers watching the highest number of feature films in cinemas (KOFIC, 2017). Indeed, Koreans love to go to the cinema and this can imply that film is an important part of Korean life. Furthermore, film as media in Korea has an important role in protecting the local culture. When the government attempted to reduce screen quota days in 2006, many people working in the film industry and Koreans who cared about culture sovereignty went out to protest (Lee, Tae-Kyu, 2006). In particular, this screen quota issue was closely associated with a political and economic issue with a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the USA. Many filmmakers, actors and staff insisted that film is a last-ditch attempt to maintain our cultural spirit (Jo, Jun-Hyung, 2006). Although days of screen quota were reduced in political and economic interests for an FTA between South Korea and the USA, this screen quota made Koreans think of the meaning of film in life beyond a role within the media. Indeed, Noh Mu-Hyun, President in 2005, attempted to explain the importance of the film industry and invited many actors and film directors to convince them of the necessity to reduce the screen quota. This screen quota issue made Koreans recognise that films could be closely related to politics. In fact, Koreans have already recognised that film is political in various contexts. In particular, Dae-Han News as a propaganda vehicle was not produced merely after the military regime. Although people working in the film industry, college students and intellectuals attempted to stop producing propaganda films through a national organisation, the military regime had taken advantage of propaganda films to publicise its agenda in cinema chains. Koreans who already

experienced this intended brainwashing programme tend to want films as a media to be more independent and radical to criticise and to report a bigger power in a representation of reality (Jung, Young-Kwon, 2002, Kim, Eun-Jeong, 2017). Indeed, Koreans tend to watch films that deal with reality or realism in history, drama, crime or thriller genres. Many Korean films that succeeded at the box office were based on realism in these genres' feature, and this will be dealt in the next chapter, exploring how many Korean films address real matters and issues in Korean society.

Following the military regimes, Kim Young-Sam's regime looked at the importance of the cultural industry, noting the success of *Jurassic Park* (1993) (Kim, Sung-Kyung, 2011). In particular, with an inflow of huge budgets from big companies like Samsung, DaeWoo, or CJ, the Korean film industry has begun to produce high-budget films, called Korean blockbuster movies (Kim, Sung-Kyung, 2011). When considering the concept of a blockbuster, it could be regarded as a high-budget entertainment film genre. However, Korean blockbuster movies provide not only entertainment but also show the Korean context based on realism. For example, *The King and the Clowns* (2005) depicted love and friendship based on the real history of the King YeonSan period in the Chosun Dynasty, attracting about 11 million viewers. *Roaring Currents* (2014) was a blockbuster film based on real history and dealt with leadership and fellowship during the war between Japan and Korea, showing the absence of leadership in Korea after the ship Sewol sank in 2014. With an exponential interest in the tragic Sewol accident, 17 million Koreans watched the film, and some of them have requested a change in Korean politics, laws and leadership.

The Gwangju Uprising was a movement for democratisation in the city of Gwangju, South Korea, which occurred from the 18th to the 27th of May, 1980. Many citizens and students in Gwangju protested for democracy against the Jun Doo-Hwan government that succeeded the long-standing military coup. During this period, the Jun Doo-Hwan government sent military troops to suppress protesters, labelling them as rebels and instigated by communists from North Korea. To resist the oppression, citizens in Gwangju took up arms and attempted to protect themselves against the government troops. However, during this period, around 600 citizens were killed by the regime's military.

In the Korean film industry, there are three feature films dealing with the subject of the Gwangju Uprising: *A Petal* (1996), *May 18* (2007), and *A Taxi Driver* (2017). These three films were created with a gap of 10 years between each production. Each film shows a different perspective of history according to the time period in which it was produced. The films all deal with characters who went through and were traumatised by the Gwangju Uprising. However, interestingly, they portray different experiences through various types of characters. *Petal* follows one girl who is traumatised by the Gwangju Uprising, and the film portrays her pain and sadness derived from her past and experience with the Gwangju Uprising. *May 18* attempts to show characters as citizens living in Gwangju. Thus, the film focuses on their protest against government troops. Unlike these two films, *A Taxi Driver* concerns people who are 'outlanders', or people who visit Gwangju to find out the truth about the Uprising. One of the protagonists is a taxi driver who changed from being uninterested in the event, at the beginning of the film, to becoming increasingly interested through experiencing it unfold. In particular, the Gwangju uprising is a meaningful movement

to highlight the importance of democracy to Koreans. In fact, there were many films dealing with historical events to politically criticise regimes' faults throughout the screen representation. However, during the military regimes, it was not possible to produce these films dealing with a tragic history of Korea because of the political regulation, such as censorship.

These three feature films covering the Gwangju uprising are politically important in Korea because they intentionally criticise the military regimes' violence and suppression of Korean society. Through showing many innocent citizens' deaths in films, they reveal a political message about how Korea achieved democracy through many sacrifices. Interestingly, when *Petal* was released in 1996, two previous presidents, Noh Tae-Woo and Jun Doo-Hwan, were prosecuted for corruption and ordering the massacre in Gwangju. By law, two military presidents were arrested and found guilty in full view of the public, broadcasting their guilt (Park Myeong-Jin, 2007). Indeed, *Petal* could bring a change of perspective regarding the Gwangju uprising because many citizens still believed that it was a failed rebellion by North Korea until two presidents were prosecuted. Unlike *Petal*, *May 18* and *A Taxi Driver* might not contain strong political intention, but they attempted to see and depict the Gwangju uprising in different perspectives from the main characters' viewpoint with their actual experiences of the Gwangju uprising. Although these two films might not have the political intention to criticise the contemporary regimes, they can be regarded as political texts, considering when they were released in terms of the political situation in Korea. Due to coverage of the Gwangju uprising in film, many actors, film directors and even film production companies received invisible discrimination and

disadvantages from the government. The issues about how and why specific films and people were disadvantaged by the Korean government will be covered in the next part.

For audiences in Korea, watching a movie can be seen as political participation. In terms of the meaning of participation, watching a movie can represent a very political attitude and behaviour because audiences can become involved in films' politics, by watching them in a cinema. Indeed, many box office successes in Korean cinemas dealt with various social issues and instigated political activities through the audiences' participation and desire to make positive change. For example, after the release of *The Crucible* (2011) which tells the horrific story of physical and sexual abuse of students at a school for the hearing-impaired, the public blamed the Korean legal system. In spite of the film's R-rating, 4 million Koreans watched it and became interested in this tragic crime (Cho, Heup and Oh, Seung-Hyun, 2012). Thus, many audiences were upset and angry after watching *The Crucible*, criticising the Korean legal system for not protecting a second citizen and children. Furthermore, many netizens¹⁴ attempted to organise a campaign to reinvestigate this crime both online and off-line (Ghe, Woon-Gyoung, 2014). Consequently, the civil movements inspired by the movie led to the Korean National Assembly passing legislation to toughen laws against sexual assault in 2011 (Bae, Sang-Joon, 2013).

Like *The Crucible*, some Korean films dealing with a real event impacted on Korean society after release. In the example of *Memories of Murder* (2003), about a

¹⁴ Netizen is a word to combine 'internet' and 'citizen' as an internet user.

cold case concerning a serial killer kidnapping and killing only females, many audiences and Korean citizens asked to abolish statutory limitations on murder following the film's huge success. Similar to *The Crucible* and *Memories of Murder*, *The Case of Itaewon Homicide* (2009) also deals with a real event where an American killed a Korean man in Macdonalds, in Itaewon, in 1997.

Likewise, this film reminded Koreans of this case and the lack of success in finding a real murderer. It criticised the law system in South Korea because the Korean law system could not hold American citizens in a detention house for a long time, despite their committing a crime. While Korean prosecutors and police attempted to extend their detention period and to prohibit the suspect's departure for a trial and investigation, the suspect was able to go back to the USA, using these South Korean legal loopholes. Thus, this film attempted to reveal the issue of loopholes in the law system not to prosecute a murderer. After this film was released in 2009, the case of Itaewon homicide gained great attention from Korean citizens: this also brought about considerable criticism of the inept law system concerning foreigners' crimes in South Korea. With Koreans' interest and civil movements to ask for a reinvestigation, the Korean government recognised the seriousness of this issue and ordered a reinvestigation of this case in 2009. Consequently, Korean policemen and prosecutors finally secured the murderer and asked the FBI to send him to Korea in 2012 in accordance with an extradition agreement between the USA and South Korea. In 2017, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison. According to Bae Sang-Joon (2013), films dealing with a real event in the courtroom drama genre could bring a political and social discourse to society. Thus, films that might intend to make a social comment via a representation of reality could motivate the formation of public opinion

(Bae Sang-Joon, 2013). However, many scholars and researchers worry about such film politics generated by public opinion via social networks because of the representation's obvious boundary between fiction and reality (Bae Sang-Joon, 2013). Representing reality in film looks into the actuality of an event in intended perspectives. Thus, films could not only bring a positive political and social influence but also be exploited for a specific political purpose (Bae, Sang-Joon, 2013).

Indeed, many Korean films creating a realistic portrayal of specific historical events have gradually impacted on Korean society. However, with increasing influence, Korean films confront a threat from an invisible power. In the same way that military regimes regulated the film industry to control and exploit any political influence, invisible power exercised through Korean politics and the government has attempted to manipulate the Korean film.

Blacklist and Whitelist: Resurrection of Invisible Censorship.

Freedom of expression in South Korea is one of the important values that Korean constitutional law guarantees and pursues. Since the military regime ended in 1992, many Korean films could be politically free in their expression. This implies that any content unless provoking serious controversial social debate, can be used in film. After the advent of the civilian regime, a South Korean cultural industry developed and many Korean cultural products, including Korean films, have been exported to many countries. As a soft-power¹⁵, a Korean Wave (Hallyu), started in Taiwan in

¹⁵ Soft-power refers to the ability to forge attraction and the preferences of being voluntarily attracted.

1998, is spreading out to the world beyond Asian countries (Yim, Hak-Soon and Chae, Kyoung-Jin, 2014). Although many Korean culture products, such as Korean pop music, films, TV shows and drama, attract Asian countries without any support from the Korean government at the outset of the Korean Wave, the growing soft-power of Korean culture in the world is based on the freedom of expression secured by civilian regimes. Thus, it attracted the intent of promoting cultural industries. Furthermore, recognising the importance of soft-power related to national image-branding in the world encouraged Korean politicians and society towards creating a law to support and promote the country's cultural industry (You, Eung-Jo, 2014). 1% of the national budget for one year is secured for promoting cultural industry (Kim, Se-Hun, Lee, Jong-Yul and Son, Kyung-Nyun, 2003).

In 2016, Do Jong-Hwan, a politician from the Minjoo party, reported the existence of official documents listing people who work in the cultural industry (Kang, Jeong-Suk, 2017, MCST, 2018). According to his report, the documents - called a 'blacklist' - was written by the Ministry of Culture and Sports and contained the names of people who have different political thoughts and behaviours to the regimes' agenda. Interestingly, all names on the blacklist are people working in the cultural industry, including the film industry. In fact, there are two blacklists that were made in two different regimes: that of Lee Myoung-Bak and also of Park Geun-hye.

Thus, soft-power encourages people to think actively about certain culture, images, institutions and policies in terms of 'national interest' or 'national strategy' (Lee, Jin-Young, 2006)

In the context of censorship towards the politics of culture, it would be very interesting to know why these two conservative regimes, between 2008 and 2017, ordered such blacklists.

Between 2008 and 2012, Lee Myoung-Bak's regime sacked all main public officers and people who were suspected as left-wing and appointed people from his own party. In fact, when a regime changes, it is a natural decision to form a new cabinet. However, Lee's decision to form the ministries related to the cultural industry was an attempt to dismiss a previous regime's political legacy. In particular, in the investigation of blacklists during Lee's regime, it is thought that he issued orders to look into which film directors might have left-wing tendencies. Similarly, there is a list of films that could be perceived as demonstrating a left-wing leaning against the Lee regime's agenda (Kang, Jeong-Suk, 2017, MCST, 2018). There are 82 people on the blacklist, including actors, writers, singers, film directors and so on. Among the 82, there are 52 film directors on the list. Likewise, Park Geun-hye's regime, between 2013 and 2016, ordered a new blacklist for the purpose of regulating and watching politically left-leaning individuals. Unlike Lee's regime, Park's regime has longer lists, including 9,473 people. In particular, Park's blacklist updates each time someone speaks out with a political voice regarding sensitive events that could influence Park's approval rating. In her blacklist, there are more than 5,000 people who work in the cultural industry, including the film industry. Interestingly, Lee's regime tended to focus only on those working in the film industry, but Park's blacklist shows more concentration on the entire cultural industry (Kim, Hye-Young, 2016).

There are 15 films on both regimes' blacklists. These films were reported and mentioned in many documents from Chung-WaDae (Korean presidential house), the National Intelligence Service and Korean Cultural centres in other countries, due to political threats towards their agenda. According to an investigation of blacklists (2018), these 15 films were analysed and evaluated in several valuation bases related to the regimes' political disposition and agenda. *The Host* (2006), which tells the story of a monster accidentally created by illegal chemical waste from the USA army staying in Korea, was listed because it portrays a government failing and could encourage an anti-American movement. Furthermore, this film could influence Koreans to a left-wing stance. These blacklists, issued by conservative regimes, prove that Lee and Park's regimes seem to worry about films that criticise conservative concerns derived from their party. Regarding *Joint Security Area* (2000) and *The Berlin File* (2012), blacklists revealed that these two films pose a problem to friendly and positively depict North Korea and North Koreans. In fact, both films describe a tragic situation throughout the military conflict between the two different Koreas. Beyond North and South Korea's complicated politics, each film depicts the characters' friendship and sacrifice, thinking about one reunited Korea.

Interestingly, the evaluations of the two films are very similar to an appraisal of *7 Female Prisoners* (1965), which also portrays North Korean soldiers as friendly characters. The director of *7 Female Prisoners*, thus, had to be prosecuted for violating the National Security Law in 1965 (Park, Yu Hee, 2012). Likewise, the blacklist reveals that describing friendly North Korea or North Koreans in film could encourage audiences to the political left-wing. *Public Enemy* (2002), *Memories of Murder* (2003) and *The Crucible* (2011) were listed due to their negative depiction of

governmental authority. According to the blacklist valuations regarding the three films, they describe corrupt or incompetent police officers and could promote a negative image of the police organisation, including governmental authority. When *Memories of Murder* and *The Crucible* were released, the films brought about a positive social movement, asking for a reform of laws to make a better society. However, the blacklist shows that Lee and Park's regime viewed these social changes negatively as civil movements emanating from films. Indeed, Park's regime seems to worry about civil movements: *Snow Pierce* (2013) encourages the resistance movement. This proves the blacklists reveal the entrenched political stance of two conservative regimes towards cultural creativity.

In addition to these films dealing with free expression and subjects such as North Korea, the governmental authority or social issues, the blacklists compiled by the two conservative regimes seem to include more private political intention, and they have broadly affected the Korean film industry. *Masquerade* (2012) was listed because the film might have described a former president, Noh Moo-Hyun, who committed suicide as a result of a scandal around his family and people in his cabinet. Although this film occupies 'historical genre' to depict a substitute person to act like a king, who dreamt of a fair world regardless of class, the blacklist evaluation was that the character of the counterfeit king represents Noh Moo-Hyun. Furthermore, this film indirectly supports a candidate, Moon Jae-In, who was one of Noh's right-hand men, from the left-wing party, MinJoo. In fact, the death of former president Noh Moo-Hyun is still controversial because the media and others suspect that his death was the result of a political vendetta to get rid of the previous regime's achievements. After his suicide, Lee and Park's regimes might bear heavy pressure through the criticism

they receive. Thus, they fear people missing the former president, having watched *Masquerade*. However, interestingly, *The Attorney* (2013), covering Noh Moo-Hyun's life when he was a lawyer, was released in 2013. Park's regime listed this film on their blacklist due to its political bias. More than 10 million Koreans watched this film at the cinema and its success was thought to lead people to a left-wing political stance as a result.

The rest of films on the blacklist are *The President's Barber* (2004), *May 18* (2007), *Unbowed* (2011), *26 Years* (2012), and *Namyeong-dong1985* (2012). Commonly, these films dealt with the violation and oppression of governmental authority. Excepting *Unbowed*, all films are based on the period of pressure through military regimes. These films criticise how, during such periods, governmental authority violated South Korea's democratisation, pressurising individuals' freedom. Thus, the blacklists illustrate that these films distort the image of governmental authority, creating a negative image and politically influencing people. These perspectives of blacklists imply that they will not make films as criticism. Moreover, Lee and Park's regimes seem to view the freedom of expression as instigating various opinions and thoughts as a threat to their political status. Thus, the blacklists made by the Ministry of Culture and Sport from the two regimes comprise a detailed and concrete practice to censor the film industry. In fact, these blacklists were politically engendered to regulate the Korean film industry.

CJ is one of the biggest organisations conducting considerable cultural business in Korea, owning a cinema chain, film production, film distribution and cable broadcasting companies and so on. During the Park Geun-Hye regime, unlike other

previous regimes, there were many rumours that the government pressurised CJ to regulate their content related to filmmaking, TV shows and distribution. In particular, Lee Mi-Kyoung, a vice-chairman of CJ, was placed in the LA branch under government pressure. Thus, rumours about Lee Mi-Kyoung were that she ran away from surveillance and pressure from the government. According to the rumours, Park's regime disliked several films, and TV shows that CJ produced and distributed because they appeared to criticise Park Geun-hye's presidency. In particular, when Park Geun-hye was a candidate at the campaign for the presidency election, Korea's version of Saturday Night Live (SNL) satirised her character and her party via a parody of Teletubbies characters (Kim, Bong-Ki, 2017, Kang, Jung-Suk, 2017). After she became a president, the rumours abounded that she hated such representation making fun of her in SNL. Interestingly, during Park Geun-hye's regime, SNL's main producer and writers were changed and the show stopped showing political satire. Furthermore, Lee Mi-Kyoung visited Los Angeles at around the same time (Kim, Bong-Ki, 2017).

In 2016, the owner of CJ corporation, Son, Gyoung-Sik, was summoned as a witness for the investigation into the influence-peddling scandal of Park Geun-hye's regime (Park, Bo-Hee, 2018). The influence-peddling scandal is a very important historical event in Korean history because it exposed the truth and this caused a candle-lit revolution to protest about the corruption of Park's regime (Lee, Won-Jae, 2017). Millions of Koreans went out to protest for almost 4 months and achieved a democracy via this revolution, impeaching Park Geun-hye. During the hearing, Son

Gyoung-sik testified that there was pressure from the government from VIP¹⁶ in Chung-Wa-Dae (Park, Bo-Hee, 2018). He stated that Lee Mi-Kyoung, who is his niece, should stay away from Park's regime in the hearing. This shows how government authorities can control even a private company in a liberal market.

CJ produced and distributed many films which ended up on the blacklists, such as *Joint Security Area* (2000), *Public Enemy* (2002), *Memories of Murder* (2003), *The Crucible* (2011), *Snow Piercer* (2013), *Masquerade* (2012), *The Berlin File* (2012) and *The Attorney* (2013). According to the NIS report, CJ is a very left-leaning production and entertainment company. It produced and distributed many films and content highlighting friendly North Korea and sensitive political events, like the life of President Noh Moo-Hyun. After the huge success of *The Attorney*, Chung-Wa-Dae scolded Mo Chul-Min, who was the officer to be in charge of the blacklist, for the Ministry of Culture and Sport invested in this film. Because of this specific funding, Chung-Wa-Dae ordered Mo Chul-Min and the secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Sport to take countermeasures to regulate CJ and to reform the investment policy to promote the Korean film industry (MCST, 2018). As a consequence of this government order, the Korean Film Council had to follow various countermeasures planned by the Ministry of Culture and Sport.

Examining the CJ case is very interesting because it includes not only all aspects of the blacklist but also the existence of a white list, comprised of those people and films that fulfilled the government's agenda. According to the investigation of the

¹⁶ VIP means the president in Korea. Son Gyoung-Sik used this word instead of Dae-Tong-Ryeong: it literally means a president.

blacklist, the Korean Film Council and the Ministry of Culture and Sport made a policy and plan to promote healthy films. The concept of healthy films, suggested by Park Geun-hye's regime, is very similar to those of Park Chung-Hee's regime. It is possible that Park Geun-hye's regime attempted to recover her father's policy towards the Korean film industry. After government pressure, CJ attempted to agree with the government agenda and political disposition, producing a film to flatter Park Chung-Hee's achievements and broadcasting propaganda films on their cable channels and in cinema chains. *Ode to my Father* (2014) is about the one man striving to make a better life during South Korea's modernisation and industrialisation. His life goes through the mobilised modernisation with fast economic development propelled by Park Chung-Hee's policy. This film reveals nostalgia through the values of the fast economic development and shows the sweat and sacrifice of people who worked together for such values. Furthermore, the backdrop to the film is Kukje Market in Busan; Park Chung-Hee and Park Geun-hye's political hometown. Thus, this film produced by CJ depicts a positive image of Park Geun-hye's regime with a halo effect from Park Chung-Hee. It can be viewed as a healthy film promoted by Park's regime because it fulfils the necessary requirements as a patriotic film enhancing Korean pride. While this film was released in CJ cinema chains, Park Geun-hye watched it with people in her cabinet. This might have been intended political behaviour. With her interest in this film, 10 million Koreans watched it at the cinema.

After Park Geun-hye became president, CJ had produced and distributed several patriotic films called 'KuKBBong' films, which literally means a film like heroin to promote patriotism and stopped showing controversial films that the regime might not like. Likewise, CJ produced a series of propaganda films to publicise a national policy

to promote a soft-power of culture. This is called ChangJo Economy, meaning the creative economy in the culture industry. Park's policies to promote soft-power, called creative economy, were publicised in cinema chains and on cable TV owned by CJ in Lee Mi-Kyong's absence in Korea (Han, Gwang-Beom, 2016). This situation is very similar to the effect the military regime had on the Korean film industry, although showing propaganda films before a mainstream movie was mandatory by law. CJ may have had to show loyalty to Park's regime to maintain their business. Thus, the company's sudden changed attitudes were caused by government pressure.

Indeed, there are some films that coincide with a healthy film on the white list. Unlike people and films on the blacklist, some films received aid and funding from the Korean Film Council (KFC) through the examination of their support programme. In particular, it has been established that there were unfair examinations in the process of selecting projects for film-making for a support programme. KFC confessed that they excluded many films dealing with social-political issues and contents and selected films that would suit the patriotic subjects the government pursued (MCST, 2018, Sung, Ha-Hoon, 2018). Many experimental independent film projects, dealing with social issues, were excluded in this programme. For example, *Pandora* (2016), which is a story about problems with a nuclear power plant, was excluded, but *Sa-Sun-E-Seo* (2016), about a man who tries to escape from North Korea received 98% of the total production cost (approximately 45 million dollars) from the government (MCST, 2018). According to Kim, Eo-Jun (Kim, Sang-Min, 2017, MCST, 2018), when KOFIC selects a film project in a support programme, they usually check how each film project secured its private investor or company funding. Unusually, this film won huge support from the government. Interestingly, *Sa-Sun-E-Seo* cannot release

after exposing this whitelist and impeachment of Park Geun-hye. As healthy and patriotic films, *Northern Limit Line* (2015) and *Operation Chromite* (2016) are on the whitelist. *Northern Limit Line* is based on the true tragedy of a naval battle with North Korea which occurred around Yonpyeong Island in 2002. While the sunlight policy from a left-leaning party and President Kim Dae-Jung made a peaceful ambience between the two Koreas, this Yonpyeong naval battle occurred. Many in the Korean navy died in the battle, and right-leaning people criticised the sunlight policy, blaming the radical agenda towards North Korea. Thus, this film is basically an anti-communism movie, hostile to North Korea, inducing patriotism.

Likewise, *Operation Chromite* is a film based on a true event: the Korean war between 1950 and 1953. In particular, this film deals with the battle of Incheon, Operation Chromite, by General Douglas MacArthur. This operation provided very significant historical momentum in the Korean war, because through this, the South Korean and UN army could change the situation of the war from North Korea. Before this operation, South Korea was almost occupied by North Korea, leaving only Busan, which is the second biggest city in Korea. Hence, Operation Chromite is of great significance in Korean history, revealing patriotism against North Korea. Because of the subject of hostility towards North Korea, these two films could receive huge investment and funding from the government as *Sa-Sun-E-Seo*. This whitelist shows how the government selects the films that suit their political purpose and agenda via exploiting the support programme to promote the film industry. Indeed, many films dealing with a true event may have the potential to bring about social change, attracting audiences to their message. Park's regime has already recognised the potential of film politics. Thus, interestingly, her regime attempted to take advantage

of film politics to fuel their real politics, supporting films suiting their political disposition via their administrative power. Likewise, CJ case amply illustrates how the government manipulates a private company to achieve its political purpose, applying pressure to show a propaganda film. Echoing what her father, Park Chung-hee, did for a dictatorship regime, Park Geun-hye's regime attempted to control the film industry via the blacklist and white list as a new 21st-century censorship.

According to interviews with film directors, producers and actors who were on the blacklist, they could not work in the film industry until Park Geun-hye's impeachment. Song Gang-ho, who acts in *The Attorney*, *Memories of Murder*, *Snow Piercer*, *The Host*, and *Joint Security Area*, said most films in which he was willing to take part were cancelled through Park's regime (MCST, 2018). Indeed, he did not star in any films during this period. Although this blacklist regulated the Korean film industry, there had been many efforts to expose social issues via film-making. *The Truth Shall Not Sink* (2014), *Pandora* (2016) and *Criminal Conspiracy* (2017) could be produced via private funding from individuals and civil organisations. *The Truth Shall Not Sink* tells the story of a secret absence of 7 hours about what Park Geun-hye did not show her feature to the public when many high-school students were dying as Sewol ship was sinking. This There was an attempt to release the film in cinema chains and Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) but it could not secure screens to show it to the public. Furthermore, Busan's city mayor pressurised BIFF to exclude this film from its screening programme. With the blacklist scandal, it is thought that the government attempted to sabotage this film for release in the Korean film industry (Choi, Hyuck-Kyu, 2016, Park, Ggot, 2018). *Criminal Conspiracy*, dealing with media control, especially MBC during Lee's regime, was excluded from the support

programme from KOFIC. Likewise, this film could not secure screenings, so the film director decided to employ Youtube to show this film to the public. Politically, these films were sabotaged to meet their audiences in the Korean film industry. However, many Korean citizens and organisations strived to find a new channel to share these films with audiences and to report social issues against two conservative regimes. Politically, these films revealed the faces of corrupt regimes.

These cases of blacklist and whitelist show how the Korean film industry was politically regulated by the power of government. In terms of filmmaking, several regimes attempted to manipulate the Korean film industry for their political exploits. In particular, they got involved in the process of filmmaking. This proves that the meaning of filmmaking in Korea cannot be fully explained away from politics. Of course, there have been many films that do not entail political and social matters: however, many successful films in the Korean film industry tend to include such matters in various ways. Audiences might have a different expectation of Korean films, unlike other foreign films, especially Hollywood films. Indeed, Korean audiences have a preference for a specific genre in Korean films. This will be dealt with in the next chapter to ascertain what kinds of Korean films could succeed in Korea, in comparison with foreign films. Although film does not need to be political, the environment of filmmaking in Korea is very political (Park, Jong-Sung, 2008). In fact, beyond debates about the politics of filmmaking via representation and restoration between reality and fiction, filmmaking in Korea could be a vehicle for political purposes.

Chapter Two. Economic Particularity of the Korean Film Industry

The previous chapter looked at politics surrounding the Korean film industry. In order to further understand the meaning of filmmaking in Korea, there must be an explanation of the economic perspectives or particularity of its film industry. This is because filmmaking cannot separate itself from capital. Since the end of military regimes in early 1990s, the Korean film industry has come to be dominated by five major companies. The organizational infrastructure is vertically-integrated. Outwardly, this monopoly structure would seem to mitigate against the development of a more progressive cinema - reliant as it is on big budget film. However, this study reveals how some of genres of mainstream cinema are open to 'queer reading' – subject of next chapter. Surprisingly, queer filmmaking has emerged in a different business infrastructure – as a part of the independent film festival circuit and through an alternative online platform and through crowdfunding.

According to Hozic (2001), there are two different perspectives: on the one hand, many economists look at the film industry in their economic model, ignoring cultural and social perspectives. On the other hand, film researchers tend not to consider economic perspectives as a consumer culture. In order to understand the film industry, these two different perspectives have to be considered at the same time. The previous chapter discussed the political perspectives in the Korean film industry. This section will look into its economic perspectives and particularity.

In terms of the filmmaking, it might be important to explore what types of films attract moviegoers because films need to make a profit, although there might be some that have their own political purpose, regardless of making money. Examining what genre films succeed can economically explain a strategy and tactic around filmmaking in the market. Indeed, the Korean film industry tends to follow a trend to produce a specific genre film in a certain period for several reasons, such as the fact that the structure of the industry is dominated by several big companies. Obviously, this is also related to moviegoers' genre preference in terms of consumer behaviour. Thus, considering the genre might influence filmmaking. In addition, filmmaking covering queer subjects in Korea might not be free from economic particularities in the Korean film industry because of its specific subject; a sexual minority. When considering securing a budget for filmmaking, queer filmmaking might have to find a new way or new channel to show films. Obviously, they are not related to the mainstream film market but more to the independent film market or online platform. Thus, this chapter will have a look at both economic perspectives in the Korean mainstream film market and the independent film world.

1. The Structure of the Korean Film Industry

In the mid-1990s, when relocating the film industry from a service industry to the manufacturing industry, the advance of big manufacturing companies brought a big change to the business (LeeTaeKyu, 2006). This enabled big Korean manufacturing companies (called *Chaebol*) to enter the Korean film industry market. Before large companies, such as Samsung, SK and DaeWoo, entered the market, the Korean film industry could only secure budgets from individual investors or profits from importing

foreign films (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). However, since the mid-1990s, huge capital flowed into the Korean film industry with the help of such companies. Hollywood's production system and vertical integration system are very attractive to Korean manufacturing companies. Their way of producing components or products via a division of each production line is very similar to film production, and the Hollywood system's efficiency is already proven on a world-wide scale. For example, as films are produced through the division of teams of production, direction, lighting and filming, manufacturing companies kept applying their production practice to the film production process. Their films could be distributed through the channels they already owned. In particular, when the Lotte company, one of the biggest companies in Korea owning many department stores, entered the Korean film market, they just remodelled small areas of their department stores to make multiplex theatres (Choi, Young-Jun & Kim, Mee-Hyun, 2013).

Unlike the first advance of manufacturing companies in the early 1990s, the current big distributors (apart from CJ and Orion companies, which were vertically integrated) that embrace film production have focused on expanding their distribution channels to make a profit directly from audiences (Choi, Young-Jun & Kim, Mee-hyun, 2013). It was an efficient strategy not to compete directly with Hollywood distributors because they could exploit Hollywood movies to make a profit as a 'cash cow' (Won, Seung-Hwan, 2012). CJ and Orion companies owned their own film cable channels and systematically prepared to vertically integrated film production, distribution, marketing and sales. Although they did not produce Korean films during the 1990s, they had inherited experience from Samsung and Daewoo, which withdrew from the Korean film market in 1997. Beyond cooperating with Hollywood films

through their theatre chains, they attempted to participate in Korean film production to increase their already huge profits. As a result, this vertical integration system has contributed to the expansion of the Korean film market as well as enabling the production of Korean blockbuster movies.¹⁷ In other words, this economy of scale in the Korean film market has enabled Korean production companies to have the competitive power to produce big-budget films, increasing the quality of films and attracting Korean audience's interest towards home-grown films. The success of *Shiri* (1998), the first Korean blockbuster movie, introduced new possibilities and opportunities to produce Korean blockbuster movies and it changed the Korean film industry structure (Yoon, Sunny, 2004). After its success, due to a wide distribution strategy, Korean blockbuster films and similar strategy impacted the Korean film market and changed its production environment (Yoon, Sunny, 2004). Firstly, regarding the production stage, it led to an increase in the overall production budget. Secondly, the Korean apprenticeship production system was dissolved, and the Hollywood production system, such as the contract system with a division of labour, was adopted. Lastly, with the spread of the multiplex cinemas, several big companies handled the distribution system (Yoon, Sunny, 2004).

Since 1998, the Korean film market's share of domestic films is about 50 %, and it is emblematic means for world film industry except for China and India, which have strong regulations for the protection of domestic culture; for example, censoring

¹⁷ Korean blockbuster movies adopted the idea of the Hollywood blockbuster, such as big budgets, big stars, wide screening, wide distribution and so on. However, although Korean blockbuster movies borrowed the idea of the Hollywood blockbuster, based on the Korean context, they have Korean content in terms of the locality and de-westernisation (Berry, 2003). Furthermore, the advent of the Korean blockbuster movie could be explained by nationalism because behind the success of Korean blockbuster movies there were many media reports comparing them with Hollywood films by appealing to national homogeneity (Kim Seung-Kyung, 2005).

Hollywood imperialism (Lee, Gyo-Rye, Choi, Jin-Wook & Kim, Jeong-Soo, 2006). Hollywood had already predicted and watched the potential growth of the Korean film market and the USA suggested cutting the screen quota of domestic films. Cutting the quota was one of the demands put forward by the United States for the successful conclusion of the Korea-USA free trade agreement (Backe, 2012). In light of the FTA, the Korean government cut the minimum screening days of Korean films from 146 days to 73 days a year and the newly adjusted screen quota took effect in July 2006 (Lee, Tae-Kyu, 2006).

2006 was a significant year for the Korean film industry as the market developed in quality and quantity. There were several controversial issues and analyses: reduction of screen quota, oversea sales decline, the rise of marketing budget, high-risk investment for the absence of systematic accounting system and wide screening problems caused by giant distributors (KOFIC, 2008b; LeeTaeKyu, 2008).

The cutting of the screen quota affected the continuous reduction of the Korean market share between 2005 and 2008, because it was already reported that average Korean films screening day would reduce to 0.336 day a year when 1 day of screen quota a year is cut (KOFIC, 2008b). Cutting screen quotas from 146 days to 73 days is predicted to reduce an average of 13.9 days of the Korean film screening. As it is, cutting the screen quota affected the Korean film market for 1 or 2 years. It is shown that between 2006 and 2008 there was an increase in the number of foreign films that were released and imported (KOFIC, 2014). Cutting screening quotas and the advent

of IPTV¹⁸ have promoted imports of various films from other countries and enabled many small distribution companies to import many diverse movies (KOFIC, 2013). The increase in the amount of foreign films released was an inevitable outcome of cutting the screen quota, and since 2006, has gradually decreased the Korean market share.

The reduction of screen quota might be the natural adjusted period to cut down poorer quality Korean films. Although a huge inflow of capital caused exponential growth in film productions, it also brought about a paucity of good quality films at the same time (KOFIC, 2007). As the specific genre films, such as Korean gangster comedy or sex comedy films, attracted many audiences before 2006, many similar genre movies were financially backed and introduced almost every year. In spite of the low quality of the films, some of them were consumed and guaranteed profits before 2006 (Cine21, 2009). However, these similar genre movies did not attract audiences anymore, because people had grown tired of them, and most of the Korean gangster comedy films and similar genre films failed at the box office (Cine21, 2009).

Without any guarantee of profits, financial companies and private investors began to reduce their investment. Furthermore, investors had pointed out the problem of the absence of a systematic accounting system. Although funds via various channels, such as film production companies' KOSDAQ¹⁹ share trade, and funding from individual shareholders should be reported transparently in the process of production, it has been possible only to peruse data about investment, accounting, production budget, revenue

¹⁸ Internet Protocol television (IPTV) is a system through which television services are delivered using the Internet protocol suite over a packet-switched network, such as a LAN or the Internet.

¹⁹ Korean Securities Dealers Automated Quotations

distribution and so on (YounHa, ChoiInKuk, 2011). This chronic problem, in which cash flow still cannot be traced, leaves the Korean film market as a high-risk industry (Youn, Ha and Choi, InKuk, 2011).

In contrast to the quantitative growth and rise of market share, the ratio of return on investment in 2006 recorded minus 24.5%, because only 20% of total Korean films released in 2006 broke even and two movies, *The King and The Clowns* (2005) and *The Host* (2006) attracted audiences of more than 25 million in the market (KOFIC, 2006). As a result, it was found that a few Korean films led to the growth of the market share and most of them failed at the box office. This data showed that the film market is a high-risk industry and has also brought about reduced investment (Youn, Ha and Choi, InKuk, 2011)

Ranking	Distributor	Screening	Audiences	Market Share
1	CJ Entertainment	42	45387675	21.40%
2	Next Entertainment	21	39004580	18.40%
3	Lotte Entertainment	36.5	31570243	14.90%
4	Show Box	13	29168805	13.70%
5	Sony Pictures	18	20166825	9.50%
6	WamerBrothers Pictures Korea	8	14910181	7.00%
7	Universal Pictures Korea	13	10351396	4.90%
8	20Century Fox Korea	13	8450158	4.00%
9	ILove Cinema	1	3118847	1.50%
10	Cinus Entertainment	15.5	1817233	0.90%
	The Others	816	8384548	3.90%
		997	212330491	100.00%

Table 1. Distributors Market Share in 2014.²⁰

The monopoly is dominated by only five big distributors in theatre chains and in order to recover the initial investment, most Korean films had to focus on increasing

²⁰ KOFIC (2014). The Korean Film Industry Analysis in 2013. Korean Film Council.

their marketing budget (KOFIC, 2006, YounHa, ChoiInKuk, 2011). To recover their initial investment, most distributors usually release their movies widely in their theatre chains at the same time that they invest and produce. It affects the releasing schedule of other films that are not supported by big distributors. In other words, it demonstrates that the Korean film market could be controlled by only 5 big distributors.

Indeed, only a few big monopoly distribution companies occupy most theatre chains (KOFIC, 2006; Youn, Ha & Choi, In-Kuk, 2011). In addition, these monopoly and oligopoly problems are still closely related to the screen quota issue. The five biggest distributors held more than 95% of the market for home-grown films in the first half of the year (Korea Herald, 2012). They usually hold more than the allotted days of screen quota in order to release the films in the chain in which they invest and produce, so the screen quota is exploited to maintain their monopoly (Lee, Tae-Kyu, 2006). In this monopolised market, small-budget films or independent art films cannot use the screen quota benefits anymore and seldom get an audience in any theatre. Although the Korean film market cannot compete with the financial ability and scale of Hollywood, by imitating Hollywood, a few vertically-integrated companies that also own production and distribution companies are able to produce Korean blockbusters suited to Korean tastes and interests. This has gradually dominated the Korean film industry (Yoon, Sunny, 2004). Adopting and imitating the Hollywood system is bringing a substantial expansion of the Korean film market, and it is an inevitable choice to challenge Hollywood.

Interestingly, the structure of this vertically integrated system is very similar to how Korean *Chaebol* companies integrate their subsidiary companies in their managing structure (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). Since the Asian economic crisis, economic reform via the structural regulation of *Chaebol* companies failed. Under this *Chaebol* system with neoliberalism, huge economic resources and budgets have been focused on the few *Chaebol* companies. Many big manufacturing companies have expanded their influence on other industries. In particular, in the distribution industry, big companies like CJ have dominated all channels with their capital power. Likewise, these big companies entering the Korean film industry have made a high market entry barrier for distribution channels and cinema chains (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). They have built multiplex cinema chains through their capital power and controlled the distribution of films, increasing their market share. Furthermore, they have joined filmmaking by using profits made by their distribution and cinema chains.

Unlike Hollywood, the Korean film industry used to make an only profit in their cinema chains. In the case of the USA market, Hollywood can make a profit from other valued copyright marketing, such as DVD, broadcasting and exporting, despite films being unsuccessful at the box office. However, the Korean film market tends to depend only on box office ticket power although many Korean films find new channels and platforms, such as IPTV or Netflix to make profits (Choi, Young-Jun, Choi, Soo-Young, Ban, Hyun-Jeong, Seo, Young-Kwan, and Jung, Heon-Il, 2007). Since 2007, many major Korean film production companies and distribution companies have attempted to export their films to the foreign market, but basically, the Korean film industry makes most of its profit in the local market. According to Ban Hyun-

Jung (2008), major distribution companies with cinema chains in their vertical integration system have created this earning structure.

In addition, there has been an issue related to the investment system since the 1990s. Before big Korean companies entered the Korean film industry, there was no concept to define the investment in filmmaking, even including a concept of distributors (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). There were only distribution networks to connect local cinema chains (Choi, Yong-Bae, 2003). However, after the USA distributors entered the Korean film market to directly distribute their films, several local distribution companies were established, integrating local networks, which were local cinemas. Before the 1990s, Korean films should independently have a contract with the cinema owners. Likewise, some companies with a licence to import foreign films should have a contract with local cinema owners. Thus, the advent of distributors rapidly changed the Korean film industry. In particular, big companies' interest in cinema chains and distribution also brought about a modern investment system to maximise profits, attempting to take an active role in filmmaking. When films were produced before the 1990s, they usually secured production costs as investments from owners of local cinemas. However, most profits usually belonged to individual investors who had cinemas. After big companies entered the film market, these distributors and companies could use their profits to reinvest in film productions. This influenced the establishment of a modern investment system and meant the Korean film market became industrialised in this systematic change (Choi, Yong-Bae, 2003).

In the vertical integrating system, big companies have started to dominate the market, unifying distribution and investment system since 1995. In particular, the concept of full investment in filmmaking occurred at this time, and big companies could own all film rights. As they sign an exclusive contract with many film production companies, they invest 100% of production costs (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). This is called the Main Investment System in Korea, which literally means an exclusive investment system controlled in the vertical integrating-unifying system. In this main investment system, big companies entrust the filmmaking film to production companies and can take 60-80% profit from the total film revenue (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). In fact, this investment structure seems unfair to film production companies. However, the *Chaebols* give 20-40% of the stake money although they invest total production costs and have all exclusive rights. Samsung introduced this system, and other big companies have adopted it based on their cinema chains. The main investment system in the Korean film industry is a basic and common investment and production system for filmmaking. Based on this, various investment types were introduced in the mainstream film industry, recruiting individual investors or issuing investment stocks in financial banks (Lee, Tae-Kyu , 2006)

In the 1990s, the participation of big companies in the Korean film industry obviously brought many changes to film production. Many talented people could enter the film market, and many universities opened film production departments. There were only 17 universities to have a film department, but there are now more than 40 universities to run a film department. When big companies decided to enter the film market, many film production companies in Chung-Mu-Ro did not welcome them because they already had a strong connection with owners of local cinemas and

worried about an inflow of huge capital (Ahn, Ji-Hye, 2004). However, after the USA's direct distribution, they gradually started to embrace big companies' financial input because they thought local capital might be better than foreign money (Kim, Hak-Su, 2002). Furthermore, Hollywood kids²¹ who were influenced by Hollywood films welcomed this huge change because they expected to produce films in a systematic way, like Hollywood. Likewise, this could be a huge opportunity for them to produce films if they had excellent ideas and technique but not enough money (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). Thus, young film producers and directors could conduct experimental trials, unlike filmmaking in a previous production system. Indeed, various professional business models and strategies, such as marketing, were applied to the Korean film industry. This implies that the Korean film market was industrialised in a professional way, such as in the manufacturing process. Many famous film production companies, such as Sin-Cine, Myeong Film, Uno-Film, and Cinema Service were established in this period, leading a renaissance in the Korean film industry. These film production companies were based on the producer system to be mainly responsible for management and budget. If there are a workable scenario and idea, producers in film production companies usually make a plan to produce a film, managing the investment. This implies that the role of a producer is very important because a lot of money emanates from large companies. At first, the investing companies did not know about the filmmaking process. This enabled film production companies to take control to make the films.

²¹ Hollywood kids mean a generation or group that yearned for Hollywood's production system and environment. This word was firstly introduced in the film, *Life of Hollywood Kid* (1994) in Korea.

In the early 2000s, big companies gradually started to become involved in the process, especially in the pre-production stage. In particular, big companies complained about the lack of clarity in accounting and the management of their investment. Although the production companies innovated the filmmaking process in a professional and specialised way, managing budgets equivocally, they did not adopt a professional accounting system. This caused distrust between the two parties. Consequently, as main investors, big companies could take most of the control in filmmaking, becoming involved in budget management and accounting. Many individual investors and financial companies have started to rely on these big companies, in terms of risk management, to secure profit because it might be much safer to make a contract with big companies (*Chebol*) than with film production companies. This implies that roles traditionally taken by production companies, like film planning, production and management, could be controlled by the big companies' capital power.

Since the mid-2000s, the Korean film industry should face a rapid change of platform to show films. Many other big companies, such as KT and SKT, that own telecommunication business, entered the film market and started a business to create content for their new platforms, like IPTV and digital mobile broadcasting (Ban, Hyun-Jung, 2008). Although huge capital investment from big companies leads to an exponential growth in the film, many film production companies in Korea have been dependent on their capital and seem to lose independent autonomy. There are still many efforts to be independent from the power of capital: however, the Korean film industry is already caught in the power of capital from several big companies.

In this mainstream market situation dominated by five large companies, Korean queer films have had to find a way to attract audiences. KimJho-GwangSoo, a queer film director and producer in Korea, established the film production company 'Rainbow Factory', for the purposes of queer filmmaking only, in 2012. He was already a very successful film producer running a production company before he openly came out in 2006. According to his interview (KimJho-GwangSoo and Kim, Do-Hye, 2012), he first started to work in the independent film world after a student movement and he has been interested in making indie-films to criticise social problems. After his experiences in the indie film world, he has produced many mainstream films, such as *Happy End* (1999), invited by the Cannes Film Festival. Although he moved to the mainstream film industry, he has still financially helped film directors in the indie film world. In particular, he organised a queer filmmaking project and helped several film directors, such as LeeSong-HeIl, to debut in the Korean film industry.

After he moved to the mainstream film market, KimJho-GwangSoo criticised the vertically-integrated mainstream film market because low budget and indie-films have no chance of finding audiences in cinema chains. Furthermore, they cannot secure anything like the marketing budget of the five big companies. He said this market situation mitigates against the development of a progressive cinema. Thus, he has kept putting his efforts into producing indie and low-budget films in the Korean film industry (KimJho-GwangSoo and Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). After *No Regret* (2006), a queer film that he produced, he decided to come out and he has begun to produce queer films in the Korean film industry. LeeSong-HeIl won the award for the best indie film director with *No Regret* in several Korean film festivals. Surprisingly, this

film attracted significant attention from Korean moviegoers and made enough profit to cover the production costs. According to him (KimJho-GwangSoo and Kim, Do-Hye, 2012), he saw the possibilities of queer films in the Korean film industry without less help of the five big companies. This led him to encourage queer filmmaking and establish a film production and distribution company solely for queer films. Like KimJho-GwangSoo, there are many efforts to find various ways to produce and distribute progressive films against the mainstream film market dominated by big companies.

2. The Korean Independent Film World: A Reality of Queer Filmmaking

Queer filmmaking seems to mainly occur in the independent film world (KimJho-GwangSoo and Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). Due to the political purpose or financial lack such as raising a production cost for queer filmmaking, there might be some difficulties to produce queer films in the mainstream film market. Indeed, queer filmmaking in the Korean mainstream film market has many limitations. Thus, it has practised in the independent film world. Looking at Korean independent film world will provide a further understanding of filmmaking beyond the mainstream film market. From understanding the Korean indie-film world, this will also help to understand how queer filmmaking can be possible in the Korean film industry.

Korean independent films implying political criticism towards Korean society have an important role in the Korean film industry. They have contributed to providing various perspectives about Korean society and introduced film studies through indie film-making in the 1980s, as well as having produced many talented

filmmakers who are still working in the Korean film market (Kim, Jung-Hwan, 2013). Without the development of Korean independent films, it might not be possible to achieve a golden age of the Korean film industry because the expansion of the nation's film market also means more opportunity for investment in independent films (Kim, Jung-Hwan, 2013). However, although there was an expansion of the market in both mainstream films and independent films, it caused bias in the interest of audiences towards the mainstream and commercial films. As it is, the Korean film market structure was designed to make a profit, and it seldom provides the opportunity and channels for small-budget films or independent films to garner audiences.

In the Korean independent film world, the meaning of indie-film is related to a social movement (Kang, Sung Ryul, 2009). Many researchers who look into the Korean independent film world believe that indie-films always go with a democratic reformation and rationalisation in the Korean film world, via film movement with filmmakers. This implies that indie-filmmaking is a social-critical movement as a counter-movie movement. (Kim, Dae-Ho, 1989, Kim, So-Yeon, 2006). Indeed, in 1998, the Association of Korean Independent Film & Videos (AKIF) announced that the Korean independent film world would embrace more various experimental films and play films, documentary, alternative films and cinematheque and so on, inheriting the old tradition as a counter-film movement (Kim, Eun-Jung, 2017). The Korean indie world declared that they would refuse censorship and pursue a minimum budget in 1998. This implies that the Korean indie world has strived to keep its independent identity from mainstream commercial films. According to Kim, Eun-Jung (2017), indie filmmaking tends to focus on political movement. In fact, it might be difficult to define a clear boundary regarding which films could be more independent and secure

autonomy, keeping their identity. To explain this question, Kim, Eun-Jung (2017) observes Bourdieu's theory on the field of cultural production. She explains that the Korean indie world fulfils conditions of the field of cultural production because they produce cultural products and a cultural-political field to struggle with interior or exterior agents (2017). Agents' social positions are located in this field and formed in the interactions between the specific norms or rules of their field (Bourdieu, 1993). Here, the field means the independent film world in Korea, and agents are various people and organisations involved in indie-filmmaking and the indie-market, including government organisations. However, this field is built and run in the economy of cultural commodities and aesthetical theories of culture (Bourdieu, 1993). Although indie films do not require specific knowledge or theories for filmmaking, in order to criticise mainstream society, they require critical thinking concerning cultural, political and social knowledge (Kim, Eun-Jung, 2017). In fact, Bourdieu's theory about the field of cultural production focuses on the relation between art and the capital of a market economy and looks at how the autonomy of art could secure its independence from this market economy.

In terms of securing capital and enough screens to show their films, holding indie-film festivals and establishing an aesthetical system, there have been various struggles in the field. When the Korean independent world declared to refuse censorship, restrict a capital power, and retain independence from conventional filmmaking and political power from the government, their rules already define their identity. Although these rules seem to be impossible to practice in the real world, the Korean indie world strives to keep these rules, struggling to find how to reduce dependence on capital, how to make a new indie cinema chain, such as an art house, and how to

improve their production system. These attempts and trials are particularly related to economically secure autonomy in the field. Indie-films struggle to maintain their identity. Thus, indie-filmmaking in Korea is a political and economic practice, distanced from power to regulate their autonomy.

The Korean indie film world is not fully independent to maintain its autonomy from political and economic power because there are many difficulties in producing such films and in screening them in a film market. In particular, many such films still depend on financial support from the government-run Korean Film Council (KOFIC). Most policies to support and regulate the film industry in Korea are controlled by the KOFIC. Since 1998, KOFIC has financially supported the Korean indie world and also provided various rental services for film production equipment. These supporting programmes enabled the indie world's exponential growth in a qualitative and quantitative aspect. Unlike AKIF, the meaning of the independent film in KOFIC is very broad but ambiguous. KOFIC defines the independent film as a not-mainstream film, like diverse films and experimental films: it tends to ignore short-films and films made by individuals and students because their policies and standards to support indie-filmmaking are very unclear. In details of supporting the programme and examining indie films, the KOFIC believes that they should provide a different visual experience and different subjects to mainstream films as diverse films, to expand cultural diversity. The KOFIC recognises that indie films might be high-risk and not attract many ticket sales: this situation cannot secure a marketing budget in the film industry. These criteria to examine indie films in the KOFIC imply that indie filmmaking cannot escape from economic autonomy from capital power. Thus, the KOFIC might have the possibility of practising their capital power to regulate the

Korean indie film world. Indeed, the Korean indie film world has already criticised the KOFIC for having the huge power to control such filmmaking. During the Park, Guen-Hye regime, the KOFIC reduced and terminated a budget to financially support indie filmmaking. According to the report to investigate the blacklist to regulate Korea's cultural industry (MCST, 2018), the Park's regime forced the KOFIC not to support indie films that could criticise Park's policies and agenda. During this investigation, the chairman of the KOFIC admitted that they purposely excluded many indie films in their financial support programme (Park, Ggot, 2018, MCST, 2018). For example, some documentary films covering the Sewol ferry disaster and media censorship were excluded by the KOFIC due to government pressure. The KOFIC intentionally reduced or terminated a budget to build an indie-film cinema chain. In order to do this, the Korean indie world needs political aid and capital from the government. Indeed, KOFIC attempted to reduce any opportunity for indie films to show their films in a specific channel during Park's regime. In spite of these obstructions by KOFIC and the government via capital power, the Korean indie world persists with its filmmaking. Indie producers have been looking for various ways to secure their production budget and to find a new channel to show their films, such as an online-streaming platform and film festivals. This can be seen as the struggle in the field of cultural production.

Interestingly, this is an ironic situation for the Korean indie film world because the Korean film industry has been developed with the development of the Korean indie film world. Although the Korean indie film world might be controlled or regulated by economic values, they attempt to find ways to maintain their identity as a counterpart of the mainstream film industry and help its development. The Korean indie world has

attempted to host various activities, such as holding indie film festivals, publishing indie-film journals and organising AKIF to encourage indie filmmaking. What they strive for is to keep their identity, autonomy and independence from political and economic power.

A queer film in Korea is usually regarded as a diversity film in KOFIC's criteria. Obviously, a Korean queer film does not fall into the mainstream film industry. Like other indie films, queer filmmaking in Korea faces the challenge of raising enough funds. Likewise, Korean queer films are experiencing a lack of distribution in the home market and direct prejudice against homosexuality in Korean society. Apart from their artistry and great acclaim, they receive limited viewing due to an absence of space in which to encounter and to communicate with audiences in the Korean film market. Although audiences could encounter queer films at art-houses or Korean-based international film festivals, the films first have to be examined under the pre-rating system in order to be released in Korea. However, most Korean queer films tend to acquire either a relatively low rating or are rejected. In this case, they cannot secure enough theatre chains and thus forfeit the opportunity to even recover their investment. However, they also attempt to secure a production budget, like crowd-funding, throughout individuals' voluntary financial investment and use new channels to show their films, such as online-platforms, in addition to a traditional screen in cinema chains. In the case of 99 Film, which was established as a queer film production company in 2013, its production costs were raised via crowd-funding and their films released on online platforms, such as NAVER N store and IPTV. *Beautiful* (2018) was released to a few screens at first, but they expanded to online-platforms. Unlike traditional marketing, 99 Films and other queer film production companies

tend to focus on using online platforms, such as Youtube, and portal sites to publicise their queer films (Lee, Min-Hyung, 2018). Indeed, many indie films are looking for new ways to maintain their independence and autonomy from capital power whilst still depending on funding from the KOFIC. Korean queer films are a very good example of how indie films or small films could keep reproducing in the Korean film industry. Indeed, queer films attempt to raise their money via crowdfunding and use this online marketing because of the sensitivity surrounding queer issues (KimJho-GwangSoo and Kim, Do-Hye, 2012).

Like this, queer films attempt to seek various platforms to show their movies. Furthermore, via these new platforms, queer films can also expand the market for queer filmmaking, attempting to move the art from the indie-film world to the mainstream film market. Although there are still many limitations and difficulties for queer filmmaking, Korean queer films have been overcoming economic limitations and regulations in the Korean film market.

3. Investigation of Popular Film Genre in the Korean Film Industry

In addition to looking at how queer films attempts to overcome economic limitations and regulations in the Korean film industry, exploring particularity of the Korean film industry in terms of genre is very useful for queer filmmaking: it could provide an insight to useful ways of dealing with queer matters via queer film production. Considering choosing a genre before queer film-making can be a good strategy and tactic to deliver the story or message in queer filmmaking, according to the purpose and intention. For example, in a comedy genre, a queer film could intend

to present happy queer people. In a crime-thriller genre, queer filmmaking could wish to describe a violation or hate-crime concerning queer people. Thus, selecting a genre depends on the intention and purpose related to the queer subject. Indeed, considering a genre is a strategy related to a political intention for queer filmmaking, regarding how to deal with queer matters. Likewise, this is also associated with screening queer films because some specific genre queer films could attract audiences, strategically reducing risk from prejudice around queer matters. Thus, this might be entirely a matter of choice for queer filmmaking.

Looking at the film genres in Korea that are popular and attract many moviegoers is interesting because this can give a further understanding of the Korean film industry in terms of filmmaking. This investigation could give simultaneous political and economic insights. Likewise, it can provide useful information of specific film trends that Korean moviegoers prefer.

According to the Korean film investment profitability analysis between 2007 and 2012, drama and comedy genre films were produced mostly in the Korean film industry. In addition, the analysis shows that crime-drama genre films have been steadily introduced into the Korean film market. When looking at the most successful Korean films at the box office between 2006 and 2013, drama, comedy and crime-thriller genre films tend to attract many audiences and make a huge profit. Some Korean historical drama genre films, such as *The King and The Clowns* (2006), *Portrait of a Beauty* (2008), *A Frozen Flower* (2008), *War of the Arrows* (2011), *Masquerade* (2012) and so on, were also produced during this period and attracted large audiences (KOFIC, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

The Korean Film Council publishes a report of Investigation for Film Consumers every year. According to its reports between 2013 and 2016, Korean moviegoers tended to watch action, drama, science fiction and crime-thriller genre films at the cinema (KOFIC, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). This data includes Korean and foreign films. When considering multiple answers, the crime-thriller genre was the most popular in 2013. Generally, many Korean moviegoers tend to watch action, drama, crime-thriller and comedy genre films. However, when considering only Korean films, crime-thriller films are generally very popular and historical or drama genre films dealing with a real historical event also attract good audiences. For example, *The King and the Clowns*, the story of the real history of King YeonSan in the *Chosun* dynasty, attracted an audience of about 11 million. *18 on May* to describe GwanJu uprising, which is a democratic movement in 1980, attracted 7.3 million. Likewise, *The Crucible* (2011) tells the horrific story about the physical and sexual abuse of students at a school for the hearing-impaired and attracted an audience of 4.6 million, despite its brutal subject. After its release, this film led to the Korean National Assembly passing legislation in 2011 to toughen laws against sexual assault.

The data concerning foreign films in the Korean market between 2007 and 2011, shows that Korean audiences prefer to watch sci-fi, adventure, fantasy and action genre movies (KOFIC, 2007, 2008b, 2009, 2010, 2011). These genre films attract large Korean audiences and tend to be Hollywood blockbuster films (KOFIC, 2013). Indeed, in an annual report from the Investigation for Film Consumer Behaviour between 2012 and 2016, the most successful foreign films were Hollywood productions. The reports show that Korean moviegoers prefer to watch Hollywood films than foreign films (KOFIC, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016).

When looking at the foreign films that attracted most Korean audiences in the Korean box office between 2006 and 2011, most Korean moviegoers tended to enjoy watching blockbuster series films such as *Harry Potter*, *Transformers*, *Iron Man*, *Pirates of Caribbean* and so on, based on fantasy or sci-fi genres. Interestingly, this data shows that Korean audiences tend to choose Hollywood blockbuster films based on sci-fi, action and fantasy genre when there are no interesting Korean films being screened. Indeed, film consumer behaviour reports show that Koreans prefer to choose Korean films rather than other foreign films (KOFIC, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010, 2011). About 50% of Korean moviegoers prefer to watch Korean films and about 30% prefer Hollywood films.

From this data, there might be an assumption that Koreans prefer to watch drama, crime-thriller and historical genre films based on true stories when they go to the cinema. Likewise, another assumption is that Koreans prefer to watch Hollywood films of the action, sci-fi and fantasy genres because the Korean film industry might not be able to produce these kinds of films. However, since 2014, the Korean film industry has taken the challenge to make sci-fi and fantasy genre films in a Korean blockbuster style. Several films, such as *Train to Busan* (2016) and *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds* (2017), attracted audiences of more than 10 million. They were also exported to many foreign countries like HongKong, Japan, Taiwan and Thailand and attracted many foreign moviegoers, ranking No. 1 in their box office (KOFIC, 2017, Han, Hyun-Jeong, 2018).

In terms of genre in the Korean film industry, there were certain periods when specific types of films were very popular. In the early 2000s, gangster comedy genre

films attracted significant audiences (Seo, Kok-Sook, 2006). *My Boss, My Hero* (2001), *Kick the Moon* (2001), *My Wife is a Gangster* (2001), *Hi, Dharma* (2001), *Marrying the Mafia* (2002) and so on were produced during this period. In particular, these films (except *Kick the Moon*) were re-produced for sequels. As far as marketing and return on investment are concerned, it can be supposed that producers and directors tend to look for subjects based on the popular genres that are guaranteed to attract enough audiences (Lee, Sang-Suk, 2006). This implies that many investors and big companies tend to invest and support genre films that guarantee a return on their investment. Since 2000, the Korean film industry (dominated by the five big companies) has sometimes shown the tendency for some specific genre films being popular in a certain period because these companies only invested in certain genre films and used their screens showing such films through their own distribution channels. In this structure, audiences lose their right to choose various genre films. The vertical integrated system by big companies has influenced a selection of genres for filmmaking.

In the Korean film industry, this situation can be easily found in low-mid budget films produced in the drama, comedy, and crime-thriller genres (KOFIC, 2017). It implies that these genre films are popular and it may be easier to raise funds for these types of films than others. In particular, some historical or drama genre films based on true stories might be easier to produce because they have more content with which to publicise their films, comparing historical events with their screen version. Likewise, in terms of the five big companies' business, it might be easier to persuade investors in the pre-production stage, due to the well-known and familiar matter being available to easily transform into a screenplay. In the assumption that there are certain genres

proved to attract considerable audiences in the Korean film industry, queer films might consider selecting their genre according to the moviegoers' preference. Indeed, KimJho-GwangSoo tends to produce queer films in a comedy or drama genre to depict happy images of queer people. Likewise, LeeSong-HeeIl tends to choose a drama or romance genre for his queer filmmaking: however, he focuses more on romance through heart-breaking and violation. In chapter 4, I will deal with their specific queer filmmaking.

Despite the mainstream Korean film industry seeming to marginalise possibilities of a more progressive cinema, some of its genres have been open to more progressive/queer readings. Even when the military regimes regulated film themes, many film directors and producers attempted to deliver their political messages and expressions in a certain genre. Although there may be fear for filmmaking in queer subjects or expression in the Korean film industry, there have been attempts to be open to queer reading in the mainstream film industry. I will discuss it further in the next chapter.

Chapter Three. Open to Queer Reading in Korean Cinema.

Preceding chapters have attempted to explore two domains such as politics and economy to understand the Korean film industry. In particular, looking at the Korean film industry in these two contexts, two preceding chapters revealed a further discussion of the politics of queer films and the political economy of queer filmmaking in Korea. Before investigating Korean queer films, this chapter will look at how film can be open to queer reading. Korea's history concerning queer filmmaking is brief. However, there are many films that can be read in a queer way, such as cross-dressing and bromance in specific genre films. By analysing films with the possibility of being viewed in a queer reading, this chapter will discuss various gender discourses from film texts.

Characters in film make various relationships with others, telling their life throughout the duration of the film. Throughout the characters' networking, audiences attempt to follow their history, perhaps identifying with characters' emotion. According to playwright Bertolt Brecht (Brecht, 1964, Barnett, 2016), to help audiences to better understand a text, keeping a distance between them is necessary. Brecht explains a process of distanciation between audiences and play is the purpose of play is to educate and to provide a lesson. In order to successfully educate via drama, he argues that drama should provide an intellectual curiosity rather than appealing emotions to audiences. In fact, Brecht's distanciation focuses on minimising emotions for audiences from texts and it is related to intentionally make a strange

thing. Distanciation is to practice politics to enable audiences to notice and analyse strange or unusual things in a dramatic plot. According to Barthes (1977), when authors finish their work, meaning of their works depends on readers. It means readers or audiences are an active subject to find a meaning of texts in their ways. This distanciation enables audiences not to be passive subject and encourages them to be curious about the meaning of the text. This is closely related to how audiences perceive oddness, derived from when they find differences through representation in specific situations. Likewise, this is also associated with ambiguity, which can be hard to interpret in their experience because of a lack of familiarity. Thus, experiencing an ambiguity and unfamiliarity, through watching film, distances audiences from a text and enables them to be curious about why some representation or expression might be needed, helping them to explore the meaning of text.

To bring originality to events or characters in film is to bring curiosity and wonder, removing stereotypes that audiences could easily predict. The purpose of this intrigue is not only to gain attention and maintain interest but also to enable audiences to look objectively at characters and events in films, politically distancing them from texts. Through this, audiences could look at the problem of the dominant ideology in conventional reading. Queer reading can be based on this distancing. Removing themselves from the familiarity that they assimilate within the existing dominant cinematic conventions opens up the possibility of a new interpretation. At an awkward moment where conventional familiarity and unfamiliarity exists at the same time, the distance introduces the possibility of queer reading. Thus, the distance between audiences is based on the ambiguity and unfamiliarity and this enables them to

maintain distance from conventional reading. This chapter will look at what could help audiences to feel this distance and enable them to do queer reading.

1. Queer Reading in Cross-Dressing

It is surprising that queer images were very easily found in Korean films before queer studies were introduced in Korea. Before 1993, most Korean audiences had never noticed queer representation because of a lack of interest and ignorance of queer in heteronormative norms and hyper-masculine society. Although there have been queer people in Korean history, ‘coming out’ might not bring any attention, because it is not related to revealing their identity because there was no official definition of queer except ‘homosexual love’ or ‘same-sex behaviour’. In fact, homosexuality in Korea seems to identify same-sex behaviour as abnormality (Cho, Song-Pae, 2003). As a result, heterosexual Koreans might not be able to recognise the existence of queer and might view such individuals as perverted.

Due to a lack of studies about Korean homosexuality, many researchers have relied on interviews with a few older Korean queer people who were willing to talk about their experiences before the 1990s (Cho, Song-Pae, 2003). Although there were some historical venues for gay society in Seoul, most of them have been destroyed through redevelopment and their history has also disappeared. However, for some interviews (Cho, Song-Pae, 2003), secret meetings were held in a gay cinema in ChungMuRo and Sindangdong, where the interviewees said they explored their identity through characters in films. This answer might be the evidence that they could

read films as a text for queer reading. This motivates the exploration into how some Korean films could be open to queer reading for queer audiences.

Cross-dressing is one of the popular choices to represent a twisted gender role in the comedy genre in Korea's film industry. In particular, there was a series of films in the late 1960s embracing cross-dressing. The first successful film was *A Man and a Gisaeng* (1969). Following the success of this film, the Korean film industry started to produce several films covering the subject of cross-dressing, where each male protagonist attempted cross-dressing for individual purposes in the story. Thus, these films provide very interesting vehicles through which to explore a gender role and queer reading in terms of performance in gender trouble of Butler (Butler, 2008). Although it might be possible to read a text through the eyes of queer audiences, interpreting a character as a queer could help to show how Korean queers could enjoy films as a reflection of their own experiences.



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Figure 5. The post of *A Man and a Gisaeng* (1969).

A Man and a Gisaeng is a story of a Korean man who is called a ‘sissy’. A *gisaeng* is a prostitute or a woman who provides a sexual service or entertainment service to men. She shares similar characteristics with the Japanese *geisha* but traditionally, a *gisaeng* was an intelligent woman and entertainer who could share intelligent conversation with intellectuals in Korean history. *A Man and a Gisaeng* is a very interesting text presenting a hyper-masculine society in Korea and how women could be excluded in modernisation and industrialisation.

A Man and a Gisaeng begins by portraying many elderly Korean men drinking with *gisaengs* with live music in the *gisaeng* house, but they are complaining about the *gisaengs*’ appearance. They ask a manager to bring even a male *gisaeng* instead of the females. This first scene reveals that its subject is related to queerness even before

the film titles. Throughout this sequence, audiences might be able to forecast how this story will develop in the comedy genre. After this sequence, the title of the film, *A Male and A Gisaeng*, appears on the screen. This film shows that a madam managing a gisaeng house makes a phone call to one of the protagonists, President Heo, who is working in his office. This scene reveals how Korean men have superior gender power over women: there is no shame in enjoying their sexual entertainment although they have a wife and family. Indeed, in the presence of his female secretary, Heo declares that he is going to visit the *gisaeng* house after work. To further understand this film, exploring the historical context of this period is required. The 1960s and 1970s was a time of dictatorship under the Park Chung-hee regime. This implies that this period was an overt hyper-masculine society promoting compressed modernisation and industrialisation, mobilising people for the sake of the national economy. As a result, most Korean women had to endure social ignorance in the hyper-masculine and patriarchal society. Likewise, even men who could not show their strong masculinity could be excluded during this period.

In the film, Tae-Ho is the protagonist who shows feminine characteristics. He works in a cosmetic company, run by President Heo. Unlike other Korean men in the office, Tae-Ho is sewing and knitting socks in his working time. Indeed, this scene shows that Tae-Ho seems to have a different personality to other Korean men. In contrast to Tae-Ho, President Heo displays a strong masculine personality. Due to Tae-Ho's distracted work in the office, President Heo fires him. In particular, President Heo forces him to write a resignation in front of other employees. This reveals how Koreans can easily treat their employees without moral standards. Indeed,

throughout the entire narrative, this film exposes how Korean society was dominated by values derived from hyper-masculinity.

A *gisaeng* house is a very important place where most controversial events occur. Within this place, audiences can see the power relationship between men and women. In particular, this film shows how men viewed *gisaengs* as lower class. In one scene, President Heo pays money in front of *gisaengs* and friends in a banquet, showing off his wealth, then he kisses his *gisaeng* partner. Likewise, this place is a venue where it could be possible for people to practice gender performance when characters intend to play a specific role. It implies this *gisaeng* house enables ambiguous gender boundaries. After Tae-Ho has been fired from his job, a friend working as a musician in the *gisaeng* house recommends that he works there, pretending to be a woman. Tae-Ho is willing to work there, wearing a woman's costume for a living. Ironically, as a man, Tae-Ho could find a new proper job that could be accepted by all Korean society, but he decides to work in the *gisaeng* house, a brothel selling women for sex. Although his decision is a main motif to provide entertainment to cinema audiences in the comedy genre, this motif could prove that he is a person moving away from the overtly masculine society. In fact, *A Male and A Gisaeng* is the last movie of the *A Male...* series. After *A Male Maid* (1968) and *A Male Hairdresser's* (1968) success, this film plainly attempts to make fun of a man as a 'sissy' who does not exhibit traditional masculinity. The first two films portray a man who is willing to take a job that women usually occupy in terms of hyper-masculinity. Although both films seemed to categorise 'proper' jobs for men and women, they did not deal with the ambiguous boundary of sexuality between them. However, *A Male and A Gisaeng* reveals such a boundary, presenting the possibility of queerness.

As Tae-Ho wears a traditional female costume, wig and makeup and performs as a perfect *gisaeng*, this film provides the expectation of light entertainment. In particular, his performance as a woman mocks the older Korean men in the film, who seek a service from a woman. Indeed, San-Wol (Tae-Ho's fictitious name) takes advantage of the men's sexual desire for his purpose of making money, revealing his feminine side. As Tae-Ho performs as a woman from the lower class in Korea during this period, San-Wol can expose a reality of Korean women's life and her (or his) performance achieves the purpose of making fun of males' stupidity in the film, exposing their sexual desire with capital power during modernisation and industrialisation.

When President Heo visits the *gisaeng* house, he is attracted to San-Wol because she resembles his first lover. President Heo is a character representing strong hyper-masculinity (owning his company at the beginning of movie), but his desire for San-Wol reveals a queerness, although he is fooled by Tae-Ho's performance as a woman. His obsession with San-Wol is a main motif for this comedy film, providing the main substance of the story. In particular, the film illustrates how San-Wol fools President Heo with his femininity. Indeed, in terms of traditional sexuality, President Heo is a character revealing his overt standpoint of the gender binary. However, the gender performance between Tae-Ho and San-Wol places him in the ambiguous boundary of queerness.

Another old man, President Do, who is a competitor of President Heo, also wants San-Wol. San-Wol works several times for President Do and President Heo. Interestingly, all males in a *gisaeng* house seem not to reveal their full name. In old

Korean culture, when men introduce each other, they tend to declare what they do for a living. Although some people might have no specific job for their living, Koreans tend to call them 'President' (*Sa-Jang* in Korean), after their last name. This shows how Korean society was constructed through economic values and hyper-masculinity. Highlighting a job title following their last name also reveals that Korean society follows a hierarchical culture derived from Confucius and military values. San-Wol's service to males is very different to other *gisaengs*. Throughout a love game, she tries to extract more money from the President males and sometimes employs light physical violence, making fools of the men. Indeed, her behaviour towards men to encourage them to buy sexual services seems to criticise their erroneous perception of materialism from industrialisation and compressed modernisation.

A Male and A Gisaeng is a very interesting script fulfilling the possibility of queerness and revealing the social problem of women's life in urban surrounds. When Tae-Ho starts to work in the *gisaeng* house, he meets many working females and introduces himself to one woman, Jeong-Mi. *Gisaengs* stay in a waiting room before they provide their service. In a small space, more than 10 *gisaengs* share their stories about why they chose to work in such a business, including San-Wol. Although San-Wol invents a story about why she became a *gisaeng*, this film portrays how Korean females during this period go through difficult times to find a decent job, being excluded in mobilisation for economic development. Ironically, Tae-Ho/San-Wol are male and female characters at the same time and are not engaged in industrialisation. Tae-Ho's cross-dressing is caught by Jeong-Mi when San-Wol uses the men's toilet. However, Jeong-Mi accepts his/her identity and is willing to help him hide his/her secret in the *gisaeng* house because she already knows everybody has a private and

different reason to be part of the red-light district. Indeed, Jeong-Mi tells Tae-Ho that she understands why he works there, comparing his to her own private motivation. Jeong-Mi has an ill mother and siblings that she has to care for. This reason might be very predictable in the narrative, but many females from the countryside during this period had the burden of supporting their family. Unlike males, education for females was regarded as a waste of time because they would have no opportunity to join the economic workplace after marriage. Following Confucius' values, females should be at home, taking care of their family and supporting their husbands. Interestingly, throughout the relationship between Tae-Ho/San-Wol and Jeong-Mi, audiences could find queerness in addition to the relationship between President Heo and Tae-Ho/San-Wol. Although Jeong-Mi already knows that San-Wol is Tae-Ho, they share a feeling beyond friendship between females in the *gisaeng* house. In particular, after they finish their work late at night, they have to stay in the *gisaeng* house due to a curfew hour in Korean law. This scene shows how they share a special feeling as a female and *gisaeng* living in Korea. Audiences might guess there must be sexual prostitutes in the *gisaeng* house, out of frame. Jeong-Mi and San-Wol seem to grow their love beyond friendship, holding hands. Of course, San-Wol is Tae-Ho having special feelings for Jeong-Mi, but other *gisaengs* are suspicious of their special friendship. Indeed, other *gisaengs* ask San-Wol and Jeong-Mi why they always get on so well together. This scene straightforwardly reveals queerness because San-Wol answers to others that they are in a lesbian relationship. Regardless of their true sexuality, this scene provides a fantasy of homosexual love.

This film enables the portrayal of various characters who exhibit different sexuality. In particular, this film seems to demonstrate a queer motif between two

men, but when the film ends, it reveals homosexuality between women. Furthermore, the housewives of presidents who often visit the *gisaeng* house wear a male costume and visit the house to find out why their husbands spend time there. Interestingly, they do not hide their gender as females from the *gisaengs*, although they wear male clothes. Rather, they seem to enjoy their time with the *gisaengs*, asking how to attract men. It is hard to find any conflict between *gisaengs* and housewives throughout this scene. However, this scene also exposes how Korean society is gendered by hyper-masculinity as the wife of President Heo offers a gratuity to San-Wol. Ethically, selling and buying sex must be wrong but this film seldom describes how wrong it is. Even housewives visit the *gisaeng* house to experience what services are provided, rather than blaming them. In addition, they are willing to pay money to *gisaengs* in the same way as their husbands. Thus, these cross-dressing housewives illustrate that Korean society is dominated by hyper-masculinity and patriarchy.

Indeed, the *gisaeng* house in this film is a fascinating venue where unreality becomes a reality. In fact, cross-dressing might not have been possible in Korea, during this period, due to the hyper-masculine and patriarchal norms. Tae-Ho was fired from his job because of his feminine characteristics and Korean society, at this time, admired masculine values. However, the *gisaeng* house is a place to reveal a dirty sexual desire and to disgrace masculinity through exposing their attitude as practicing double standards. In particular, President Heo is a character who exhibits such double standards on screen. He is a president managing a company and a husband who takes care of his family in a patriarchal system. The *gisaeng* house and San-Wol expose a dirty reality behind patriarchy, portraying President Heo fooled by San-Wol. Probably, the *gisaeng* house could be a Foucault space of heterotopia.

Foucault's essay 'Of Other Spaces' focuses on a particular sense of the relationships between spaces; as he puts it 'the curious property of being in relation ... in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect'. Heterotopology (the discourse, that is, of the heterotopia) is involved, then, in a simultaneous reflection and inversion of the mainstream world (for want of a better term) from which the heterotopia is removed. Foucault, again, insists on a connection between the utopia and the heterotopia. But while utopias are 'fundamentally unreal spaces' that present society in 'a perfected form', which is to say they reveal a 'direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society', heterotopias are 'real spaces' and 'counter-sites' that 'remain absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about'. (Palladino and Miller, 2015, p. 4)

Foucault tells that heterotopia refers to real spaces in which people can indicate and go to. They are also places that differ and are hidden from the outside world (Foucault, 2005). In this case, Foucault examines American motel rooms, where people drive for and visit. While their application is, in this case, normal, it also includes a possibility where illegal acts such as prostitution can take place. Although heterotopia is an open place, it requires exclusion. It is a retreat for everyone and particularly queer people. It is a place constructed for seclusion, where individuals excluded from the world can go to. In order for them to freely experience love, free of judgement and societal restraints, ironically, they isolate and exclude themselves; which is a concept similar to a utopia, an almost fantasy-like exclusion and isolation from the world.

Although this place is open to everybody in the film, this venue is a hidden space for illegally selling and buying sex. A *gisaeng* house is a very private place for Korean

males but it is also a public space to show that Korean males have a social relationship with others in industrialisation and modernisation. Thus, this implies the *gisaeng* house is a heterotopia to reveal the dominant power of Korean masculinity as the superior gender and to simultaneously release their true nature behind their power. In fact, Park Chung-hee, the South Korean dictator between 1961 and 1979, was assassinated in a *gisaeng* house. This historical event can prove how *gisaeng* houses could provide a space for people to release their true nature. This heterotopia for Korean masculinity can be also a space providing the possibility for all genders to practice different gender performances. Indeed, a *gisaeng* house seems to occupy a no-man's land between a private and a public space. This place could be open to queer people and enable them to practice and to assume a different identity. It operates outside society's regulations. Interestingly, in a heteronormative society, a *gisaeng* house seems not to follow heteronormative norms. Thus, cross-dressing might not be regarded as an abnormal behaviour to anyone there because it is a real space beyond power, but where power still works at the same time.

Throughout the film, San-Wol exploits males' sexual desire and shows an ugly reality derived from masculine power, mocking their double standards. San-Wol and Jeng-Mi decide to leave the *gisaeng* house to seek a better future because they have already secured enough money from men who paid for their services. In particular, San-Wol takes huge amounts of money from President Heo, playing a fake love game with him. San-Wol's cross-dressing attempt ends when she decides to be a man. Likewise, Jenog-Mi is a woman who achieves protection from a male, Tae-Ho.

During the dictatorship regime of industrialisation and modernisation, economic values in Korean society were regarded as the most important factor of any individual's life. Economic success was a goal that they had to pursue to attain a better life in Korea. Tae-ho is not so different from other males, although he shows a different personality and masculinity from others. He becomes a visiting salesperson selling cosmetic products to women and Jeong-Mi becomes the owner of a clothing shop, having saved money from her interaction with presidents in the *gisaeng* house. To survive in Korean society during this period, it was an inevitable choice to adjust their lives to periodic values. Indeed, Tae-ho confesses his behaviour to fool President Heo into spending more money, while he visits the *gisaeng* house to sell his products. His declaration might be an excuse which cannot fully justify his behaviour to scam and it could be viewed as a ruse to steal money. It is a gratuity given for a sexual service but his confession to justify why he became a cross-dresser for a living seems to generate sympathy in audiences. After the Korean War, to seek a better future, many Koreans would do anything to make money and the dictatorship regime used this passion for mobilising them for economic development.

A Male and a Gisaeng seems to attempt to break conventional gender roles in film although this film is classified in the comedy genre. In particular, this film enables audiences to feel an unfamiliarity, showing a twisted gender role via cross-dressing. This unfamiliarity is based on a distanciation. Portraying unfamiliar characters could capture the audience's attention and provide enjoyment due to unique features that people barely consider. In addition to Tae-Ho and the housewives' cross-dressing, this film shows a mannish woman throughout: Tae-ho's sister. His sister knows how to execute a martial art, Tae-Kwon-DO, and she punishes a male gang bothering Tae-Ho

and Jeng-Mi. Indeed, *A Male and a Gisaeng* states that there is no need to be ashamed if not performing a traditional gender role that is normally followed in society. Rather, Tae-Ho is proud of his sister who exhibits some masculinity and she is also proud of her brother, Tae-Ho, with his innate femininity, because they understand the true nature of who they are regardless of social conventional gender norms.

However, when Tae-Ho decides to give up cross-dressing and leaves the *gisaeng* house with Jeong-Mi, the film loses its possibility of queerness, compromising on hyper-masculinity. Interestingly, Tae-ho worked at the *gisaeng* house for a living and through his cross-dressing, he could obtain a special power to mock Korean males, revealing their inappropriate behaviour towards girls as their sexual entertainment. Indeed, he reveals his hostile feelings to Korean males when he talks with Jeong-Mi. However, he requires an apology to president Heo for a living after giving up cross-dressing. Thus, his return to mainstream society is to address his hostility to conventional norms ruled by Korean males. Indeed, he meets President Heo again after his confession in the *gisaeng* house, because his sister is going to become engaged to Heo's son. All conflicts between Tae-ho and President Heo vanish in the structure of family and marriage, forgiving each other. This shows how Korean society is constructed regarding family values and marriage, regulated by hyper-masculinity and pursuing economic development during this dictatorship regime. Ultimately, economic development in Korea mobilised individuals to take part in industrialisation and most individuals were males. Therefore, for Korean males, having a family meant to play a conventional role during this period.

For example, in *Young-Ja's Heyday*, a male protagonist wanted to marry Young-Ja to become a real man in Korea during this period. Even Young-ja could be a member of society when she had a husband in the patriarchal system. Likewise, *A Male and a Gisaeng* could imply that Tae-ho acquired masculine power when he decided to marry Jeong-Mi. Thus, all possibilities for queerness in the film terminate in family values by patriarchy and hyper-masculinity when Tae-ho and President Heo become a combined family. Although Tae-ho's true personality does not change when he is reinstated in his job in President Heo's company, his social position has already changed and is accepted in masculine power by President Heo. Interestingly, this reveals that only masculinity can admit and guarantee the values of other genders.

A Male and A Gisaeng House, where it can be possible to practice gender performance, can offer a fantasy to queer people who lived at that time in Korea. Due to a lack of research about homosexuality before the 1990s, it might be impossible to discover how queer people received this film, identifying themselves throughout queer reading or a queer eye. However, there must be attempts to find queerness in a space like the cinema in terms of heterotopia. Cinema is a space of heterotopia, where various meanings and even meanings of heterogeneity coexist simultaneously. It is an intertextual space where audiences may fulfil their fantasies. Although this film ends in values of patriarchy and hyper-masculinity, it could provide possibilities for queer people to explore their identity. Furthermore, throughout various characters' gender performances, the *gisaeng* house exposes a dominant hyper-masculine and patriarchal power prevalent in Korean society. In a comedy genre, this film's space criticises how one gender, masculinity, could regulate other genders in its norms, in a roundabout way.

Indeed, the film's cross-dressing motif could provide a possibility for queer people to identify themselves through the relationships between characters, as well as being read in a queer way. A cross-dresser in film could be a character to crack the boundary of gender binary. Thus, a cross-dressing performance obtains a power to reveal various problems in gender binary, and it especially exposes various gender issues generated by the dominant gender, masculinity, in the gender binary system.



Figure 6. The brochure of *The Man with Breasts* (1993)

There is one film to portray how masculinity in Korea discriminates against females, revealing a social prejudice towards queer people. *The Man with Breasts* (1993) tells the story of one woman, Hye-Sun, who attempts cross-dressing to join the male society to prove herself against prejudice towards women. As a woman, Hye-Sun tries to avoid insignificant work, such as making coffee and photocopying documents, as commanded by many male workers. Although she is hired for her superior skills and better educational background than men who are employed at the

same time, she barely gets a chance to create her own projects to promote her ideas. Alongside her frustration at work, she and other females usually face and suffer from sexual harassment by male workers and her supervisors.

To survive in the workplace, women in contemporary Korea seem to ignore such sexual harassment. Although this attitude towards female workers is wrong, Hye-Sun tries hard to be patient so that she can join a project with male workers. However, their sexual harassment and discrimination towards her make her leave her job. *The Man with Breasts* has a similar theme to *A Male and A Gisaeng*, which is to get away from his/her work due to inappropriate thought or behaviour against masculine values. Unlike other female workers, Hye-Sun attempts to speak out and to be a member of male society. Her behaviour and verbalisation might look unusual in that period in Korea because females were subjected to males' values. Thus, Hye-Sun is not the typical woman that Korean men usually prefer. Indeed, a female worker's uniform in film is a very short skirt to display her legs to males. Neither Hye-Sun or Tae-Ho's characters fit in with the traditional gender values that Korean society pursues. Hye-Sun is subjected to insults and neglect from her supervisors and male workers because she is a woman. Furthermore, although he turns down her planning the first time, due to his lack of foresight, her supervisor attempts to suggest her business plan to his boss, in a meeting, to avoid being blamed for the lack of planning. He also recommends Hye-Sun to his boss as a project manager: however, his boss insults her, saying a woman has no ability for this big project and orders Hye-Sun to make coffee for all other males. In this hyper-masculine environment, Hye-Sun seems frustrated. However, she speaks out, defending her rights as a human being, regardless of sexuality. She throws all cups filled with hot coffee at the men in the meeting and

punches her supervisor's nose, when he tries to stop her. She complains about her life to her sister. Her appealing with her sister shows how difficult it is to live as a woman in Korea. She has already quit jobs six times, including her current job, because of being treated as a man's assistant or secretary. She explains why it is so easy for all men to live in Korea and that even a talented female can only be a person who serves coffee or tea in a café for prostitution. Furthermore, her sister argues with her that women who do not gain any approval or admission are not women any more. Their perspectives reveal how Korean females were treated as secondary citizens, regulated by masculine values. Instead of making efforts to protest against such prejudice and discrimination, Hye-Sun decides to be a man, attempting cross-dressing.

When Hye-Sun becomes Hye-Suk, he confronts a male-dominated society and is struggling to pursue his goal to succeed in his workplace. While he works with many male co-workers, he proves that his work performance is much better than theirs. In fact, this film attempts to show that a difference in gender does not influence work performance, and it enlightens audiences to realise that gender is not important in judging ability. In fact, this film provides various analyses of Hye-Suk's success if it is achieved only by his/her own ability, because this achievement could be possible only as a male in Korea. In the film's story, although Hye-Suk does his best to understand his female co-workers, who have barely any chance to join a business meeting, he strives to be a part of the male society. In *The Man with Breasts*, Hye-Sun's cross-dressing reveals a power relation between male and other genders through everything he/she faces and his/her male and female identity problems.

Like *A Male and a Gisaeng*, *The Man with Breasts* also portrays various situations and events occurring through her cross-dressing in a comedy genre. However, unlike *A Male and a Gisaeng*, *The Man with Breasts* directly deals with identity issues - especially gay and lesbian identity issues. Tae-Ho never doubts his identity as a male in the film. However, between Hye-Sun and Hye-suk, she or he starts to doubt his/her identity because Hye-Suk gradually figures out that he acts like the sort of male who Hye-Sun used to criticise. When he cross-dresses in the early stages, he has sympathy and fellow-feeling towards his female co-workers and female prostitutes: however, he starts to ignore their concerns, based on masculine perspectives, in his quest for success. Indeed, the group dating scene shows that Hye-Suk criticises other women with whom he and his friend have a group date because the women seem to act like materialistic people who find men to take care of them, for a living. This scene is very interesting because Hye-Sun does not exist from the moment of cross-dressing.

After the projects' success, Hye-Suk gains the confidence of his company and is sent to a new organisational department for a new secret project to take part in a competitive bid. Hye-Suk meets his new co-worker, Hyung-Jun, who is very masculine and takes pride in himself. While Hye-Suk stays with him to build a strong bond as a team in a training camp, he experiences various interesting events. In a comedy genre, this film shows how Hye-Suk strives to hide his identity and notices Hyung-Jun's masculinity as a regular Korean male. Thus, throughout events occurring between Hye-Suk and Hyung-Jun, audiences can read their secret gay relationship, beyond friendship, although Hye-Suk is a female. Furthermore, many female co-workers admire Hye-Suk, due to his thoughtful and respectful behaviour. Indeed, many females attempt to seduce Hye-Suk and even one prostitute girl, taking his

advice, attempts to rape him. These scenes also provide possibilities for queer reading between female characters, including Hye-Sun. Indeed, cross-dressing in a comedy genre explores gender performance via various relationships between characters. Therefore, audiences can also explore various gender experiences through Hye-Sun and Hye-Suk. Likewise, Hyung-Jun's fiancée also attempts to seduce Hye-Suk, cheating on him, due to Hye-Suk's thoughtful behaviour, completely unlike usual Korean males. In fact, Hye-Suk's attitude and behaviour come from his true identity and sympathising with what he experienced before cross-dressing, basically derived from femininity. Ironically, Hyung-Jun also starts to have feelings for Hye-Suk beyond friendship, although he feels betrayed when he finds out his fiancée's attempts to cheat on him. His growing feelings towards Hye-Suk confuse him and bring him to the mental health clinic to question his state of mind because he cannot accept he could be gay. Likewise, Hye-Suk has a similar feeling for Hyung-Jun while they work together. However, he focuses more on their project and maintains his friendship with Hyung-Jun. Interestingly, the scene at the mental health clinic, to diagnose homosexual feeling, reveals how Korean society categorises homosexuality as an abnormality and a mental illness. Indeed, Hyung-Jun asks a doctor if a person can be a dirty faggot. This film admits it could be possible, revealing that being homosexuality constitutes dirty behaviour. In Hyung-Jun's fantasy, he cross-dresses to be with Hye-Suk. This scene shows how Koreans, in the contemporary period, perceive homosexuality through two cross-dressers, Hye-Suk and Hyung-Jun. These two scenes may indicate that being gay would be fearful to people who are suffering from identity issues. Struggling to deny his feelings towards a man, Hyung-Jun attempts to blame and criticise Hye-Suk's feminine personality. In addition, he even swears and

shouts many degrading words (like ‘sissy’) to blame his feminine behaviour on Hye-Suk. His words seem to attempt to ignore his homosexual feelings towards Hye-Suk, as he even decides to leave the project they have been working on together. When Hyung-Jun confesses how he feels in front of Hye-Suk, on the roof of the building, Hye-Suk stops his talking by suddenly kissing his lips. Their 20-second kiss proves that they love each other and this scene provides queer reading between two males - although Hyung-Suk is a woman. Indeed, this is a homosexual kiss between two men, although audiences already know Hye-Suk is a woman. In their relationship, they reveal homosexual affections each other. Hyung-Jun’s embarrassment seems to change to acceptance of being gay, because he is speechless without apportioning any blame for Hyung-Suk’s sudden kiss.



Figure 7. Kiss of Hye-Suk and Hyung-Jun.



Figure 8. Exposure of breasts after Kiss.

Internalised feelings between Hye-Suk and Hyung-Jun change the film’s genre from comedy to melodrama. In a comedy genre, cross-dressing has a role in exposing a reality of Korean society regarding how hyper-masculinity discriminates against femininity and how there is one dominant gender. However, Hye-Suk and Hyung-Jun expand the meaning of gender in a binary system to queer beyond cross-dressing in comedy. Thus, this film can be read in a queer reading to explore identity via the

characters' gender performance and gender perception. Thus, the cross-dressing gives themes to audiences for queer reading between characters in a melodrama genre. In particular, when Hye-Suk and Hyung-Jun's feelings develop beyond friendship, Hyung-Jun's reaction about his gay identity reveals the meaning of love in terms of gender in melodrama. In fact, this is a very political message in film: cross-dressing seems acceptable in the comedy genre, but it seems to be taboo when it relates to identity issues in melodrama. Although this film treats homosexuality as a dirty behaviour, Hyung-Jun seems to accept his feelings after kissing Hye-Suk.

In *The Man with Breasts*, breasts are portrayed as a symbol of femininity, because Hye-Suk always hides his breasts with a compression bandage when cross-dressing. Likewise, he shows his breasts to Hyung-Jun and audiences when he reveals his identity as a woman. Indeed, when Hye-Suk takes off his shirt and bandages after the kiss with Hyung-Jun, his/her breasts are visible on the screen. This scene shows their love is not homosexual love but heterosexual. As a result, when Hye-Suk becomes Hye-Sun, queering is ended in gender binary because Hyung-Jun loses his fear of being gay and Hye-Sun recovers her femininity. Indeed, *The Man with Breasts* seems to lose all possibilities of suggesting a new perspective of gender in Korea when it returns to support traditional gender values. Hye-Sun applies make-up to her face and wears a short skirt and stockings to represent a typical career woman; something she used to deny. She completes a project and achieves success as a woman, without Hyung-Jun, in the company. However, her success is based on her cross-dressing as a man. In fact, her position as a woman in the company is accepted with the approval of hyper-masculinity due to the company's profits. Likewise, her life's goal seems to be

completed when Hyung-Jun forgives her cross-dressing, discovering their love for each other at the end of the film.

This film cannot be classified as a feminist film. However, it is a very important script for queer reading and its representation in dealing with gender in the contemporary period could help to understand of a change of gender perception, compared to its present situation. In particular, in comparing women's reality, this film can offer evidence that hyper-masculinity is still operating in regular Korean society. In the 1970s, Young-ja, in *Young-ja's Heydays*, had to marry a man because a woman's life would be complete with her family. Although women in the early 1990s could play a part in economic activities, their role was limited to assisting men and their life's achievements were also measured through men.

Both motifs in *A Male and A Gisaeng* and *The Man with Breasts* are based on characters' frustration with hyper-masculinity, and their motifs show reality of Korean gender situation of the contemporary period. However, unlike *A Man and A Gisaeng*, *The Man with Breasts* reveals gender issues related to discrimination from hyper-masculine power through cross-dressing. Thus, queering in cross-dressing enables audiences to expand their understanding of gender in a gendered society. And obviously, exploring identity via queering in film can be political against hyper-masculine norms by producing gender discourse. *The Man with Breasts*, thus, contributes to acknowledging homosexuality to Korean society through the political behaviour of cross-dressing.

Interestingly, when cross-dressing reveals identity issues, queering is over and only the political meaning of queer remains in the film. *A Man and a Gisaeng* seldom

shows any serious identity issues between Tae-Ho and San-Wol because he never doubted his identity while cross-dressing, so this film leaves possibilities for audiences to explore gender. In contrast, *The Man with Breasts* reveals a queer identity issue, representing a social image of gay in a hospital scene. Thus, revealing queer identity in films seems political, regarding gender, because when queer identity is represented, it seems to leave a choice whether queer is acceptable to audiences, as well as the characters in the film. Thus, representing a queer image in a comedy genre might be a good strategy to queering, embracing the political meaning of gender against dominant masculine norms in a roundabout way. If there is a representation of queer related to identity in film, dealing with social prejudice and violence towards queer is inevitable. This enables audiences to recognise the reality of queer people and their problems in a gendered society. As for the representation of queer, there are two Korean queer filmmakers who have different perspectives dealing with queer subjects in their filmmaking. Their particular methods of approach to queer subjects and identity will be discussed in the next chapter.

2. Between Friendship and Love? : Bromance in Buddy Films

There have been many Korean films covering two same-sex protagonists: they are called ‘buddy films’. In fact, most buddy films in the Korean film industry seem to deal with male-male (with different personalities) relationships. In particular, since the 1990s, buddy films have been a popular genre with the success of *Two Cops* (1993) in the Korean film industry. Like the Hollywood film, *Lethal Weapon* (1987), *Two Cops* portrays two policemen with different personalities and backgrounds. Based on a male-male relationship, their different attitudes towards tackling a crime is a major

theme for this film because one protagonist is a dirty cop who receives a bribe from criminals and the other is a new cop with a passion who wants to punish criminals through the legal system. Due to their different approaches, they consistently face conflict in the film. However, in their common purpose to solve a crime, they compromise their conflict as police officers, building a friendship. In fact, a buddy film as a genre depicts a friendship in a male-male relationship. In addition, most Korean buddy films seem to display a strong masculinity through solving conflicts and compromising their character differences.

In the buddy film genre, the male-male relationship could be read in queer because their relationship basically requires the building of their friendship, but sometimes their relationship seems beyond friendship, revealing their 'bromance'. A bromance is a homosocial male bonding relationship to show their unusually close friendship (DeAngelis, 2014). In terms of homosociality, protagonists in Korean buddy films instigate their relationship in institutional settings, such as school, prison, or a police station, for example. Of course, some protagonists encounter each other in specific organisations like a corporation or gang. However, most Korean buddy films depict their protagonists as policemen or criminals and their location for them is mainly in institutional settings, where they can be trained to pursue their goal. In fact, these spaces where two males encounter each other are a very important motif in Korean buddy films because the space could decide their relationship, training and education in its system. For example, in *Two Cops*, the police station regulates the characters' relationship in mentorship. In buddy films featuring police officers, the police station becomes a convention as an institutionalised space to regulate the protagonists' attitude and behaviours. Indeed, since the success of *Two Cops* in 1993, there have

been many buddy films in the Korean film industry focusing on police crime investigation or corruption in comedy, action and thriller genres. This implies that their bromance is established when they face a serious threat to their life. Likewise, criminals who encounter each other in prison or a gang develop their relationship in special environments, such as prison or a hotbed of crime. Unlike police officers, their relationship is usually based on the past that they have experienced together. They tend to test their loyalty, friendship or mentorship to discover if they can trust each other. Their bromance is also very similar to that of the police officers when they face death or a moment to test their friendship or loyalty.

Showing a naked body in film might sexually attract an audience's attention: it could be a moment to reveal and imply a change of relationship between characters. It does not fully mean to create sexual tension between characters, but it could provide a momentum of the transition of the plot through the characters. In particular, a shower or bath scene with female and male characters could imply the status of their relationships, such as love or sexual attraction. However, if same-sex characters are depicted in a shower or bath scene, the meaning might be different to that inferred by heterosexual characters.

Many buddy films in the Korean film industry have a specific common feature to illustrate their relationship. It is a bath or shower scene that portrays two males washing together in a bathroom or public spa. In fact, many Korean films dealing with a friendship between males tend to show these bath or shower scenes to depict that they are close to each other, although these are clichéd. These scenes could be associated with queer reading because of revealing erotic friendship. They show their

intimate friendship between same-sex characters, bonding with each other, naked. Defining their relationship as erotic might be the wrong interpretation, however. Scenes depicting taking a shower or taking a bath together in Korean films are very common methods of proving a relationship is special beyond just friendship. There is a special word to refer to a close friend in Korean culture: Bul-Al-Chin-Gu, which literally means testicle-friend. This word implies that two males are in a very close relationship, even comfortable seeing each other's genitals. Thus, to enable a close male-male relationship, going to a public bath together might be necessary because they should not hide anything in terms of the trust. Thus, the erotic friendship between two males with naked bodies could provide possibilities of queer reading through an invisible tension, although it does not contain a fully sexual meaning.

The Merciless (2016) is a buddy film about two criminals with a special friendship. This scene shows how their trust or friendship is constructed, showing them urinating together in prison open urinal: even their buttocks touch. Likewise, in *The Man with Breasts*, Hye-Suk goes to a public sauna with his male colleagues to develop team membership, and he explores other males' bodies. Although Hye-Suk's true identity is a female, as a cross-dresser Hye-Suk's eyes take in males and females at the same time. His observation of naked male bodies in a public sauna reveals the erotic tension in queer reading. Thus, a male-male relationship sometimes describes complicated emotions, although it is based on friendship. In particular, after taking a bath or shower, the protagonists usually discover their mutual trust and friendship, and they build emotions beyond friendship. Furthermore, if physical contact occurs while they shower or bath, erotic tensions occur, based on homoeroticism. *The Pollen of*

Flowers (1972) is a good example, showing homoeroticism in the physical contact between two males.



Figure 9. Dan-Joo to massage HynMa.

In this scene (Figure 9), Dan-Joo's boss, Hyn-Ma, lies naked on a massage table while Dan-Joo massages him. In fact, scrubbing each others' bodies when taking a bath together in Korean society is also common behaviour, revealing an intimate relationship. Likewise, this massage scene provides an erotic tension between two male characters while naked. In particular, Hyn-Ma blatantly reveals his sexual desire to Dan-Joo, saying 'Your touch is too gentle and soft.' Indeed, *The Pollen of Flowers* shows how two male protagonists' physical contact could produce sexual tension in queer reading. In addition to this physical contact while naked, sexual tension between two same-sex characters could occur throughout scenes depicting various forms of physical contact, such as hugging, linking arms, holding hands and putting arms around each other's shoulders.

In Hong Kong martial arts films, many young men practice their martial arts and compete with other trainees, sometimes fighting each other. They usually sleep together on the floor or in the same space. Throughout their shared physical training, they develop their friendship and sometimes show their love beyond friendship (Grossman, 2000, Chiang and K. Wong, 2016). Likewise, Korean buddy films have a similar process, showing how friendship grows according to their lived background, such as a police department or prison. Thus, in the process of training, bromance can be revealed between male protagonists. In Hollywood, a bromance is (DeAngelis, 2014) depicted in a close friendship when a life-or-death crisis is faced. In particular, a special feeling beyond friendship is demonstrated when the protagonists are willing to die for their colleague and friend. They overcome their crisis, completing their mission in film narrative. Likewise, Korean buddy films depict the special relationships between male protagonists beyond friendship while they pursue their common goal. Obviously, they confront various crises such as death or the possibility of failing in their mission. However, throughout their cooperation and efforts, based on trust and friendship, they achieve their goal in the story. For example, buddy films about police officers show how they investigate crime and how they catch criminals. In *Two Cops*, the senior officer representing a corrupted policeman recovers his conscience, investigating crimes with his new partner who has a passion for being a good officer. In fact, these police buddy films seem similar to coming-of-age films because the main characters grow together, helping and competing with each other.

Unlike police buddy films, similar films about criminals show a different relationship. Each of the two protagonists reveals an issue of power between them. Thus, these buddy films illustrate that the two main characters strive to take control in

their relationship. Interestingly, two criminals share their history and work out the position between them. This is a verification to ascertain if they can trust each other. Unlike police officers, the film criminals' relationship is more associated with loyalty. Their relationship might not be innocent due to their hidden desire and intention to achieve individual or organisational benefits in their goal. Although their relationship might not be pure in film, they can reveal sexual tension while they are together. In *The Merciless* (2017), the protagonists meet in prison. As in *A Male and a Gisaeng*, their space can be a heterotopia because they share their secret and history in an isolated space. There must be a legal penalty to regulate prisoners' behaviour: however, they can reveal their desire in prison at the same time, being away from society.

In *The Merciless*, JaeHo is a character who has a desire to be a boss after being released from prison and HyunSu is an undercover cop investigating JaeHo and his boss, President Ko. Thus, this film is based on how these two characters pursue their desires and goals amidst loyalty and betrayal. In particular, HyunSu is portrayed as a character who must take sides between a gang member and a cop.

In *The Merciless*, JaeHo shows his obsession towards HyunSu. It cannot be explained by friendship, but by love. However, HyunSu's feelings towards JaeHo hover between friendship and love due to his personal ambition. Even when HyunSu confesses that he is working for the police undercover, JaeHo forgives him and accepts his confession. In fact, JaeHo already knows HyunSu is working for the police. JaeHo might be a gay, given his attitude towards HyunSu, unlike other gang members. When Hyun-Su comes to prison for the first time, JaeHo and HyunSu

carefully look at each other. In particular, JaeHo watches HyunSu's face and again when he is passed by HyunSu. As a heterotopia, a prison guarantees their privacy and secrets behind others' eyes, although laws and regulations might be working to control them. A prison space in film reveals an ambiguous identity regarding who are criminals and who are prison officers because prison has its own rules. This implies that all people in prison, isolated from society, have their own agenda and care about their own advantages.

The Merciless shows two men eating sushi in the film's first scene. One man, ByungGab, states that he does not like to eat sushi on the plate with a whole body and eyes because he is fearful of seeing a dead fish's eye and he mentions that his friend, JaeHo, kills people without any hesitation, looking into his enemy's eyes. This scene reveals how JaeHo has no mercy when he kills people. ByungGab kills the other man eating raw sushi by shooting him, revealing that he dislikes seeing the dead man's eyes.

JaeHo wears sunglasses in front of a red open-top sports car, waiting for HyunSu's release from prison. He seems very happy to see HyunSu and he introduces a Russian girl to him, in front of his gang members. On the road, HyunSu kisses the Russian girl in the back seat of the car and JaeHo seems to enjoy watching their sexual activity. This sequence describes how JaeHo cares about HyunSu and demonstrates that they share a special relationship.

In prison, many prisoners watch a game where two inmates slap each other's cheeks. Although there are prison officers, many prisoners enjoy watching the game, and JaeHo is among them. When one man is felled by a strong man's slap, HyunSu

steps out to confront a big man to join the game. Unlike other prisoners, HyuSu's appearance is very pretty, and his body size is quite small. His participation seems to be reckless but it also seems daring, to attract JaeHo's attention. Indeed, this genre of buddy film shows how masculine values could be regarded as a key factor. Proving strong masculinity in a male-dominated society implies that men could acquire power in a hierarchy system. In this scene, HyunSu attempts to impress JaeHo, who has power in prison. Indeed, JaeHo looks curiously towards HynSu. This is a very similar process to a king selecting his concubines. In order to win a game, HyunSu cheats, hitting a big man's cheek with his fist, instead of using a palm. Because of his cheating, the big man is very angry and asks JaeHo to judge this unfair result. However, JaeHo does not give any clear judgement regarding the game, and his ambiguous attitude instigates a group fight in prison. In this mass brawl, HyunSu imprints his fighting skills and courage on JaeHo's eyes.

JaeHo visits HyunSu's cell after the group fight and tells him he is the person to make the rules in prison. This scene is very important, providing a clue concerning JaeHo's identity because of his appellation towards HyunSu. When he mentions HyunSu's facial bruise, he says, 'Honey, you have a pretty bruise on your eye.' In Korean culture, Ja-Gi means 'Honey'; an affectionate term usually used by couples or married people in a heterosexual relationship. However, the word, 'honey', that JaeHo uses seems to have a very sexual meaning to reveal his desire. In the same way that a king visits one of his concubines' rooms to spend a night together, JaeHo goes to visit HyunSu at night and expresses his desire and feelings to him. Although HyunSu does not allow JaeHo to touch his bruise in this scene, their space seems to be filled with

sexual tension. JaeHo's speech and behaviours towards HyunSu create a homosexual atmosphere in the entire film.

Many prisoners with huge muscles are working out in a field, and JaeHo conducts his cigarette business with his gang. This sequence demonstrates how JaeHo controls the prison with his power, manipulating prison officers. In particular, this sequence depicts him as a messianic figure. Indeed, *The Merciless* uses many references and images from Christianity to illustrate JaeHo's exclusive power. This scene portrays JaeHo and his gang members like da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. In addition to this scene, the film attempts to make a strong connection with Christianity in its narrative and images. Unlike other films dealing with prisoners in Korea, *The Merciless* shows prisoners wearing an earth-coloured uniform instead of a blue one. This implies people were created in the dust of the ground. Furthermore, when JaeHo reveals his violence and aggression, the frame is illuminated in red. He drives a red sports car: he is represented in red, like blood. JaeHo and his gang celebrate HyunSu's release in a feast after the sequence of *The Last Supper*, toasting their 'brotherhood'. Similarly to the sharing of Jesus' bread and blood, they swear their loyalty and friendship. ByungGab is a very interesting character between JaeHo and HyunSu because he seems to be jealous of HyunSu and JaeHo's strong trust in him. In the feast with his boss and HyunSu, he attempts to show his position to HyunSu in a gang. He states that he could 'suck HyunSu's dick' on a beach if he loses a physical fight with him. Indeed, he directly describes homosexual activities in several scenes, doubting a relationship between JaeHo and HyunSu in a queer way.

Based on the bible, *The Merciless* attempts to tell a story of love and betrayal. Interestingly, he is represented as a god, Jesus or other characters in the bible, portraying various images between good and evil. When Sung-Han, who is a legendary boss in gangland society, comes to prison, Jae-Ho's power is tested. Likewise, the appearance of Sung-Han is a new opportunity for Hyun-Su to contact and to be close to Jae-Ho: this triggers his recognition of the ambiguity between the absolute good and evil. Sung-Han takes over from Jae-Ho, operating power and control in prison. All prison officers support him. Although Jae-Ho struggles to challenge his domination, he fails to win back his control in prison. Many followers have already left him, except Hyun-Su. When Hyun-Su and Jae-Ho pass by each other in the corridor, they see each other. Jae-Ho seems to sexually desire Hyun-Su. Hyun-Su also desires him in his undercover mission for investigation. Hyun-Su notices that one prisoner who betrayed Jae-Ho tries to kill him in the corridor and he saves Jae-Ho's life. Although they report this attempted murder to the prison governor, they discover that all prison officers and the governor are already on Sung-Han's side. However, Hyun-Su creates a trap with Jae-Ho to exploit the governor's corruption regarding smuggling cigarettes and he succeeds in threatening the governor to return to their side. Hyun-Su's tactic attracts Jae-Ho's interest and attention.

Their relationship is built on Sung-Han's torture and death by Jae-Ho in prison. The sequence of Sung-Han's torture illustrates Jae-Ho's nature and reveals a conflict between good and evil. In particular, a tattoo covering Sung-Han's body is that of a snake, but his tattoo ends at his knee. Jae-Ho tortures him with hot oil, looking at his eyes. Interestingly, he pours hot oil onto his knee. This seems to describe Sung-Han as a snake without legs. While Jae-Ho tortures and investigates why Sung-Han attempted

to kill him, the film shows a close shot of Jae-Ho eating an apple. Indeed, *The Merciless* attempts to adopt many images from the bible and constructs each character's personality. As a police officer, Hyun-Su should have stopped Jae-Ho's torture and murder of Sung-Han, but he ignores this terrible crime to be close to Jae-Ho. The film tells of ambiguity between good and evil.

With Hyun-Su's help, Jae-Ho recovers his power in prison, and he seems to fully trust Hyun-Su. However, in a flashback, the film starts to relate their complicated situation and potential conflict to break the trust between Jae-Ho, Hyun-Su, a gang and police organisation. In fact, a prosecutor forces Hyun-Su to be an undercover police officer to plan the undercover operations, trading his mother's kidney operation as compensation. In order to get rid of criminals, they illegally make a deal. While Jae-Ho recovers his power in prison, he asks Byung-Gap to investigate Hyun-Su's background because Hyun-Su asked if he could join his gang. In these flashbacks, the man who was killed by Byung-Gap during the film's opening sequence was also the undercover officer to contact the gang belonging to Jae-Ho. These flashback scenes show that Jae-Ho already knew that Hyun-Su was a police officer sent to investigate and he intentionally contacts himself. Although he knows these all these circumstances surrounding Hyun-Su, he seems to act generously towards him. So, he attempts to find a way to keep Hyun-Su to himself and to put his plan into action. Indeed, they seem to have a great time after Sung-Han's death, and they gradually build their trust and friendship. Jae-Ho and Hyun-Su share the same cell in prison because of Hyun-Su's request to use a bigger room as compensation for the help in getting rid of Sung-Han. However, Jae-Ho seems to watch and test Hyun-Su to see if they can work together.

Hyun-Su hears that his fellow officers find a kidney for his mother's operation and he shows Jae-Ho how happy he is. However, his mother is killed in a car accident with a truck on the way to the hospital. *The Merciless* does not show that Hyun-Su's mother's death is caused by Jae-Ho's plan. However, Hyun-Su's deep despair and sorrow is overlapped by Jae-Ho's concerns, who strives to comfort him. Hyun-Su keeps asking a prosecutor to get him out of prison to see his mother and to attend her funeral. The reply is that they cannot do anything because they worry about the undercover operation failing, and they threaten him that he could be an actual criminal if he confesses the truth to prison officers.

The colour red belongs to Jae-Ho in the *Merciless*. After phoning his mother, Hyun-Su lies down on the red chair, happy with the hope that his mother could have surgery. However, in Jae-Ho's colour, the film shows Hyun-Su's mother bleeding on the road. After his mother's death, Hyun-Su is broken, losing his mind in prison because he cannot get out of his small cell to attend his mother's funeral. Hyun-Su swears, curses and attacks Jae-Ho, bereft with his tragedy. In fact, if he did not join this undercover operation, his mother would be killed. They have a violent physical fight with each other. However, because of his mental state, Hyun-Su does not control the fight. While they fight, Jae-Ho keeps trying to recover Hyun-Su's mind, comforting him. In this scene, Jae-Ho also seems pained when he hits Hyun-Su, out of guilt or sympathy for his deep sorrow. However, Jae-Ho stops him with force and knocks Hyun-Su to the floor.

After a big fight, Hyun-Su is summoned to see a prison governor and he hears that he can go out to attend his mother's funeral. He learns that his police colleagues

do not help but that Jae-Ho helps him to attend the funeral by bribing the guard and officers. Throughout these sequences, the film demonstrates that Jae-Ho takes care of Hyun-Su from his heart, although he manipulates all situations in order to win Hyun-Su's trust. Interestingly, the colour red is very notable between Jae-Ho and Hyun-Su when Jae-Ho attempts to carry out an illegal or criminal plan. However, *The Merciless* also attempts to show colour of blue, contrasting the red, when Hyun-Su shows his intentions towards Jae-Ho. This seems to imply he is still a police officer, believing in the values of justice. Indeed, the symbolic colour of the South Korean police is blue. However, after Hyun-Su loses his trust in the prosecutor and police colleagues, his colour in the film gradually starts to change. In particular, a bluish colour with red is revealed after Hyun-Su's confession to Jae-Ho that he is the undercover cop to investigate a gang smuggling drugs. Indeed, Hyun-Su decides to be on Jae-Ho's side after coming back from his mother's funeral.

The Merciless shows Hyun-Su's changed attitude after joining a gang. In particular, he decides to be a double agent between a gang and a police organisation, but he appears to be on Jae-Ho's side. He seems to have a plan for revenge on the police organisation, which orders him to stay in prison although his mother died. The film focuses on a change in Hyun-Su's attitude concerning violence and a change of Jae-Ho's feelings towards Hyun-Su through fighting scenes. Hyun-Su gradually reveals his violent behaviour when he attacks his enemies. When Hyun-Su negotiates with a boss in another gang in Busan (a port city in Korea), Jae-Ho waits for Hyun-Su's sign to support him in case of emergency, whilst feeling restless because of worrying about Hyun-Su. In the first group fighting sequence, *The Merciless* portrays their brotherhood and friendship to help each other against enemies, in a buddy film

genre. This sequence shows how Jae-Ho cares about Hyun-Su's safety, describing Jae-Ho's help to save Hyun-Su. It also shows that Jae-Ho keeps calling Hyun-Su 'Honey' even while fighting. Although this behaviour and expression might be derived from his witty personality, *The Merciless* continues to portray Jae-Ho's affection towards Hyun-Su.

The background of an alley that Jae-Ho wanders around is illuminated in red. In a red coloured vibe, Jae-Ho wears a blue suit and tie. This implies that Jae-Ho's destiny in the film could be led by his colour as a police officer. Indeed, after Hyun-Su joins a gang, *The Merciless* attempts to use a red and blue colour to point to a change of the two protagonists' psychological attitudes. Jae-Ho seems not to conceal his feeling towards Hyun-Su and Hyun-Su seems to suffer from identity issues between being a police officer and a gang member. When an officer visits Hyun-Su, where many red containers are in a port, Jae-Ho notices their secret meeting. However, it turns out that Jae-Ho already knows that the man visiting Hyun-Su is a police officer. Indeed, after Hyun-Su joins Jae-Ho's gang, the film focuses on Hyun-Su's conflict between supporting the police organisation or a gang and it exposes the truth about Hyun-Su's mother. *The Merciless* describes Hyun-Su who seems not to be trusted even in the police organisation, portraying that the police and Prosecutor Chun kidnap him and examine his identity as an undercover officer. Their examination makes him decide to be more on Jae-Ho's side. However, although Jae-Ho has a strong feeling for Hyun-Su, he always seems to be very careful in all circumstances around his people. In particular, when he finds out Hyun-Su has a hidden voice recorder in his watch, supplied by the police organisation, he stops the elevator. JaeHo checks Hyun-Su's body in the elevator to investigate if Hyun-Su has a suspicious object like a camera or

recorder. This scene dealing with their physical contact seems to portray their sexual tension, due to their breath on each other in an isolated space. Indeed, JaeHo touches all parts of HyunSu's body, and HyunSu's face seems to show sexual excitement in this scene, in close-up. This might seem to portray that HyunSu feels JaeHo's touches. Jae-Ho seems to feel guilty but also sexually excited in this sequence. Hyun-Su is very angry at Jae-Ho, not trusting his loyalty. In an awkward scene, Jae-Ho takes Hyun-Su to his red sports car and brings him to a secret place where he grew up and planned his future. Likewise, his secret place is filled with a red coloured light. Showing a secret place probably reveals his feeling towards Hyun-Su, sharing his past. Like sharing a space in prison, Jae-Ho and Hyun-Su share their special feelings between love, friendship and loyalty. However, their relationship is destroyed when the fact surrounding the death of Hyun-Su's mother is revealed. When Prosecutor Chun discovers that Hyun-Su betrays the police organisation and ruins a covert operation to catch drug smugglers, she shows the recorded video to Hyun-Su as evidence. Although Prosecutor Chun already knew, they have concealed the fact of his mother's death to manipulate Hyun-Su for their own purpose. Interestingly, she notices the special relationship between Hyun-Su and Jae-Ho, after seeing their photos in which they smile at each other. She notices their affection and friendship in photos taken by their spy camera.

The Merciless attempts to give a hint of tragedy between Hyun-Su and Jae-Ho. Before they set up a plan to betray a boss of gang and cops at the same time, they visit a beach with their gang members, including Byung-Gap. Late at night, they set off fireworks, enjoying and sharing their moment. With the fireworks disappearing in the sky, they talk about they would not be able to be together if Hyun-Su's mother was

not dead. They lie down together in the red sports car, watching fireworks. This sequence implies that Jae-Ho's desire to be with Hyun-Su might disappear, like fireworks in the sky. After Hyun-Su finds out Jae-Ho planned everything, including his mother's death while he was in prison, he seems to turn back to be on Persecutor Chun's side. He calls Jae-Ho and asks if there is anyone who knows he is an undercover officer because he will be secretly investigated for the failure of an operation. He asks Jae-Ho to meet in a covert place that only they know. Jae-Ho goes to see Byung-Gap ask if he reported Hyun-Su's identity to the police. However, *The Merciless* tells that Jae-Ho already knows Byung-Gap is not a person to betray him. Although Byung-Gap is innocent, Jae-Ho kills his old friend because of trust or love towards Hyun-Su. Indeed, Byung-Gap tells Jae-Ho that he is blind and entreats him to see everything rationally.

The film uses a change of colour from red to blue. While Jae-Ho drives to their secret place, the colour in the frame is changed from red to blue. This scene implies Jae-Ho's destiny and that he might die. Although Jae-Ho already knows Hyun-Su and the police set up the situation to catch him, he goes to see Hyun-Su. When they confront the truth, they still reveal how they affect each other. In particular, Jae-Ho's face looks as though he is crying when he aims a gun at Hyun-Su. And he tells I might be blinded. Literally, it means he admits he was blinded by Hyun-Su and his saying finally proves that he loves Hyun-Su. Jae-Ho cannot kill Hyun-Su, hesitating and not seeing Hyun-Su's eyes. Likewise, Hyun-Su confesses there are police around the building. This seems to show that Hyun-Su still has loyalty and affection towards Jae-Ho. Thus, their relationship is completed in Jae-Ho's tears and asking of Hyun-Su, 'Do you trust me?' Jae-Ho's feeling towards Hyun-Su is love, but Hyun-Su's feeling

towards Jae-Ho might not be love. After Jae-Ho kills all the police officers who hide to catch him, he leaves Hyun-Su behind, but he is hit by Prosecutor Chun's car. Under the red light, he hardly breathes on the ground, bleeding. Prosecutor Chun comes to Jae-Ho and takes evidence about smuggling drugs from his gang. She leaves Jae-Ho behind: he is dying on the ground under the red light. However, she is soon killed by Hyun-Su, following Jae-Ho. In fact, Jae-Ho did not need to come to see Hyun-Su. And he could kill him as soon as he meets Hyun-Su. Thus, this last sequence dealing with Jae-Ho's one-way love towards Hyun-Su portrays his doom in his beliefs, because he always believed the situations, not people. But, due to his love, he throws away his beliefs to construct his life. Hyun-Su comes to see Jae-Ho dying on the ground and Jae-Ho tells Hyun-Su, 'Do not make a mistake, like me.' The camera focuses on Jae-Ho's face. Hyun-Su closes Jae-Ho's mouth with his hands to stop him breathing and he chokes to death, looking at his eyes. This scene seems to show Hyun-Su takes over Jae-Ho's will or power in the end. However, after Jae-Ho's death, the film shows Hyun-Su's tears in Jae-Ho's red sports car. *The Merciless* might be a good script to reveal a possibility for queer reading in the buddy film genre, because this film lies between the boundaries dealing with male love and friendship in a complicated emotion.

The Merciless covers many controversial issues related to queer due to the unusual friendship between the two protagonists. In particular, many moviegoers watching this film organised a community to analyse the story and to share their opinions about the two characters' love and friendship, debating the meaning of bromance, based on the meaning of queer (Kim, Hyo-Eun, 2017). This shows that films enable the public to voluntarily discuss various issues on different platforms, such as the Internet. In terms

of queer reading, *The Merciless* is a very interesting text regarding bromance and heterotopia.

Buddy films are based on traditional and conventional masculinity. Most protagonists in buddy films seem to be free from restraints or regulation by dominant norms in Korea because they already belong to a masculine society. Their feelings for each other in masculine values seem to replace conventional heterosexual relationships via romantic bonding friendship. Interestingly, their romance seems to be acceptable within masculine values. Thus, this provides a possibility of queer reading because their same-sex relationship could be guaranteed in masculinity and could be interpreted as love beyond friendship. In buddy films, each protagonist attempts to prove his true friendship, loyalty and love for another in a same-sex relationship. This enables audiences to imagine their relationship in queer reading.

This chapter has examined several films that can be read in queerness. In fact, queer reading in this chapter is based on looking at ambiguity and unfamiliarity from traditional or conventional reading. Cross-dressing in a comedy genre provides unfamiliarity in a gender binary system and bromance or erotic-friendship in buddy films reveals an ambiguous relationship between love and friendship via same-sex characters. This implies queer reading might refuse to see films in a conventional way. Thus, queer reading is possible when audiences are distanced from films based on ambiguity and unfamiliarity. Throughout the distanciation, queer reading enables audiences to explore the meaning of gender. Likewise, it helps film directors or producers to consider a new method to express an image of gender in their filmmaking; especially queer filmmaking.

Chapter Four. Regarding to Korean Queer Cinema

Homosexual behaviour is easily found in Korean history. However, the advent of discourses related to homosexual identity truly began in 1994. Likewise, the representation of homosexuality could be found in several Korean films and through queer reading. However, the history of Korean queer cinema really began with *Broken Branches* (1995), which is regarded as the first Korean queer film. In terms of the country's history, this may imply that no Koreans had been interested in homosexuality before 1995. Although there have always been queer people in Korean society, homosexuality there was seldom openly expressed. However, there are interesting revelations about why, suddenly, the film industry became interested in a formerly taboo subject at this point.

The achievement of democratisation and the rapid economic development of the early 1990s brought many changes to Korean society. In particular, with the student movement in Korean universities, there was an attempt to bring many Western thoughts and theories over in order to introduce new perspectives to Korean society. In particular, the concept of coming out was introduced in 1994, when the first gay and lesbian communities were organised in Korean universities. These queer communities looked into the Western gay liberal movement and explored queer identities via cases in the West.

With the spread of portable video cameras in the 1980s, college students who were engaged with democratisation and social issues looked at the possibility of film making in order to document the social or political issues of Korean society. This caused an inflow of well-educated college students into the Korean film industry, enabling it to grow from strength to strength. Unlike studio-produced films, many indie films produced during this period could avoid government censorship because they were only shown and distributed in universities (Kim, Jung-Hwan, 2013). These indie films could be used as a channel to discuss various social and political issues opposed to the military regime and enabled mobilisation for student movements. This demonstrates how film making could be a practical tool used as a means to bring about political or social change in Korean society, reporting on its social or political problems.

Indeed, the movement for homosexual equality in Korea can be explained in a historical context as a protest against the military regime and in favour of democratisation. In particular, the inflow of many students who had studied abroad and activists for gender diversity gradually became more interested in film as general features. They came together in nearby universities and attempted to explore gender identity through film. In fact, this activity is not only found in film, but also in many various fields such as Korean literature, music, and painting and etc (Bae, Kyoung-Min, 2004). However, exploring homosexuality in Korea has been covered in celluloid more than other fields. This implies that films are a more easily accessible and politically influential medium for the general public.

Korean films are not always political, and film making does not need to have a specific political purpose. However, while some Korean films were produced and exploited by certain government regimes in order to support their espoused policies and national values, they also sometimes revealed a critical position at the same time. This filmmaking tradition has been kept up by the Korean film industry. Although moviegoers might not notice why Korean films often attempt to show political messages to shine a light on various issues in the country, they may understand that filmmaking in Korea has to be free to criticise society and go beyond mere entertainment. This might be a special feature – that the Korean film industry has an important role as a watchdog and critic towards society at large. With this specific feature, Koreans involved in gender activism have focused on the gender representation of characters in films. In particular, they have looked into how these representations can politically affect the gender perception of audiences. In addition to this, they aggressively attempt to participate in film making to show gender diversity. Furthermore, they introduce many interesting foreign films in film festivals, established with a political purpose. These activists, thus, are very related to queer representation beyond the subject of homosexuality (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005, KimJho, Gwang-Soo and Kim, Do-Hye, 2012).

Unlike other countries, the Korean film industry has had a tricky relationship with homosexuality that is born from perceived audience ignorance. Thus, filmmaking dealing with homosexuality was usually produced by the indie film scene until Korean audiences acknowledged the existence of homosexuality in Korea when Hong Suk-Cheon, a Korean celebrity, officially came out to the public in the year 2000. Indie films in Korea are relatively and politically free from censorship,

and due to the free atmosphere after the end of the military regime, filmmakers and producers in the indie film world became interested in looking at what Korean society had barely considered and what they did not know (Kang, Suk-Youn, 2000). Therefore, indie films in Korea tend to focus on subjects related to political matters to expose and to show various issues to the public. However, the expansion of the indie film industry in Korea has also brought positive changes to the mainstream film industry as it has enabled many talented and well-trained film professionals from the indie film industry to move to its mainstream counterpart. In addition, the content or subject of independent films has been more flexible than in the mainstream (Kang, Suk-Youn, 2000). This implies that the relationship between them is complementary. It is probable that aggressively dealing with homosexuality in the indie film industry was inevitable, considering the limitations on expression in Korea's gendered society.

Korean indie films can portray homosexuality with more nuance than mainstream films as they are subject to less censorship (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). On the other hand, in the mainstream industry films might have a barrier to expressing homosexual subjects for various reasons, including censorship. In fact, although Korean films might be political as a watchdog or reporter, sometimes films in the mainstream industry help to support national values that the Korean regime requires (Kim, Won, 2013). This might be a force by the power of government or an intended purpose for benefits to make a profit or to succeed in a market. Korean films have been located in between dependent and independent environments due to various regulations by the government. Thus, making a balance between them limits choosing a subject and genre for the mainstream film industry in terms of politics

and economy. Nevertheless, the Korean mainstream film industry has attempted to deal with political subjects, being interested in various matters and portraying them in their creative ways to avoid regulations and censorship (Kang, Suk-Youn, 2000, Seo, Kok-Sook, 2008).

In this chapter, I will investigate Korean queer films that directly deal with queer subjects. The aim of this is to further understand Korean queer films and to seek implications about the purpose of them and queer filmmaking in general. Therefore, I want to know why filmmakers and producers in the Korean film industry produce queer films, considering various factors in terms of politics and economics. Furthermore, this chapter will help my argument's related purpose of dealing with queer matters in film making in a heteronormative film industry via several Korean queer films: *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* (2001), *A Frozen Flower* (2008), *Like a Virgin* (2006) and several queer films that two gay directors, KimJho, GwangSoo and LeeSong, HeeIl, produced. In particular, I will attempt to figure out how dealing with queer subjects in the Korean film industry brings any political meanings to the Korean gender society despite there being limitations to representing queer subjects.

1. Films Dealing with Queer and Death: *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* (2001) and *A Frozen Flower* (2008)

The Korean mainstream film industry normally limits the representation of gender to ensure that it conforms with two social norms: heteronormativity and hyper-masculinity. The social construction of masculinity in particular exerts a strong influence on Korean politics, economics, culture and education, and the film

industry is no exception. In this chapter I argue that the film *A Frozen Flower*, however, offers a radical departure from the Korean mainstream film industry by challenging the heteronormativity and hyper-masculinity rooted in so-called traditional gender values.

In the Korean mainstream film market, *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* was a very rare successful movie dealing with human nature's consideration between homosexual and heterosexual love. When *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* was released, because of the expression of homosexual love between a male teacher and his student, the production had several problems in securing enough screens and distribution channels. However, as the Korean Walt Disney, a foreign distribution company in Korea atypically distributed *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* in the Korean film market so this movie could be released.

Bungee Jumping of Their Own tells the love story between a male protagonist, In-Woo, and a female protagonist, Tae-Hee. However, this movie is not only a heterosexual romance as it tackles a love story beyond death through samsara or transmigration. Our leads seem fated to fall in love at first sight when Tae-Hee jumps into In-Woo's umbrella on a rainy day. However, their meeting is not a coincidence as Tae-Hee had already fallen in love when she saw In-Woo from a distance. Jumping into his umbrella was her choice for achieving love, testing fate to see if he had the same feelings for like her. Their love is obviously based on heterosexuality until Tae-Hee dies via car accident. She believes that fate can be made by humans' choices in a narrative. When they climb to the mountain, they stand in front of the steep cliff and Tae-Hee says "There is one place in New Zealand, where people can

jump off from a high position like this cliff. Even I jump down from this cliff, I believe my life will not be ended". Through this scene, *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* attempts to compare a boundary between a death/jumping down and living/eternity. Thus, the love between In-Woo and Tae-Hee attempts to acquire immortality beyond death.

In fact, the film is based on the fantasy of dealing with rebirth. The two protagonists' love seems to be ended by Tae-Hee's death. Twenty years later, In-Woo became a Korean literature teacher in a high-school in 2001, and he's married with a family, as others with normal lives do. However, when In-Woo finds out that Tae-Hee was born again in his student, Hyun-Bin, his love towards Tae-Hee is renewed. After finding out Tae-Hee has been reborn as Hyun-Bin, most events in the film are related to prejudice between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Even when In-Woo doubts his belief that she is reincarnated, he goes to see a mental psychiatrist to find out if he is a gay. This still implies that being attracted to a same-sex is related to mental disorders, reflecting the social of recognition about homosexuality at that time. Although the doctor says he does not have any mental problems in relation to homosexual affection, In-Woo always stares at Hyun-Bin. Overall, *Bungee Jumping of Their Own* is the film about prejudice and violence towards homosexuality. When a colleague of In-Woo and his students doubt his emotion about Hyun-Bin, most people turn their back on him without any understanding of why he stares at Hyun-Bin. This is because the homosexual atmosphere around him was regarded as an abnormal attitude. Hyun-Bin's respect towards his teacher, In-Woo seems to be denied in order to avoid bullying and he blames his friends for not trying to understand homosexual emotion, although his respect is still pure. With

many suspicions and misunderstandings about In-Woo as a teacher caused by his homosexual affections, he is faced with having to leave school. However, a sadder situation than quitting a job for him is Hyun-Bin, because he feels Hyun-Bin is both Tae-Hee and his destiny, but Hyun-Bin does not notice that In-Woo is the one he should be with. In fact, after conflicts caused by homosexual emotion and behaviour in several sequences in this film, the plot point of Hyun-Bin realising he is a rebirth of Tae-Hee seems to not be an important matter in the entire film because this film is to tell about how they find each other beyond the death.

In the last sequence, the film shows them going to New Zealand to keep their promise of travelling together from when they were in heterosexual love. Holding hands with each other on the street, they seem to feel freedom being away from prejudice towards homosexuality. Indeed, their love seems to be truly achieved when the film depicts them gazing at each other at the top of the mountain against the blue sky. However, as soon as they jump from a cliff without any safety, the camera just shows the beautiful scenery of New Zealand, as if these two protagonists fly around beyond deaths. In fact, this film reveals an invisible boundary between life and death through Tae-Hee. As she said about death via bungee jumping, death is not an end, but it would be another beginning of life. If their love can achieve eternity beyond life and death, any matters, including heterosexuality or homosexuality, seem not to be serious in terms of the ultimate value of love, which should be accepted openly without any prejudice.

When Bungee Jumping of Their Own was released in the Korean film market it brought up a controversial social issue about homosexual love. Unlike other queer

films in the indie film industry, it starred a very famous actor, Lee Byung-Hyun as In-Woo and showed complicated feelings towards the same sex, although it is not a truly homosexual love story. When this film was introduced for the first time, it did not attract a lot of attention from audiences; however, many audiences watched this film started voluntarily to leave a good review by themselves on online to save a good movie from a film market situation dominated by several big budget movies. Regardless of the content and subject dealing with homosexuality, this film would attract large audiences in the long run. With this unexpected movement, it also opened several issues related to homosexuality. In particular, many researchers argued how this film could be seen in terms of gender, queer or homosexuality (Lee, Hyun-Ju, 2008). In addition, it also brought some issues about how queer film can be defined in the Korean context and the Korean mainstream film industry (Lee, Hyun-Ju, 2008). Of course, the film deals with the homosexual subject between two male protagonists, but their love is based on heterosexuality between In-Woo and Tae-Hee. Thus, this might not be regarded as a queer film due to several reasons, including how it seems to support heteronormativity. However, this film reveals the problem of gender perception towards homosexuality. Although this film seen to support a heteronormativity, this brought a queer issue to politically discuss a meaning of gender. Thus, in the political context, this film can be seen as a queer film. This perspective will be further discussed after looking into other queer films dealing with homosexuality as a subject.

When *A Frozen Flower* appeared in 2008, it represented homosexual love and behaviour in a way that the Korean mainstream film industry had never portrayed before, as its story was based on the actual history of homosexual practices at the end

of the Goryeo dynasty. The Goryeo dynasty preceded the 500-year long Chosŏn dynasty, which was responsible for institutionalising the kind of patriarchal neo-Confucianism that continues to play a role in the social construction of gender relations today. This earlier Goryeo dynasty was thus a time when the social position between males and females was relatively equal.

In *A Frozen Flower*, two male protagonists, King Gongmin and HongLim as a King's bodyguard, show homosexual love and behaviour at the beginning of the film. This scene is based on actual history about homosexuality was not abnormal sexual behaviour during Goryeo dynasty. Although homosexual behaviour was not abnormal, homosexuality was not recommended. *A Frozen Flower* manages to invert gender relations by virtue of its setting in the Goryeo Dynasty, where it positions homosexuality as the dominant gender power. King Gongmin in the film represents a strong male character with masculinity and power in a strong nation, Goryeo, against the Chinese Kingdom, Yuan. In his desire to promote the national power, he pursues his sexual desire as organising his sexual escort under the name of the King's army. Honglim is the beloved one who King Gongmin trusts most. Beyond the loyalty between the master and servant, their love seems to be very enthusiastic until a Chinese princess, NoKuk, comes to Goryeo to get married to King Gongmin. In terms of actual history, the Chinese Kingdom, Yuan, took Goryeo princes to mainland China to educate them. However, in fact, this was a kidnap attempt to make the Goryeo dynasty obey. In order to acquire permission as the Goryeo King from Yuan Kingdom, kings were to get married to a Chinese princess during this era. With this historical background in mind, King Gongmin should get married to Nokuk. However, as a gay person, he does not want to engage in any physical

behaviour with a girl and submits his will to make a strong nation against China. The film, thus, reveals the power relations through the political situation between Goryeo and the Yuan Kingdom, and this represents the gender relationship through a conflict between heterosexuality and homosexuality.

What *A Frozen Flower* does is reveal how gender construction is largely mediated by the dominant power. In the Goryeo dynasty, although King Gongmin is regulated in his power by the Yuan Kingdom, he has a dominant power in his nation. He rules policies and organises his army to protect his land. The film shows that Gongmin raised his servants and educated them as his escorts. This exposes how gender is controlled and restricted by the dominant power and ideological state apparatus. By representing homosexuality constructed as a sublime and spiritual meaning in the film, it acquires the power. Their love is pure and there is loyalty towards the king and nation. Thus, Honglim can have sex with Nokuk instead of King Gongmin. Honglim was a man who was educated as an elite in the national institute by the dominant gender power, homosexuality. With a constructed homosexual identity, his first sex with Nokuk Princess was odd for him. Normally, homosexual behaviour could be odd in a heteronormativity society; however, in the film, it is the first heterosexual sex for Honglim that is unnatural. Compared to the current gendered society by heteronormativity in Korea, this inverting of the relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality seems to expose that sexuality could be constructed by the dominant power and how that, for some political matters in context, sexuality could be regulated. After all, the film thus helps to expose and underscore how sexuality is socially determined.

Struggling to regain the actual identity in this film is not only for homosexual characters but also for heterosexual characters to achieve power. After engaging in heterosexual behaviour with the Nokuk princess, Honglim faces a conflict between the loyalty towards his king and his heterosexual identity. Upon realising that he can have sex with a girl, the loyalty derived from homosexuality is prosecuted by the dominant power, King Gongmin. Based on his homosexuality, the power of Honglim could be achieved with the goal of making a strong nation. However, as soon as he recovers his heterosexual identity, his loyalty is doubted and he is banished by the central power. This implies the film inverts the situation where queers are banished in a heteronormative society when they come out from the closet. With Honglim regaining his actual identity, the film reveals how the dominant power could exclude those who are different in gender homogeneity.

A Frozen Flower tells a tragedy via two protagonists' deaths. Their conflict is not very related to their love, although it looks like it is derived from loyalty and love based on homosexual norms. In terms of the power, homosexuality and heterosexuality are not an important matter for power relationships between the Goryeo dynasty and Yuan Kingdom. Everything can be replaced to maintain the dominant power, thus, this means King Gongmin could be replaced. The gender power of homosexuality in the film also can be replaced for keeping the dominant power. In the last sequence, the fight caused by the conflict between Honglim and King Gongmin could be a sacrifice manipulated by the dominant power group.

This film basically is based on the power of masculinity, which controls norms or the systems of society in film. After all, this implies that dominant power is based on

masculinity. This power of masculinity plays a role in the construction of gender identity, with the ideological state apparatus represented educational institutes in film, and this is articulated in relation to the dominant gender and homosexuality in film. Inverting the relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality achieves three things: 1) it reveals the construction of sexual identity by the dominant power, 2) exposes how gender can be regulated by the dominant gender norms, 3) to face a dominant gender power in current Korea. Thus, *A Frozen Flower* tells how the dominant gender group exploits the ideological state apparatus to maintain their ruling power beyond queer matters. If it fails to maintain power, the film shows how dominant gender can be changed.

When *A Frozen flower* came out in 2008, it risked being criticised by religious organisations and anti-queer movements. Two famous Korean actors, Jo, In-Sung and Joo, Jin-Mo, who played Honglim and King Gongmin, were advertising the movie as Gggot-Mi-Nam, referred to as beautiful men, to attract Korean female moviegoers. This star marketing strategy was very successful. In particular, news of two well-known heterosexual actors representing homosexual characters in film stimulated Koreans' curiosity regardless of the subject matter (Kim, Jeong-Sun, Min, Yong, 2012). In drawing on a historical moment from the Goryeo dynasty, *A Frozen Flower* seemed to avoid severe criticism from religious organisations or homophobic perspectives. Furthermore, in portraying the death of two male protagonists representing homosexuality in the last sequence, the film seemed to address recovery of heteronormativity, obtaining a stable gender position from the dominant power, masculinity. Gender identity issues causing the main conflicts throughout the entire narrative result in resolving the existence of heteronormativity. In spite of this ending

describing a recovery of heterosexuality, the film leaves various thoughts lingering about homosexuality in Korean society. In fact, although this film deals with a queer subject based on actual history, with graphic gay sex scenes performed by famous actors, it barely brought many queer issues up for the Korean gender society (Yang, Sung-Hee, 2009). Despite exceptional queer representation in the Korean mainstream film industry, Korean audiences might prefer to see an ordinary narrative constructed by conventional film making something on a queer subject instead. Audiences might want to ignore the tragic reality of homosexuality in Korea because it is an uncomfortable truth that they already know or do not want to know.

In *The King and Clowns* one male protagonist acting clown suggests an inverting gender role as acting a female character in a satire play, and it brings homosexual discourses through brotherhood between two clowns' relationship with the King's madness towards political advantages in a kingdom. In fact, *The King and Clowns* bring up many controversial issues on whether this film could be seen as queer. One of the characters, Gong-Gil acts a female in a play as a cross-dresser and has a gay kiss scene between the king and him when the king sees Gong-Gil falling asleep in front of him after performing a traditional puppet play. In addition to the unexpected kiss, this film also depicts complicated tension between two clowns who are beyond friendship. In particular, Woo-Sung, who is one of clowns as a friend of Gong-Gil to ask to go to a big city to make more money, reveals a hostile feeling towards the king after Gong-Gil receives a lot of attention from him because he doubts that Gong-Gil got raped or was forced into physical contact by the king.

Although this film entirely does not directly address homosexual matters, based on the bromance between the two clowns and the obsession between Gong-Gil by King, many audiences and film critics suggested that this film could be considered queer. In terms of the brother-romance and the behaviour of changing into another gender's clothes, this film seems to reveal various gender issues related to homosexuality, and these issues produce homosexual discourses beyond the subject of film in Korean society (Lee, Hyun-Ju, 2008). *The King and Clowns* attracted more than 10 million moviegoers and it brought attention about homosexuality due to the complicated affection between the King and Gong-Gil. Indeed, this film created a homosexual discourse in academic due to a queer expression. With its financial success in the Korean film market, this proves that films dealing with gender matters like homosexuality can succeed both in terms of political discourse and the box office.

The Korean mainstream film industry normally limits the representation of homosexuality due to the risks in returns in investment and profits. In the Korean film industry, dealing with homosexual subject matter implies that it could receive a high standard of rating in the media rating board in terms of juvenile protection. This, therefore, could negatively affect film directors or producers' plans to tackle gender matters like queer subjects in the future. Securing enough investment is an important feature for queer film making in the Korean mainstream industry. Casting Korean celebrities or well-known actors, therefore seems to be very important in securing enough money and the right to use images of them to create a reliable profit in the Korean film market. Although only casting well-known actors entirely cannot guarantee success for a queer film, it could help to attract Korean moviegoers,

generating reliable ticket power in terms of star marketing (Yang, Sung-Hee, 2009, Kim, Jeong-Sun, Min, Yong, 2012). In addition to this, films dealing with queer matters tend to hide homosexuality in marketing before release at first. In *Bungee Jumping of Their Own*, the film poster only shows the couple, one male protagonist and female protagonist, hiding the other main protagonist as a rebirth of Taehee. Furthermore, in a trailer of *Bungee Jumping of Their Own*, the trailer to promote the film only showed only two main characters, the male and female protagonist. Likewise, *A Frozen Flower* also hides its homosexual images between two male protagonists, focusing more on historical images for each character. This marketing strategy might prevent having the product labelled as a queer film before release in the market, as defining it as such could imply that it could obtain imprudent criticism without rational interpretation of the film. Korean Disney pictures were careful with this when they distributed *Bungee Jumping of Their Own*, introducing queer films in the Korean mainstream film market, as they knew it could be a difficult challenge considering the various perspectives towards homophobia and prejudices about homosexuality.

A Frozen Flower also seemed to avoid showing their homosexual subject matter in its poster and promotion when it was introduced. Many media outlets tended to focus on the challenge of acting for two heterosexual actors in representing gay characters for the entire movie. Unlike other indie films dealing with homosexual subjects, *A Frozen Flower* was promoted without any prejudice towards homosexuality. Although there were some homophobic matters brought up when this film was released, relatively this film could be free from homophobic perspectives because of their brave homosexual acting. Like this film, *Antique* (2009) also

adopted a similar strategy to separate it from homophobic perspectives in the film market. This film shows four different male characters who have painful histories and live together to manage their own European bakery. Among them, one male protagonist has a private history as a gay man in Korea. The most interesting point is that there is no conflict derived from homosexuality in this film; it openly accepts homosexuality through its other characters and protagonists, hiding homosexual images behind beautiful faces of actors. However, it also has a similar limitation in that homosexual images seem to be constructed in a heteronormative way, making sure that heterosexuality is located in the main plot to solve most conflicts.

In terms of star marketing, most commercial films dealing with and depicting homosexual subjects tend to attempt to cast good looking actors with beautiful faces in order to avoid serious judgement about addressing homophobic issues. Furthermore, they try to focus on the actors doing a hard-working job, portraying homosexual characters and taking on a challenging new role via many media outlets, emphasising how heterosexual actors could act homosexual characters and show homosexual sex in the film. (Kim, Jeong-Sun, Min, Yong, 2012). Nevertheless, these films could not entirely avoid suspicions of homosexuality, expanding gender discourses that Korea's gendered society barely considers. Indeed, in a market situation pursuing profits, dealing with queer matters seems to be difficult. In spite of this, what commercial films with queer subjects in Korea do is reveal the reality of Korea's gender society via the political power of film, although, as we have discussed, they cannot represent themselves as a queer film in the market directly.

These three films, *Bungee Jumping of Their Own, King and Clowns* and *A Frozen Flower* are the successful commercial films dealing with queer subjects in the Korean mainstream film market, though these films describe homosexual love or friendship with a heterosexual expression. Following the conventional way of film making, these films do not aggressively attempt to highlight their homosexual nature, they just deal with it as one of the triggers causing a conflict in their narrative. Based on the drama genre or melodrama genre, these films more focus on dramatic climaxes to tell their essential narrative subject via each character's conflicts. The narratives that these films describe are about a desire that each protagonist pursues, with their ultimate goal being love.

When these commercial films show most of the main protagonists representing the homosexual identity face death at the end of the film, they seem to indicate homosexuality is associated with tragedy. This might imply that homosexuality might be bad. The way to describe homosexuality being associated with death might give negative images or thoughts to audiences; however, in the entire narrative, they also attempt to provide explanations about the reality of it in Korean society. The limits they have actually expose the heteronormativity and the gendered society of the dominant gender power, hyper-masculinity. In particular, films in the mainstream market seem to support this, describing the death of homosexuality via characters represented by queer images. Thus, these films might not be able to be queer films in Korea. Thus, this tendency to describe homosexuality under hyper-masculinity might be an unavoidable choice in the mainstream market in order to secure enough profits. In spite of this limitation of commercial films dealing with homosexual subjects, these films still have the possibility of creating homosexual issues in Korea's gender

society. Through revealing queer images, this could make audiences recognise the existence of queer and wonder why homosexual matters in film should be dealt with in their own tragic narratives. If a queer matter in film is not persuasive in its narrative, audiences can feel a distance from homosexuality, recognising it as unfamiliarity. These films, therefore, were very politically successful in persuading people as to why homosexuality should be represented to support their subject (mostly in love stories).

Although commercial films in the Korean film industry have various limitations regarding politics and economic perspectives, they still have the possibility of enabling Korean audiences to look at what they have barely seen or what they barely care about. In particular, these commercial films portraying queer images have expanded a variety of gender subjects and proven that these queer subjects can succeed in the Korean film market beyond regulations about the abnormality of homosexuality in Korean film law. Thus, this implies that some films in the mainstream market might have a political impact and influence on audience's perception regardless of figuring out their intention. Although these films in the Korean mainstream film market have dealt with queer subjects, they seldom brought about any controversial criticism from audiences related to queer matters in Korean gendered society. This is because they adopted a conventional film making style based on the melodrama genre for audiences familiar with watching heteronormative love stories. This implies that genre of melodrama can be easily used to reveal queerness and it can bring a political matter of it.

2. Living as a Queer Teenager in School: *Like a Virgin* (2006)

Homosexual identity issues are still regarded as an abnormal psychological disorder, particularly in regards to developing youths (Yun, Jin-Suk, 2003). Revealing homosexual identities in Korean society could be explained as social exclusion in terms of abnormality. Gender education in Korea more focuses on gender binary, which was given at birth, and this regulates that other gender identities like LGBT could be involved (Suh, Dong-Jin, 2001, Yun, Su-Jong, 2012). In terms of the construction of gender identity, the Korean gendered society of masculinity violates the freedom of individuals to construct their gender identity for themselves through education, maintaining the dominant gender power.

In May 2016, one of the biggest hospitals in South Korea, the Samsung Medical Centre reported very interesting research about homosexual adolescents in South Korea (Lee, Dong-Yun, Kim, Seo-Hee, Seok, Young-Woo, Youn, Byoung-Koo and Choi-DooSeok). In particular, this research shows very significant data related to how many Korean homosexual adolescents are struggling to live as a minority in school. Indeed, this study might have an important meaning in dealing with the current situation of homosexual Korean adolescents. However, it still has limitations in only looking into Korean homosexual adolescents in a psychopathological way. First of all, this study attempted to figure out how Korean homosexual adolescents face health-risks and health cognition with their sexual orientation. It also attempted to compare findings between homosexual and heterosexual adolescents in terms of health-risk behaviours. Thus, this study shows how Korean homosexual adolescents are exposed to high-risk health problems compared to heterosexual adolescents. According to its findings, homosexual adolescents are more likely to be in high-risk

environments, leading to them committing suicide or trying alcohol and drugs. In particular, compared to heterosexual adolescents, this study tells us that homosexual adolescents in Korea are in high-risk health conditions (Lee, Dong-Yun, Kim, Seo-Hee, Seok, Young-Woo, Youn, Byoung-Koo and Choi-DooSeok).

Living as a queer teenager in Korea could be impossible, at least if you wish to reveal your identity. In Korean gender education, the perception of homosexuality is as a disease that could influence other heterosexual students' gender identity construction, which is regulated in heteronormativity. For example, in *Memetomori* (1999), the perception of lesbian behaviour between two girls in high school was portrayed as an abnormality via describing supernatural phenomena like poltergeists in the film. This film exposes how Korean students perceive their own gender identity from others. In Korean society, correct gender identity should be given and should be constructed in the dominant gender power without any suspicions or questions. This implies that the others normally witness abnormal genders, and criticise them without rational understanding, excluding them in the Korean gender system. This is, of course, not a problem caused by them. The Korean gender system via education forces Koreans to choose only heterosexuality.

Beyond prejudice in gender education in Korea, *Like a Virgin* (2006) focuses on one boy in high school, who wants to transform his gender from male to female. The boy, Dong-Gu, is not afraid of his gender orientation as queer. This film never uses any terminology related to the queer or LGBT community, but as showing Dong-Gu trying on a woman's dress, it attempts to tell us that this is a coming-of-age film has a goal for Dong-Gu, which is to become a girl. *Like a Virgin* deals with various

issues related to school violation caused by the Korean education system not admitting any differentiation in the Korean masculine and patriarchal system.

To be a girl and to escape from his father's violation, Dong-Gu has a part-time job to save money. He is a very optimistic teenage boy, doing his best for a better future that he pursues. In spite of his efforts to survive in hard circumstances with prejudice towards his sexual orientation as queer, he suffers from various violations, mentally and physically. In particular, branded "a sissy" he is humiliated by his younger brother and abused by his father, who has an alcohol problem and no job. In the film, his father is represented as a traditional patriarchal parent in Korea, who just forces his authority on the family system. *Like a Virgin* (2006), thus, attempts to show a teenage boy facing a marginalised society which is not protective in the legal system of Korea. Nevertheless, this film portrays how this teenage boy achieves his goal to be a girl, overcoming many obstacles and prejudice from his world, including family, through a sports activity. In fact, he was initially not interested in taking part in *Ssileum*, which is traditional Korean wrestling, because he was not that comfortable with showing his half-naked body on being publically topless, because he regards himself as a woman with a male body. Thus, showing his topless body must be shameful. However, to make some money to have an operation to be a girl, he decided to join this sports activity after his father took his savings to buy some alcohol, beating and insulting him.

Traditionally, *Ssileum* is a very masculine sport in Korea that was used to find the strongest men during the Chosun dynasty. A winner in a *Ssileum* competition could acquire honour and respect from people and might have a chance as a national

hero. Ironically, Dong-Gu is not a character that represents masculinity in the film. However, his talent, strength and skill for Ssileum, lead him to this masculine competition. In Korean gendered society, masculinity might be a general requirement for teenage boys in a school, and it should be fully completed via education. When Dong-gu has a wet dream, he cries in a bathroom, washing his underwear with a sense of shame because of being a male. However, he gradually realises that he can choose his life by himself beyond his inborn sexuality and social pressure to be a man in Korea.

In fact, this film attempts to show that there is no eternal power to maintain in a certain society through the sport, Ssileum. Although a part of Ssileum involves restraining a competitor, the actual purpose of this sport is to control the power of the competitor and overturn them using their own strength. Our protagonist then uses his talent to be a winner in this competition representing masculinity, and it helps him to restrain the violations of his father as a representation of patriarchy. When his father abuses Dong-Gu after judging his “sissy” behaviour under the name of parenting, he restrains his father and shows his will to confront reality. This behaviour reveals that he will never give up trying to be a woman. Even though he doesn’t win the final competition, he wins the respect of his friends and colleagues in school and the sport and proves that he can be who he wants to be. Thus, in the last sequence, in which Dong-Gu performs as a drag-queen, dancing and singing to Madonna’s song, *Like a Virgin*, in front of a large audience including his friends and younger brother, this film reveals that coming out can be achieved with many blessings and it should be accepted. It also suggests that there are still limitations to coming out in Korea’s gendered society, with Dong-Gu’s father representing Korean patriarchy and hyper-

masculinity via the final competition sequence and performance sequence. His father never gives up trying to change Dong-Gu's mind, although he is proud of his son and attends the sport competition with love in his heart. However, the emotions of the father looking at his son's final competition seem to be complicated because the moment he sees his son doing this sport is his first time seeing the boy that he really wants. He might feel frustrated after when his son straightforwardly talks to him to tell him that there is nothing to make him stop becoming a girl. Therefore, he might be unable to attend DongGu's performance to celebrate his debut as a woman or transgender person because he cannot accept this reality. The reality is a threat to the patriarchy and hyper-masculinity that Korea's gender society maintains as a national value.

In addition to this relationship between father and son, this film attempts to portray how school might be able to help students struggling with their sexual orientation, but also might abuse, isolate and exclude them without any understanding or counselling. In particular, Dong-Gu is severely bullied by one person, and no one in the school cares about this irrational violation to a minority. A Japanese teacher also judges Dong-Gu because his love towards the teacher is abnormal for him. Through a physical punishment, this teacher seems to attempt to correct his gender identity. Thus, this film also portrays how the Korean school system fully misunderstands queer identity without any consideration about teenagers and how it abuses their students. Thus, *Like a Virgin* exposes, how the absence of gender education brings a violation. In fact, according to research about gender education in Korean teenagers, there is barely any gender education about homosexuality at all (Yeu, Ki-Dong and Lee, Mi-Hyoung, 2006). Although there is a

coach that notices the talent of Dong-Gu, his interest is not based on understanding Dong-Gu's matters around his sexual orientation. However, this little help and interest from the coach bring Dong-Gu closer to choosing and deciding what he really wants to pursue. This implies that this film attempts to say that the schools and education system in Korea should pay a little attention to their students struggling with their sexual orientation without any prejudice.

When *Like a Virgin* was released, it was expected that it could attract enough Korean audiences because of its successful premiere screening event and good reactions from many critics regardless of the queer subject matter (Jun, Jeong-Yun, 2006). However, this film failed to secure enough screens and attract enough audiences to recover its production budget of 3.5 million dollars. Unlike *A Frozen Flower* and *The King and Clowns*, which fully secured a lot of support from big distributors to recover their production budget, this film could not get enough support from its distributor. In fact, there might be many explanations for this failure in the Korean film market. Among them, unlike other successful films dealing with queer matters, there are no beautiful, famous men in this film, and it is also based in the comedy genre (Jun, Jeong-Yun, 2006). Many films dealing with queer matters in the Korean mainstream film market usually cast attractive actors or actresses to publicise their film; however, in the case of *Like a Virgin*, there are only chubby boys to act as the sports players for Ssileum. In terms of marketing, the absence of beautiful actors could be a limitation to attracting enough potential audiences. According to interviews with the directors and marketers for this film, even though they were very confident in their appeal to the Korean film market, due to the dominant market situation of securing a quick profit through several big distributors,

they said that films dealing with less popular subjects might lose the opportunity to maintain their distribution channels for a certain period (Jun, Jeong-Yun, 2006). In particular, films with queer subject matter might face more difficulties because of their unfamiliarity in the Korean film market. However, unlike other films dealing with queer subjects, *Like A Virgin* tells that us Korean society should understand and respect many minority groups marginalised in the country, describing a happy image of queer people and criticising the patriarchal and hyper-masculine Korean society. Indeed, these two co-film directors tell us that Korean society should first respect minorities living in Korea before beginning to understand them (Kim, Eun-Hyung, 2006). Their approaches and attitude to see minorities are based on queer people are not different. Thus, this film attempted to encourage people as a minority in Korea to speak their own voice.

In the mainstream film industry in Korea, queer should be concealed for a succeeding result in the film market, although its subject is associated with queer. When considering the political impact of films on Korean society, there must be economic considerations for the mainstream film market. Thus, a level of expression for queer people might be also considered in various ways through these political and economic factors when a film is in production. In addition, there would be more arguments about queer people in the Korean film industry regarding whether they should be portrayed in a positive or negative way. Of course, most Korean films dealing with queer subjects except *Like a Virgin* seem to support heteronormativity, showing a tragedy in homosexuality. However, these films can highlight questions and perspectives about queer film-making for all Koreans, including people working in the Korean film industry. Thus, it is very important to figure out how these

questions and perspectives about queer people could provide new insights to coping with various limitations in the market, securing a variety of subjects, expanding gender discourse and bringing political changes to Korea.

Like the hostess film genre of the 1970s, which conveyed gender inequality in the Korean mainstream film market, Korean films dealing with queer matters or queer films have the opportunity to expose more radical gender discrimination caused by the dominant gender power. In an assumption that the film market is a political sphere, queer film in the Korean mainstream film industry could suggest further discourses, including all gender issues to reveal hyper-masculinity. Indeed, looking into films dealing with homosexuality, there are some with similarities to the hostess genre of films in Korea. First, there is no explanation about why women or queer people embrace their prejudice from society. Second, although they might be victims violated by masculinity in terms of heteronormativity, they admit their violation and are willing to take it as their destiny. Lastly, they attempt to find shelter in this harsh world. When hostess genre films were produced and popular in Korea, many feminists and scholars criticised them for ignoring the violated reality of Korean women by males. However, now hostess films have acquired a new perspective for dealing with contemporary Korean women who have to live in a hyper-masculine society. In addition, this genre of film suggests a new approach to describing reality in a roundabout way, pretending to support a justification for a masculine society in Korea. Likewise, some films dealing with homosexuality in the Korean mainstream film industry have a similar approach to the hostess films. They barely talk about how homosexuals are excluded or violated, but in an entire film

they show how tragedy or the death of homosexuality must not be accepted. This implies films can leave an open discussion for their audiences.

3. Korean Queer Film Directors : KimJho-GwangSoo and LeeSong-HeeIl

Representing queer in the Korean mainstream film industry might not intentionally bring up any political matters against the dominant gender, such as hyper-masculinity. Some Korean films adopting queer subject might just want to use it to explore the gender reality in Korea. Although it might be hard to find out if queer films in the Korean mainstream film industry contain a distinct purpose for delivering on political queer matters, they obviously suggest various discourses towards Korean gendered society through queer subjects. Unlike queer films in the Korean mainstream film industry, several independent queer films produced by two Korean gay film directors, KimJho-GwangSoo and LeeSong-HeeIl, aggressively attempt to reveal political matters about homosexuality.

KimJho-GwangSoo is a gay director and producer in Korea. He was also the first gay man to get married to a same-sex partner, although the Korean supreme court turned down gay marriage in May 2016, because they said in their legal system, marriage is only possible and acceptable between a male and female.

Before he decided to be a director to produce queer films, he was a very successful producer in the Korean film market and had already acted as a producer on a number of films. He already knew that film could be political because he decided to work in the industry after watching a documentary dealing with the

GwangJu uprising in 1980. This was a democratic movement against a military coup led by General Jun, Doo-Hwan. During this resistance in GwangJu, many citizens lost their lives; however, Koreans living in other cities and provinces did not know about the tragic incidents that occurred. After KimJho-GwangSoo watched the documentary, he decided to join a student movement for democratisation for about 8 or 9 years, while he was in university. Informed by his personal experience, he recognised film as a means of bringing political change and influencing behaviour (KimJho-GwangSoo, 2007).

In his biography, in producing queer film in the Korean market, he says there are many difficulties, including the queer image in Korean society. In particular, as a producer, he already knew that securing enough of a production budget is very difficult. In addition to producing queer film, he says, that due to the prejudice and misunderstandings surrounding homosexuals, Korean queer film is regulated by a legal process in which a film must obtain a proper media rating. For example, in the case of *Just Friends* (2009), the film, about a gay couple, barely had aggressive sexual expressions, but it has an over 18 certificate rating in keeping with the juvenile protection law. Furthermore, securing enough cinema chains to show his queer film is another problem. In terms of making film, it is not only art but also related to the economy. This implies a film should make profits when shown in a public space. This is an additional concern, beyond the content and narrative, which faces makers of queer film.

Most queer films produced by Kimjho-GwangSoo seem to describe being queer as a beautiful thing. In *Boy Meets Boy* (2008), two pretty young men find each other

on a bus, and they feel a connection between each other. In their world, there is no conflict caused by prejudice. Kimjho-GwangSoo just portrays their innocent expectation and tension from each protagonist feeling love. Through this short indie film, KmJho-GwangSoo successfully debuted as a queer film director in the Korean film industry after coming out, and he promised to produce queer films to deal with normal queer people at least every two years in Korea (KimJho-GwangSoo, Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). This was his first political step to challenging gendered society and attempting to involve the Korean queer society in mainstream affairs. One year later, KimJho-GwnagSoo showed his second queer film that he directed in accordance with keeping his promise. Likewise, in this film, *Just Friends* (2009), he also attempts to show that two protagonists figure out how much they love each other beyond any prejudice. In addition to the gay love of two protagonists, he attempts to deal with realistic consideration about coming out to family. Unlike describing a beautiful moment of finding their destiny in *Boy Meets Boy*, *Just Friends* portrays other characters facing an existence as gay men in Korean society, even using a space like military base. In spite of revealing a consideration related to queer identity, KimJho-GwangSoo shows happy queer people through the strong love of the two protagonists.

According to his interview after the closing credits in *Just Friends* (2009), as a gay director and producer in Korea, he has been encouraged many times from Korean queers to produce various queer films that have dealt with gay matters after *Boy Meets Boy* (KimJho-GwangSoo, Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). Thus, he seems to have a big responsibility as a gay man living in Korea beyond just being a director and producer. In his first short film, *Boy Meets Boy*, he already illustrated how two

teenage boys can fall in love with each other in a pure way, as if he were telling a fairy tale without depicting any sexual contact between the two protagonists. Unlike this, *Just Friends* tends to focus on more confronting matters, such as military service and coming out issues, which young Korean gays have to experience as another stumbling block in society after their teenage years. Indeed, KimJho-GwangSoo says in his interview that he really wanted to show young Korean gays men's emotions and affections about not being able to unveil themselves as a gay throughout the film. Thus, his queer film making project may be a channel to helping gay people living in Korea, representing their thoughts, feelings and lives. Indeed, *Just Friends* illustrates invisible fears such as prejudice and discrimination for homosexuals, who have to conceal their identity in Korean gendered society.

Just Friends (2009) uses many close-up shots to help guide attention to certain objects, including characters' emotional changes in their faces. In particular, many close-up shots are found in the film in order to create specific images related to the protagonists' secret love, including gay identity, in contrast to using a long shot or full shot. This not only refers to the background of full frame but also emphasises reality and the invisible pressure in which Korean gays conceal their identity. In order to meet MinSu, Suk has to fill in the visitor's application form. In this scene, the camera focuses on the application form using a close-up. At first, Suk writes the word boyfriend in the blank space to clarify their relationship, but then rewrites it as friend, crossing out the first word. In this sequence, his wrinkled application paper and Suk's sad face are framed in each close-up shot's change. When MinSu comes to see Suk in the visitors' room, the camera focuses on their feet contacting with each other under the desk using a close-up. This close-up shot is intended to show the

reality of concealing their gay identity in an open space. In particular, revealing the fear of gaze by others is also depicted by the woman who MinSu accompanied on the bus.

In contrast to close-up shots, the film sometimes uses many long shots to indicate an open space before using close-ups. Between repetitive use of close-ups and long shots, *Just Friends* creates an invisible boundary between concealing and revealing, comparing images that the shots create. Thus, the film locates the two protagonists in many open spaces in which others can watch their behaviour. Their behaviour is seldom free from others because they seem to have to be careful to hide their identity at all times. After the sudden appearance of Suk's mother with a diegetic sound offscreen when MinSu and Suk are in the visitor's room, their relationship is defined as a friend in dialogue with her. In this sequence, Suk and MinSu talk about their love on the street in front of the inn in order to avoid her, and the full shot shows the unavoidable reality of hiding their identity from even their families. The film gives several implications to indicate a secret gay relationship in which they stay in the inn through several close-up shots. These transitional shots frame three toothbrushes in the same cup, two clothes hanging in a coat hanger, and a medium-long shot contains three characters lying on the floor

Within the sequence depicting the two protagonists' sexual desire on the street while Suk's mother heads to the local church on Sunday morning, a medium-long shot follows them going back to the inn to have sex. The next shots show their sexual behaviours in moving close-ups. Then, when the mother unexpectedly comes back to the motel room, close-up shots frame Suk's mother and the two protagonists through

the transitional cuts to show fear about the exposure of their gay identities. The film illustrates a conflict via the distance between each character. Furthermore, in the transitional shots, the long shot to depict their distance portrays how the gender reality of two protagonists seems to be stuck in prison behind the background of barbed-wire entanglements.

After revealing MinSu and Suk's secret gay love, the camera follows Suk's mother and Suk using a long shot. With Suk's narration confessing his love and identity in a musical sequence consisting of cut changes, each full shot creates an image of the past in which Suk and his mother had a great time together. The camera focuses on the smiling Jesus statue in close-up and shows Suk's mother praying for her son in a church by using a long shot. Among these scenes, the most interesting one is the smiling Jesus in close-up made to look like he accepts all love, including a mother's love towards her son. Although there is no perspective of the mother in the narrative, the film demonstrates that the mother can embrace their relationship and identity through understanding and love. This musical sequence also has a similar pattern between several long shots and close-up shots. However, after this, the pattern is used to attempt to report the ambiguity of the invisible boundary between revealing and concealing, as through the narration of Suk he decides to stop concealing his gay identity. At the moment he reveals himself, both close-up and long shots are employed to reflect their reality, including gay identity. Thus, the two protagonists can hold their hands on the street in long shots, and they can kiss each other in a crowd in a close-up frame. Between close-ups and long shots, *Just Friends* attempts to create a meaning in each shot. KimJho-GwangSoo attempts to suggest a new mechanism, endowing these shots with meaning in film through the relation

between close-ups and long shots in order to show the invisible boundary between concealing and revealing. Also, he attempts to seek similarities in this relation of queer identity between concealing and revealing.

He uses long shots to illustrate a difficult reality in Korea's gendered society, in which Korean queer people may not be able to reveal their identity in open spaces. There are many spaces represented within the film where the two protagonists conceal their identity, thus long shots reflect a marginalised reality for them in Korea. In contrast, he uses close-ups to indicate the existence of queer people, with some of these shots being the close-up shots in the film, which attempt to reveal the existence of tacit queer people. This implies close-up shots draw intentional attention to reveal homosexuals in film. From this mechanism, he illustrates two gay guys living in the boundary between revealing and concealing themselves, and he attempts to explain that this is similar to the invisible boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality. In a heteronormative society, queer people may have to conceal their identity for fear of discrimination and exclusion. However, close-ups can be explained as emphasised and magnified images as part of long shots. Thus, there is no obvious boundary between close-ups and long shots in terms of recognition, but there is just intentionally edited boundaries between cuts to control the perception of footage. With this mechanism, the film attempts to say that dividing the boundary between homosexuality and heterosexuality is caused by fixed gendered perceptions. Through Suk's confession with the apology to his mother, the film shows their changed attitude in coping with their reality in Korea's gendered society. This means they admit to an invisible boundary caused by fixed gendered perception and there is

no reason to hide behind it. Therefore, they can recover their reality and wear their drag queen costumes in the closing sequence.

In the last musical sequence with the closing credits, both protagonists in the film wear drag queen costumes with full make-up and wigs. Although their performance is regulated to a small frame besides the titles, this sequence seems to attempt to break down Korean gendered values, because, intentionally, these drag queen costumes for the two protagonists can play an important main motive in reporting the gendered society in Korea. As KimJho-GwangSoo shows abnormal gender behaviour with the ending titles in the last sequence, this film invites viewers not to see this film seriously as entertainment. However, he attempts to practise gender performance, showing other genders in contrast to traditional gender values. This sequence has a very important intentional message that KimJho-GwangSoo really wants to convey, as it is performed as a challenge towards the hyper-masculine society (Seo, Yu-Kyoung, 2011). In fact, many spaces in the film restrict protagonists' behaviour in terms of gay sexuality. Due to their secret sexual identity, they have to behave more carefully and be regulated by spaces located in the film. However, at the moment when they reveal their identity, they become free from the regulation of spaces and they perform their music and dance. This implies that drag performance is an attempt to challenge the gendered society. Thus, KimJho-GwangSoo, intentionally shows this drag performance is not related to any narrative in film, suggesting other gender images that Korea's gendered society has seldom experienced. Obviously, this is the message for re-defining gender in Korean society. However, the film conceals the political implication behind the music and performance, minimising the frame size of the performance with the closing titles.

Like *Just Friends, Two Weddings, and a Funeral* (2012) also attempts to tell a story about happy queer people. In a given time, it is difficult to tell how KimJho-GwangSoo describes the representation of queer people in his style, but when he releases new queer films, something he does every two years at least, his political approach to portraying queer people in Korea evolves. Unlike previous short films, *Two Weddings and a Funeral* attempts to portray a lesbian couple. According to an interview the director gave, even in a Korean queer society, gay men sometimes retain the perspective of hyper-masculinity. In particular, he insists that there must be more queer films dealing with lesbians for a variety of gender subjects in the Korean film industry because unlike male queer people the voice of lesbians might be ignored in Korea's gendered society due to inequality of sexuality in favour of masculinity (KimJho-GwangSoo, Kim, Do-Hye, 2012, Choi, Eul-Young, 2013).

KimJho-Gwangsoo already seems to realise there are some issues related to masculinity, including gay identity, in Korean queer films. In an interview, he says Korean queer films still have a similar limitation that excludes lesbian identities (KimJho-GwangSoo, Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). Since gay organisations and lesbian organisations decided to separate in 1995, most queer movements seem to focus on males in Korea. This situation can be also founded in the Korean film industry. In a masculine society like the film industry, females seldom take an important role due to their discriminated social position under hyper-masculinity. KimJho-GwangSoo says that because of gendered structures, even in queer society, gay males are also influenced by hyper-masculinity, excluding Korean females (KimJho-GwangSoo, Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). This implies that queer films in Korea seldom deal with lesbian matters in their representation. However, KimJho-GwangSoo attempted to show

lesbians in *Two Weddings and A Funeral* (2012), and a lesbian couple is used to portray the reality of homosexual marriage in Korea. He says that there should be more female or lesbian directors interested in queer film making against dominant gender values in the country.

From his point of view, even gay men trained by hyper-masculinity in military organisations might exclude females or lesbians in the queer movement in Korea. He is worried that this might discriminate female homosexuality in the country. Thus, through his first feature-length film he attempts to portray a lesbian couple in order to suggest less focus on male queer people in Korea. Indeed, this film copes with many difficulties that Korean homosexuals face, such as the threats and fear related to social pressure like marriage systems. Through a fake marriage between a gay man and a lesbian, what this film addresses is how Korean society regulates freedom of choice even in the marriage system.

KimJho-GwangSoo says that there is a limitation in queer representation describing queer lives and reality in the mainstream Korean film industry (KimJho-GwangSoo, 2007). In particular, he says he worries, when some queer films in the Korean mainstream film industry represent queer life in a dark or gloomy way, as such representations could negatively influence mainstream audience's perception of these kinds of people (KimJho-GwangSoo, Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). Audiences or groups of minorities could feel fear or negative thoughts from a dark ending in mainstream queer films. Although queer films in the Korean mainstream film industry can show the reality of queer matters, it also could bring about fear of homosexuals with a possibility of exclusion in Korea's gendered society. Thus,

KimJho-GwangSoo says it would be better for queer films to provide happy images or fantasy in queer representation to reduce this risk (KimJho-GwangSoo, 2007, Choi, Eul-Young, 2013).

This strategy can be founded in most of his queer films. Furthermore, when he produced these films, he also considers how to publicise the non-profit homosexual organisation, Chin-Gu-Sa-I, through them. The title of the film, *Just Friends* literally means Chin-Gu-Sa-I, referring to the name of the non-profit homosexual organisation. As he already mentioned, film can politically bring some changes to society, and he aggressively uses his films to help or to support various minority organisations.

With his experience in the Korean film industry, he has been a chairperson of the Seoul Pride Film Festival, SPFF. Thus, he attempts to introduce queer matters via queer films from many countries. These activities of KimJho-GwangSoo reveal that films can be exploited for the political purpose of exposing queerness in Korean society. Indeed, his political activities are related to making queer film in the Korean film industry. The attempt at the first same-sex marriage in Korea made a huge impact on the gender perception, suggesting various alternative gender discourses.

LeeSong-HeeIl is one of the most famous gay directors in Korea who has officially come out with his sexual identity to the public. His approach to queer film making is quite different from KimJho-GwangSoo. Unlike him, LeeSong-HeeIl is more interested in meaning of the minority in Korea with his thoughts towards indie films. In terms of the relationship between the mainstream film industry and its indie counterpart, he says many subjects in the Korea's films are related to dominant

powers (Ji, Seung-Ho, 2012). He suggests that these powers can be money, masculinity or government controls, stating that they have an important role in producing differences and regulating diversity. He insists that this is a form of violence (Ji, Seung-Ho, 2012), and thus he emphasises the importance and value of indie films, and asks what being a minority means in Korean society. In fact, he says that securing diversity is more important than focusing on the meaning of being a minority because minorities are part of a diverse society. He believes that indie films can deal with a variety of matters in Korea, securing diversity and exposing the violence perpetuated by dominant powers, which is regulated. Thus, for him film should politically deal with violence in Korean society beyond just queer matters.

He thus focuses more on how film as a medium can be politically or negatively exploited by invisible powers or violence, and thus he insists film should reveal violence and discrimination against invisible dominant powers, keeping the independent identity of the art form (Ji, Seung-Ho, 2012). LeeSong-HeeIl, therefore, considers the future of the Korean independent film industry and attempts to define a relationship between the Korean mainstream film industry and the indie one. His thoughts towards Korean indie films can explain how he deals with queer matters in the country through queer film making.

In fact, since he decided to be a director and make queer films in the Korean film industry, he has received a lot of help from minority groups and queer people including KimJho-GwangSoo (although he had not come out at that time). In particular, he aggressively revealed his production purpose for queer film making in the industry and has gained a lot of attention from Korea's gender society regardless

of positive or negative points of view towards queer subjects. Of course, his expression about gay life in Korea is very controversial due to his films' sexual scenes. Before he debuted in the Korean film market, there barely had any Korean films that straightforwardly depicted gay sex in that country, although there had been hereby many foreign queer films that portrayed it. His film, thus, was very welcomed in terms of looking at marginalised people in Korea. His first feature-length film, *No Regret* (2006), produced by the Chung-Nyun film production which was owned by KimJho-GwangSoo, was invited into the Busan International Film Festival. According to his interview, he says there were many difficulties and impossibilities in securing enough of a budget for this film because of its abnormal subject matter (KimJho, GwnagSoo, 2007). Helplessly, in order to produce this film, he used a Digital Video Camera to save money. This implies that there are many difficulties in indie film making in Korea beyond dealing with homosexuality.

The title of *No Regret* was changed in the post-production stages, and the actual title for it was 야만의 밤-Yaman-ui-Bam, which means "a brutal night". However, Leesong-HeeIl and KimJho-GwangSoo said they should change its title to bring a simple message about its homosexual subject matter. As looking through all feature-length queer films that Leesong-heeil filmed, he seems to like to use the image of night throughout his work. Indeed, he also made the films *White Night* (2012) and *Night Flight* (2014). This is very important in understanding how he describes gay life in Korea with an image of the night via time and place in his style. In addition to these, there are several short and medium-length films produced by him to show various queer matters in an omnibus queer film project with other films produced by

other queer filmmakers. However, his feature-length films have more straightforward messages he wants to tell about the reality of Korea beyond just homosexuality. They are about how Korean society violates and regulates individuals to maintain its invisible power.

Based in the melodrama genre, *No Regret* depicts the love between two gay people from different social classes. Like the hostess genre film during the late 1970s, this film attempts to show how one Korean man faces the brutal reality of Korea between love and success. In particular, Su-Min is the typical protagonist of a hostess film, which was usually a female coming to a big city to achieve a dream. Meanwhile, he falls in love with one man, Jae-Min, from a rich family. In terms of a gap between social classes, and unaccepted homosexual love in Korea, Su-Min and Jae-Min confront the prejudice and violations of people around them. Like a hostess film, Su-Min goes to the gay host bar to make money, selling his sexuality to other men at night. Su-Min represents an image of the night without any hope except his love towards Jae-Min. However, his love shifts into revenge against the Korean patriarchy after Jae-Min's engagement to a girl arranged by his family. Unlike Su-Min, Jae-Min represents an image of both day and night at the same time. Although Jae-Min, in coming from the rich family, enjoys their fortune, he always feels lonely and tired in his life. However, after meeting with Su-Min and falling in love with him, he dreams of their future together. Indeed, *No Regret* is a typical melodrama based on love, money, betrayal and revenge, like what hostess films usually illustrate. The difference is that the love in this film seems to be beyond the difference between social classes, facing the reality of homosexuality and patriarchy represented in masculinity. In fact, this film just replaces a hostess with a host

working in a gay bar and shows a similar motivation as to why they've decided to sell their sexuality.

Indeed, *No Regret* adopts many clichés from hostess films; however, this has a big difference in the significant question that it asks. When Su-Min visits to Jae-Min's house in the daytime, he meets Jae-Min's fiancé in front of his home. They ask each other, "Who are you?" This scene contains what LeeSong-HeeII really wants to tell us with his film. If this scene portrayed two different women between a wife/fiancé and a mistress in a hostess film, figuring out each other's existence would be cliché. However, their asking to figure out each other's existence implies identity issues in homosexuality, although this also might be a cliché in queer film.

If the night were a moment to say good-bye until next day, daytime would be a moment to live for a dream. Thus, their love might be already decided, though their sad fate of not being together is not certain considering the title of the film. However, when looking at the actual title of the film before release, *A Brutal Night* alludes to their love not being achieved in the film. This implication through the title does indicate aspects LeeSong-HeeII wants to tell us about in homosexual love. Likewise, in the case of *White Night* LeeSong-HeeII tells us how in night and darkness, homosexuality can be freely expressed without drawing any attention. He shows that each protagonist dreams of being free from the dark reality in talking about their last day on the Earth. Their desire might be to see sunlight at night, like where countries have a midnight sun. This implies they want to reveal themselves as being gay without any prejudice. In fact, a white night is well known in some north European countries, which have a good reputation for queer rights. However, the film refers to

African countries which have strong sunlight and land where nature from the beginning of the world is preserved. LeeSoang-HeeII reveals homosexual ambitions through Tae-Jun. Although Tae-Jun delivers others' goods to their places, his desire and dreams are stuck in Korea. Unlike Tae-Jun, Won-Kyu, who travels around other countries for passengers' destinations, leaves his heart for his ex-boyfriend in Korea. Ironically, the two protagonists' job is to deliver others' desires to some places while their own desires are not achieved in the film. In the story, they just wander around a dark city where people are sleeping without a clear purpose, and throughout LeeSong-HeeII attempts to ask where the future of homosexuality is in Korea.

Unlike KimJho-KwnagSoo, who shows pure homosexual feelings between two teenage boys in *Boy Meets Boy* (2009), in *Night Flight* (2014), LeeSong-HeeII aggressively depicts violations like rape and bullying and homophobic perspectives in a boy's high school in Korea. In particular, he exposes how the Korean education system treats homosexuality, showing a teacher using homophobic swear words towards an anonymous gay boy in a class. In fact, this scene reports how Korean education is intolerant to homosexuality, with many contemporary reports investigating teenage queer students struggling from their identity issues. As LeeSong-HeeII illustrates many terrible situations that young Korean students may confront, he seems to want to communicate with the audiences about where young gay students may find shelter away from a homophobic environment. He also shows many veiled places that do not provide protection but are rather designed for exposing the homosexuality of the people who go there, resulting in them being met with violence in some form. Thus, gay boys in film only dream about flying away, for their shelter is at night, like what the film title expresses.

LeeSong-HeeII attempts to tell us about Korean homosexuals having to hide their identity under the threat of violence and pressure. The places that he describes are not imaginary spaces in Korea and are a reality for homosexuality. He exposes how the time of homosexuality is limited to night time, unlike heterosexuality. Through an image of darkness about the night, what he insists on with his films is a gendered reality located in an unprotected place and time. However, he never tells us that the future of homosexuality in Korea is only under the darkness.

Indeed, he uses an image of a night in the titles of his films in order to reveal how the image of darkness can be revealed against lights in a city. There are many lights, like starlight, around places for our protagonists at night time. The night is not only darkness for them, but, it also gives them the freedom and shelter to reveal their true identities. Under darkness, they can find themselves and have a conversation in a marginalised space. Although the darkness of night cannot fully protect them from a lot of violence and prejudice, all homosexual characters described by LeeSong-HeeII do not hesitate to show who they are. However, he also portrays a frustration of homosexuality in Korea, comparing many illuminations in the cities and streets to the image of darkness. In particular, LeeSong-HeeII attempts to show many street lights or lights on signs at night in order to emphasise an image of darkness which represents the reality of homosexuality in Korea. Ironically, however, in *Night Flight* illuminations that light the night of the city represent a dream or hope for our protagonist (Yong-Ju) to guide him where to go; however, he is violated and raped by his classmates, revealing his identity via light. Between light and darkness, LeeSong-HeeII describes the political relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality in Korea. His strategy for dealing with homosexuality via queer film

making is not only talking about violence inflicted by dominant gender norms in Korean society, but also the various implications of other sides in the meanings of the images that he suggests. The darkness of night can be a threatening or unprotected environment for homosexuality in Korea, but it can also be a shelter or a means of freedom in being away from the dominant gender society. Light or daytime might be a dominant power occupied by heteronormativity and masculinity, and they can be a hope or dream for homosexuality who want to be involved. However, they also may fear exposing their hidden identity. With these dual meanings of light and night, LeeSong-HeeIl attempts to embrace even heterosexual perspectives to tell us why heteronormativity in Korea has power and justification for violence in Korean society. Thus, revealing violence in his films is an attempt to influence the gendered society beyond homosexuality.

As LeeSong-HeeIl brings an image and meaning to night, he creates his own film style in a way to reveal light and darkness. He attempts to tell the political relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality through images between light and darkness. The political relationship is based on inequality. This is his film style, revealing the unequal political relationship between genders beyond homosexuality. His film style to approaching queer film is one of the political criticism, exploring Korea's gendered society beyond queer matters.

4. The Purpose of the Queer Filmmaking in the Korean Film Industry

Both KimJho-GwangSoo and LeeSong-HeeIl have experienced many limitations in queer filmmaking in Korea. In particular, although KimJho-GwangSoo is one of

the country's most successful producers, he has gone through many difficulties in getting investments after coming out in 2006. Some investors worry that they will not get a return in their investments after the failure of a film regardless of its subject because of his sexual identity (KimJho-KwnagSoo, 2007). Although films were produced by his production company, it could be hard to secure a good distribution channel, enough screens and enough of a budget for marketing. Due to his sexual identity as a gay man in Korea, he could struggle to overcome discrimination not related to his abilities. In these circumstances, he more focuses on getting investments through government support for indie film making in Korea (KimJho-GwnagSoo, 2007, Ji, Seung-Ho, 2012). In order to promote indie films, the Korean film council as a government organisation supports a certain amount of production costs for indie film directors and producers. Kimjho-GwangSoo says that using this supporting programme for indie films is important in securing enough of a budget for queer film making. In addition to this aid, he also focuses on international film festivals publicising his work (KimJho-GwnagSoo, 2007). In particular, through international film festivals, queer films that he produced or supported could be announced and introduced in the Korean film industry as art films. This would enable his queer films to secure enough screens upon release. Thus, in order to produce these films in the Korean film industry, he says that joining international film festivals is necessary in order to get some funding from the Korean film council (KimJho-GwnagSoo, 2007).

Likewise, LeeSon-HeeIl also focuses on joining international film festivals before conducting queer film making. In fact, KimJho-GwangSoo was a producer on the LeeSong-HeeIl film, *No Regret*, before he officially came out. After releasing the

film , KimJho-GwangSoo decided to come out in Korea (KimJho-GwangSoo, Kim, Do-Hye, 2012). Unlike KimJho-GwangSoo, LeeSong-HeeIl came out when he decided to work in the Korean film industry in 2000, and this might influence the decision of KimJho-GwangSoo. In this context, their strategy towards queer film making in the Korean film industry may be seen as very similar. LeeSong-HeeIl says indie films can be relatively free to deliver political messages and competing in international film festivals also can help their films to reduce a risk of censorship from the government (Ji, Seung-Ho, 2012). Thus, he has been working in the Korean indie forum with a non-competitive indie film festival for Korean indie writers, directors and producers since 2006. In addition to showing Korean indie films, this indie forum provides various events such as conferences and filmmaking workshops and so on to promote diversities of subjects in the Korean film industry. His passion and efforts towards indie films in Korea are related to revealing the politics that interferes with diversities in the Korean mainstream film industry (Ji, Seung-Ho, 2012).

In November 2016, the Park Guen-Hye regime faced a severe political scandal related to making a blacklist of people who worked in the Korean cultural industry. This controversy was derived from a presidential scandal, bringing up various issues to do with freedom of expression and violence in Korean constitutional law. According to this scandal, the Park Guen-Hye regime ordered the Ministry of Culture and Sport to make a list of people who have different political thoughts and behaviours counteractive to them. Thus, based on this blacklist, the Ministry of Culture and Sport attempted to figure out who could be potential threats to them and excluded them from their investment plans supporting the cultural industry (Choe,

Sang-Hun, 2017). For example, the CJ company was forced to make a propaganda film and commercial films by the ministry as a punishment for making satirical content about Park, Geun-Hye in 2012 and in *The Attorney* (2013), which dealt with the previous president, Noh, Mu-Hyun, when he was a court-appointed lawyer. In fact, TVN which is one of the biggest cable broadcasting companies, and CGV, which is the cinema chain owned by the CJ company, had to broadcast propaganda films in order to prove their loyalty to the Park, Geun-Hye regime. In addition, the CJ owner sent his daughter, who used to be vice-president of TVN, to the USA because of political backlash from the government. Before this scandal was confirmed a fact, rumours of a forced pro-government agenda were rife in the industry (Noh, Jean, 2016) However, all rumours about controlling the Korean cultural industry turned out to be true in January 2017.

According to various analyses of this scandal, the purpose of making the blacklist is not only regulating the Korean cultural industry due to the power of culture products to influence a political movement, but also controlling people to produce these products under their norms in their own ways. Indeed, the Ministry of Culture and Sport prefers to support and invest their funds to pro-regime people and reduce the budgets of people who stand against their norms based on the blacklist (Han, Hyung-Jin, 2017). For example, the Park, Geun-Hye regime and Busan city mayor attempted to stop the release of *Diving Bell* (2015), which is a documentary film that exposes the incompetency of the government in regards to the Sewol ferry accident, at the Busan International Film Festival(BIFF). The Busan city mayor then reduced the budget of PIFF and lead a major shakeup of the BIFF organisation (Kim, Sun-Sik, 2017) In addition to this happening, the government budget for promoting indie

films also was gradually reduced and only flowed into a few indie films which were pro-government (Han, Hyung-Jin, 2017, Kim, Sun-Sik, 2017).

There were 9,473 people who were named on the blacklist. Most of them were regarded as politically left sided by the government and belong to various fields like film, music, literature, art, and so on in the Korean cultural area. In particular, it was discovered that KimJho-GwangSoo was involved in this blacklist (Cho, Tae-Sung, 2016). According to KimJho-GwangSoo's interview about this scandal, he said the government has attempted to oppress many artists and activists voicing various opinions to make a better Korea and illegally watching people. In addition, he brings up several doubts about why many indie filmmakers and producers did not get funding from the Korean Film Council without any specific reason based on the blacklist (Kwak, WooSin, Kim, Yun-Jung, Yoo, Ji-Young and Son, Hwa-Sin, 2016). This scandal was derived from the corrupted Korean regime and thus proves how cultural products bring political changes and influences to Korean society.

Considering how film can be political in Korea, these two queer film directors might be regarded as a threat to the current Korean regime because they attempt to expose various irrational issues in Korea with their films. Although they might be controversial, their films address important matter related to gender issues or criticism of Korea's gendered society, and it is obvious that they challenge the heteronormativity and hyper-masculinity that has been inherited throughout Korean history. However, there must be a question on whether all films dealing with homosexual subjects can be political or bring social changes with them. In fact, in the Korean mainstream film industry several films dealing with homosexuality might

not have considered their social influences or responsibilities in Korean society. Some filmmakers and producers might simply have an attraction to a new subject they had never considered before and just looked at it as a possibility for expanding into new stories with homosexuality in entertainment. Although they might only focus on homosexuality for these purposes, the Korean film industry has attempted to take responsibility as a political medium. In particular, this implies discussing the implications of film beyond, including pre-production, production and post-production. If one film brings about an unintended phenomenon or discourse, it should embrace them and get ready to discuss them. Many films dealing with homosexual subjects or that have brought homosexual issues to the Korean mainstream film industry have encountered political gender movements for expanding the meaning of gender in Korea, and they might contribute to their activities.

Based on the political influence of film in Korea, these two queer filmmakers, KimJho-GwangSoo and LeeSong-HeeIl, keep producing queer films as an attempt to bring a political change to Korea's gender society. They have also attempted to change the Korean film industry, which is occupied by several big companies and threatens cultural diversity in the country. Because of this dominating structure, people might be easily corrupted and aligned with the ruling group. Therefore, this scandal caused by the blacklist was an inevitable consequence of submitting to the minor ruling power. LeeSong-HeeIl criticised how the Korean film industry which is dominated and regulated by several companies and the government. For this reason, queer filmmaking through cooperation with the Korean indie film industry is political activities that reveal the reality of the relationship between power and

economics in Korea. The Korean government already has various policies in place to promote the Korean cultural industry, but its policies usually focus on minority groups, representing their benefits. To secure these benefits, oppression of the indie film industry beyond homosexual matters might be necessary. Queer film not only has a political meaning for gender activism, but it also can be an expansion for indie films and festivals in Korea. Thus, queer filmmaking in Korea is a political activity because it produces various discourses, bringing the political gender movement forward.

There have been many political actions to get rid of potential threats to keeping values like heteronormativity and hyper-masculinity in place, and ruling minor groups might come up with many inventions like laws, policies, organisations and education materials to announce their justification (Kwak, WooSin, Kim, Yun-Jung, Yoo, Ji-Young and Son, Hwa-Sin, 2016, Kim, Sun-Sik2017). In this Korean society, film as a medium has a significant role in watching and criticising various issues and problems of Korean society. In fact, finding out the real purpose for queer filmmaking in Korea might require understanding the Korean context including gender, politics and economics, as film is not only an art but also a creation representing the contemporary context. In terms of intertextuality, queer filmmaking in Korea includes political implications associated with Korea's gendered society, and the implication does not mean to bring the conflict to Korean society. It may be an attempt to seek a fair society for all people.

Chapter Five. Queer in Korea: Throughout Queer Movement and Anti-Queer Movement Beyond Queer Films

Even before the making of queer films began in the Korean film industry, there had been several queer films such as *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), *Happy Together* (1997), and so on that were imported to the Korean film market from countries relatively more open to homosexuality. Although the majority of imported films dealing with homosexuality were introduced as art films, having won prizes in international film festivals, these films brought attention and interests to homosexuality and homosexuals living in Korea. Given that English terminology referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and so on is not so prevalent in Korean society, these films could have an impact on the Korean society, which used to consider heteronormative perspectives, by showing various people exploring various identities. Furthermore, before releasing these films, censorship was imposed on homosexuality in the Korean film market. In particular, *Happy Together* (1997), directed by Wong Kar-wai, revealed a problem of ambiguous standards in media rating examinations in the Korea Media Rating Board. Compared to other western films concerning homosexuality, Asian queer films usually have an R-rating due to the homosexual expression in Asians.

This chapter will attempt to explore how queer films played an important role as a counterpart in the public sphere such as a film festival by providing alternative possibilities for the queer movement beyond queer filmmaking. Moreover, by also

employing film analysis, this chapter seeks to explore how the queer movement is politically practiced in Korea. In fact, the queer movement and minority movement in Korea usually work together with queer films. This contributes to providing cultural experiences and expanding political influences in Korean society by creating queer discourses in the public sphere, which queer people attempt to join and/or challenge. In particular, the queer movement has endeavoured to adopt various political agendas from other queer movements in countries where relevant goals and rights have been achieved or attained notable success. This implies that introducing queer films can have a political meaning in discussions concerning the future of queerness in Korea. Therefore, this chapter can also suggest a further way that queer film-making should explore. In addition to the political and economic limitations in the film industry, queer film-making in Korea has also faced a new challenge from the anti-queer movement. In particular, people who are against queer rights organise anti-queer movement and attempts to leave a bad review about queer films on websites such as IMDB.com. This anti-queer movement can pose new challenges to the queer movement in Korea in general, including, of course, queer film-making. Thus, exploring queer discourses and practices in the public sphere as an alternative and counterpart must be politically very important for queer film-making and the queer movement, aiding to clarify their further limitations and preparing to cope with potential threats. This can provide a new insight into how political purpose for queerness is fulfilled and help to expand queer discourse in Korea.

1. Queer Film Festival as the Counter-public Sphere for Gender Discourse

After the Korean War, South Korean society experienced compressed modernisation to achieve rapid economy development in a short period. During this modernisation and industrialisation, South Korea barely focused on social issues such as gender equality. Unlike other developed countries such as the USA and the UK that went through various social problems needing solutions in the long run, South Korea was devoted to implementing its important agenda that would bring a better economy to the country. Since the military regime ended in 1992, many students, civil activists, researchers and intellectuals have started to become interested in looking into various social issues that South Korea seldom acknowledged before. Among them, gender issues have risen to the surface of Korean society, pointing to the gender inequality problem concerning Korean women's opportunities for higher education. In particular, many students who studied abroad have come back and attempted to join this new change. During this period, people who had studied in other countries introduced the terminology of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and so on (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). There were no specific politically-correct, popular terms to refer to each different homosexual identity in Korea before the inflow of English terminology. The pre-existing Korean terminology consisted mainly of derogatory words derived from references to a sexual position. Many activists and researchers might have attempted to bring out a new term to prevent Korean homosexuals from degrading themselves and officially inform an existence of homosexuality although there has still been an ignorance of it.

According to Ferrelli (1995), a queer film festival does not serve only to show queer films but also offers an opportunity for people to share their experiences with films, thus providing them with specific social and cultural spaces with audiences and participants (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). This perspective is similar to how the queer film festival in Seoul, Korea, sees itself as a cultural sphere in which to discuss various social and cultural discourses related to queer matters (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). When the first queer film festival was held in 1997 in Seoul, the organisers tended to focus on the local community with audiences because they might have thought queer films should not be categorised as a distinct movie genre (Seo, Dong-Jin, 2004). Their earlier notion concerning queer films was because of their purpose to organise a queer community via queer films in a film festival. These collective experiences and discussions were expected to help create queer discourses in Korea. This implies that showing queer films can create a queer community and reinforce public communication with queer discourses. Of course, whether queer films can be categorised as a genre, per se, might be controversial but this controversial debate was the first meaningful step for Korean society's queer movement. Furthermore, according to De Angelis (2001), queer politics forge a deep link between public culture and the politics of representation and queer subjects are based on the ambiguity of public cultural studies. Within the non-heterosexual gaze, this has been used for identity formation. According to Kim, Hyun-Mi (1997), culture studies is a political warfare of culture having an important function for individuals to construct their identity through producing images. Therefore, consumers of culture studies can make a specific relation based on their experiences about queer issues via a distance from heteronormative standards and might be able to practice queer politics,

discussing the meanings of queer. This implies that a queer film festival can be a public space to exhibit all identities related to non-heteronormative subjects based on identity politics. Likewise, an activity like a queer film festival can offer opportunities to discuss pressure, violation and dominance about gender binaries from heteronormative perspectives, such as patriarchy and the institution of marriage and family, who are forced to live in a heteronormative society. Thus, when Korea's first queer film festival was planned in 1997, its purpose was to create continuous warfare concerning the meaning of gender against heteronormativity. In fact, any film festival is a place wherein to share various experiences and promote discussion with different audiences. A film festival dealing with queer matters in Korea might be a new trial and challenge for homosexuals because of the conservative Korean social atmosphere. In particular, until the mid-1990s, it was taboo to discuss queer matters in Korean society. When the first queer film festival was planned, many Korean journalists expressed their concerns whether this would cause social chaos and whether adolescents could become confused about their identity through their exposure to queer films (HanKook Ilbo, 1998). Furthermore, even some gays worried about watching their lives exposed on the screen (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005).

The first queer film festival, planned in 1997, could not pass the regulations for public performance set by The Korean Ethics Committee because there were not any standards by which to examine films with homosexual topics. Although this decision might be legally correct, it implies how a public sphere like a film festival could reinforce the institutionalisation and naturalisation of heteronormativity in Korea. Feminist politics have criticised the construction of a private and public sphere in terms of gender binary since they generally empathise with a binary thought (Tang,

2005). In particular, in a discussion between the private and public sphere, privacy is based on individual freedom (Tang, 2005). However, this privacy is also based on family matters as individuals and the concept of freedom let individuals in heteronormative and depoliticised private family (Tang, 2005). Thus, being private means a reproduction of heteronormativity. In this regard, the ideal private sphere is related to domesticity, such as family, nature, intimacy, sexuality, feeling, reproduction, labour and so on, and the ideal public sphere includes rationality, citizenship, justification, economy, and nation. (Duncan, 1996).

The distinction between private and public, based on the gender binary, restricts sexuality within heteronormative norms and attempts to conceal naturalised heteronormativity in the private sector (Tang, 2005). It implies that heteronormativity is not a sexuality or a subject with which to identify, but the norm to regulate the relation between private and public spaces (Suh, Dong-Jin, 2004). To discuss sexual discourse based on heteronormativity can be an attempt to reveal how this relationship between private and public is constructed in private space and how this distinction between them is hybrid and random (Duncan, 1996). Therefore, exposing this distinction between private and public space might provide momentum to criticise this tacit social relation and explore a new relation.

The purpose of a queer film festival is to provide a movement to break down gender binary based on heteronormativity and suggest a new public sphere as counter-publicity to expand the meaning of gender (Warner, 2002). Although Warner's statement about a queer film festival seems to be overstated, it can be a place for queer people to share their experiences about discrimination, criticising a problem of gender

binary system. Likewise, it can be a showcase for queer films and encourage to support queer filmmaking in the Korean film industry. The public sphere is not space, such as the market or economy, to be regulated by a nation but a free space for social movements to be ideally and politically organised (Mitchell, 1995). However, this public sphere could be organised by white males and constructed through various power relations (Fraser, 1992). Thus, there have been many discussions seeking to find out alternative public spheres. Fraser suggests alternative or counter-public spheres and critical publics. In particular, Fraser (1992) attempts to focus on marginalised subjects, such as non-white, disabled, women and queer, whose experiences are excluded and explores how their experiences could organise conflicting public spheres, expanding the public sphere. Furthermore, Fraser conceptualises subaltern counterpublics that construct discourses against social requirement to marginalised groups being oppressed due to their identity and interests, giving several examples about how subaltern counterpublics in the feminist movement have been practised in various areas such as bookstores, journals, feminist filmmaking, universities, festivals and so on. This does not mean the public sphere should be feminised but criticises how a binary perspective, based on heteronormativity, could differentiate females, exposing a problem to regulate the sexual boundary of female (Seo, Dong-Jin, 2004).

Based on this discussion, Michael Warner (2002) argues that queer counterpublics sees a foundation of new gender relations as a sexuality discourse. According to Warner, new counterpublics should deconstruct existing public spheres and concepts of gender. This implies that queer counterpublics could make new social and political relations with issues between sexuality and gender. In particular, he sees

publics as a stranger, who can be a political subject, not to be fixed in based on social entity or experiences. Thus, these counterpublics should keep a distance from identity politics within specific shared experiences practice. Likewise, it should not place potential targets and specific groups against what it confronts on their agenda. When there would be a supposition, such as counterpublics against ruling-publics or female-publics against male-publics, he points out that there would be a limitation not to escape from gender defined in the sexual boundary of male (Warner, 2002). In order to organise heteronormative publics, there must be a limitation to anti-heteronormative publics. This could secure a strong relation between them. However, queer counterpublics can reveal an imperfection and limitation because the dichotomy of heteronormativity cannot explain queerness in its norms. In fact, this approach to a queer film festival has adopted the feminism movement and feminist film festival. Throughout film, this movement has an important objective to produce social counter discourse, creating an alternative culture sphere in which a film festival can practice cultural politics.

In the 1960s, many cinemas near JongRo Street, in the centre of Seoul, created a subculture for gay males: cinemas were places where gays would gather for sexual satisfaction via cruising. With the formation of a subculture for gay males, JongRo Street has become a symbolic place for queer culture with Itaewon, and is where foreigners and the USA army prefer to stay in Korea. In fact, it might be difficult to discern how Korean gays identified themselves with films in a cinema. However, according to gays who experienced the 1970s and 1980s in JongRo and Sindang-Dong, which used to be a famous province in Seoul hosting several gay cinemas,

watching films with their allies in a cinema was where they could reveal their identity, like the characters shown on screen (Cho, Sung-Pae, 2003).

Film spectatorship can be a process for gays to explore their identity and their hidden desires. This perspective has become a key argument in queer culture. Queer subjects put themselves in film texts and re-enact themselves. For example, in the early 1900s, gay males living in big cities in the USA and Europe used a cinema as a location in which to socialise or to have sexual contact (Farmer, 2004). Likewise, in the 1930s, lesbians in the USA defined themselves through movie stars, sharing languages with films (Weiss, 1992). This implies they invented their own terminologies to identify with their allies in their culture, unlike others who are naturally educated in a gender binary system. Thus, public cultural products like music, fashion, television, magazines etc. could be a starting point to discover a new queer identity. Film has become one of the most popular cultural products in urban areas since the early 1990s. Furthermore, cinema could be a place to socialise with allies. Gays could have free and open discussion with other gay friends, sharing contemporary life. This implies film can be an important cultural text in this context, although queers might have their own strategy to watch films differently, by means of queering or appropriation of films via counter-reading (Farmer, 2004). In particular, these strategies are based on counter-reading and oppositional reading but these can be possible by public culture's ambiguity. This ambiguity of public culture enables interaction with resistance, familiarity, strangeness and pleasure. When characters represented in films reveal an ambiguous identity not defined by heterosexuals and homosexuals, queer people can work these strategies and construct in their queer way via imagination against dominant or traditional meanings (De Angelis, 2001).

For queer people, going to a cinema to watch films is a cultural experience related to a process of exploring identity, as well as subjectivisation of queerness. Likewise, a film festival also presents a space in which to socialise and provide a specific opportunity for audiences to make a community in terms of their tastes. People who join a film festival may have different genders and a private taste in films. Queer film festivals, thus, can provide a cultural space for them based on their political purpose. This space enables it to create queer discourses with their audiences via queer spectatorship. In particular, queer films selected in festivals enable to have a relationship with their audiences, acquiring a meaning as a queer film (June, 2003). This implies that this relation can produce queer discourses, discussing if selected films deal with queer matters or representations. Furthermore, these queer films practice their political purpose with queer discourses produced in festivals. Likewise, according to Gamson (1996), a queer film festival is particularly associated with a political movement because this event can make a better environment in which to produce films dealing with queer matters, including financial aid and to provide a space to share collective identity, in interaction with individuals' identity. In particular, this collective identity can lead a direction in an entire process of a queer film festival, such as programming. Yet collective identity is not constructed in only groups or organisations. It is revealed when people who take part in queer film festivals, share their experiences and identities (Gamson, 1996). Queer film festivals, thus, have been organised to provide these opportunities not only to queer people but heterosexuals who are willing to explore queer discourses, too. With various queer films invited from many countries, audiences can share their feelings and thoughts via group experiences in counterpublics and can also produce discourses attempting to

steer away from gender binary. Furthermore, these experiences are expected to help expand the queer community and make queerness an active subject as a cultural consumption.

2. Queer Controversy in Queer Film Festival and Korean Film Industry

Revealing homosexual identity in Korea was impossible until the military regime ended. This does not mean that there was a strong political or social discrimination against homosexuals. Due to ignorance of the existence of homosexuals in Korean society, queer individuals did not need to reveal their identity. However, after achieving democratisation with civil and student movements, they could see how to deal with the negative political power and learned how to achieve a political goal. In particular, many people who could not explain themselves, even in Korean language and in terms of heteronormative identity, have attempted to bring queer theories from Western countries that have already come up with various discourses and experienced queer movement. They have thus adopted what Western queer researchers and movements have practised. Queer film festival is one of them, after the organisation of LGBTQ societies within several Korean universities after 1993.

Cine21, which is a popular film magazine, published a special article in 2004 to celebrate the 10- year anniversary of Indie-Forum. It was about issues in the Korean independent film industry through 8 keywords (Cine 21, 2005). Queer was one of the keywords bringing an impact on the Korean independent film industry. After the military regime ended, cultural diversity and freedom of expression were important values to be approved in the 1990s. In particular, based on cultural diversity,

discussion about sexuality gave rise to queer issues, which were treated as abnormal in Korean society. Thus, queerness could represent a controversial issue against heteronormative Korean society. However, queer matters had limitations in the Korean independent film industry in the 1990s. In spite of this limitation, queer issues could influence many people working in the Korean film industry, suggesting various perspectives about sexuality. Chung-Mu-Ro, a well-known place for the symbol of the Korean film industry (like Hollywood in the USA), faced serious queer issues via one film, *Broken Branches*, in 1995. In fact, there were many foreign films revealing queer matters or homosexual characters like *Philadelphia* (1992), *The Crying Game* (1992), *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) and *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) that were released in Korea. However, these films were introduced as art films that had won a prize in international film festivals and barely brought any issues related to homosexuality until *Broken Branches* (1995) was introduced in 1995. Thus, this Korean film might be the first case to promote queer discourses in the Korean film industry. Many Korean media were interested in this film, introduced as the first Korean queer film (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005, KyoungHyang, 1996). However, this film's perspective had a limitation in that it was regarded as an artistic film that was invited in the international film festival. Most Korean media attempted to define that queer films should deal with a topic concerning human rights and reality about homosexuals. And they claimed that films dealing with homosexual topics aimed to sexually attract audiences for entertainment do not belong to queer cinema (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005, KyoungHyang, 1996). In fact, until this film came out in the Korean film industry, there may not have been many people who understood the meaning of queer. In spite of this ignorance, *Broken Branches* (1995) was the first case to bring a

social discussion to Korean society, even if unsuccessful in Korea. Likewise, this could make homosexuals question what queer cinema is (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). In particular, many homosexuals discussed this issue in a PC communication²² board based on the queer community in Hitel, Cheonlian, NowNuri, etc., which is a PC communication provider (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). Furthermore, Cine21 published a special article quoting famous critics and reporters in their debate concerning whether *Broken Branches* (1995) can be read as a queer film.

Though not issued to the public, *Broken Branches* (1995) brought out the queer issue in Korea. However, controversial issues related to queer films in the Korean film industry occurred in earnest in 1997 with the film *Happy Together* (1997), directed by Wong Kar-wai. The Korean Ethics Committee of public performance prohibited the screening of this film due to the unfamiliar homosexual topic against Koreans' sentiment and thought which are in the gender binary. In particular, they added that there were strong policies to ban films dealing with incest, 'gangbangs', homosexuality, sodomy and other perverted sex. Although this film won the prize in several international film festivals, most Korean media focused solely on how this film was banned by The Korean Ethics Committee of public performance, rather than looking at the homosexual subject or queer matters. This is the first case to demonstrate a conflict between cultural representation and dominant discourse related to gender. Furthermore, this could produce the question about what level of queer representation could be possible in Korean society. Unlike other foreign films dealing with social conflict and discrimination about queer matters that did not give rise to any

²² PC communication is a phone line-based internet.

issues in Korea, this film seems to have brought an antipathy to queer matters in Korean society. With *Happy Together* (1997), the queer film festival in Seoul attracted considerable attention in Korean cultural society. Seoul queer film festival planned to hold this event, attracting huge attention, in September 1997 but it failed because The Korean Ethics Committee of public performance did not allow this event.

If there are no official documents that The Korean Ethics Committee for Public Performance admits in its own process of examination, events, performances or concerts cannot proceed with their planned schedule. Thus, Seoul queer film festival would be an illegal event, lacking permission, which could be punishable. Although there was a trial to start their opening event in Seoul queer film festival, the local council cut the electricity supply to a venue because the event was reported as illegal as it did not provide any official documents. Like *Happy Together*, Seoul queer film festival was prohibited because there were particular laws in the examination standards about homosexual subjects. Indeed, these two events show how Korean society viewed homosexuality in a similar way as incest or perverted sexual behaviour. Although they were officially banned in a legal process, this shows how The Korean Ethics Committee for Public Performance had ambiguous standards about queer representation, compared to other queer films previously released (LeeSong-HeeIl, 1998). In fact, it seems not to be associated with any sexual matter in heteronormative norms, but is more related to ideology states apparatus, including law, family, social structure and so on (Warner, 2002). This implies that Korean society had never considered any queer identities as social members or citizens because there was no clear law to define the meaning of queer. However, these two events introduced queer issues to Korea.

Before the 1992 introduction of foreign queer films, there might not have been any discussion in Korea defining what queer film is. After *Broken Branches* (1995), it provided controversial debates about queer film, and it also brought a discussion about how to define queer film in Korean society's understanding in 1995 (Han, Song-Yi, 2002). Although there were several researches studying sociology and gender-related to the queer theory abroad, there were difficulties concerning discussion about queer matters in public spaces. In particular, debates about queer films might need collective experiences by watching them. According to several interviews with queer audiences who joined the first Seoul queer film festival (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005), many queer people worried about publicly revealing their own identity through joining various events related to queer matters. Furthermore, there were many queer people who felt awkward watching queer films representing their homosexual lifestyle (Kim, JeongMin, 2005). They argued that watching queer films seemed to be unnecessary to identify their miserable reality with others in cinema and that there was no particular reason to reveal their existence in Korea. In fact, there was no recognition for Korean queer people regarding the meaning of queer, including LGBT. They were very unfamiliar with terminology to represent themselves in Korean society, and discussion to define them was not persuasive because there was not any opportunity to be educated in a strict heteronormative society. Indeed, they explored these new terminologies and various queer discourses in online space, sharing and debating them (Kim, JeongMin, 2005). Thus, the first attempt towards a queer film festival could impact greatly on Korean homosexual society, announcing a new terminology concerning queer. This implies that a queer film festival could provide an opportunity to socially relate to Korean queer people. Here, social relations do not only mean a

relationship between audiences and film but also the relationship of shared experiences regarding identity formation in a group with others (Suh, Dong-Jin, 2004b). A queer film festival space can help identity exploration within-group experiences, sharing thoughts via watching films together. This enables communication with society, not individually but in a community and group. Although each individual might worry about confronting their real concerns related to their queer identity, a group of people can face such issues together.

When the first queer film festival was finally held in Seoul, in 1998, many selected films received great attention from audiences because of the rare opportunity to watch various queer films in Korea. There were 9 sections for the programme according to film subjects. In particular, it attempted to define 'queer cinema' in its programme. From the first to the third section, the queer film festival attempted to introduce many films dealing with various genders, including LGBT (See appendix 1). For example, the programme for the first section were related to films gay men or gay boys, however, the second section showed films dealing with lesbians. (See appendix 1). In the seventh section, 'AIDS show', its programme included several films to deal with and cope with AIDS issues and rumours towards homosexuality. And in the last section, it showed several Korean queer films to the public sphere throughout the film festival. Overall, when looking at the programme, the first Seoul queer film festival in 1998 seems to focus on the educational purpose to discuss what LGBT and queer mean. Likewise, it politically challenged to confront AIDS issues for the first time in the public space.

However, there were controversial issues, including the number of screenings in a given schedule. In particular, some films invited to the film festival were asked if they could be regarded as queer films. For example, *Away with Words* (1999), directed by Christopher Doyle, was invited as the opening film in the second Seoul queer film festival in 1999. Due to its subject, based on the director's autobiographical story, many queer people expressed criticism that the film did not fit in with the purpose of a queer film festival. However, tickets for this film sold out because of the fame of the visual director who had been working with famous directors, such as Wong Kar-wai. This opening film disappointed many queer people (Kim, JeongMin, 2005) as they had expected the film festival might promote a change of perception about queer. It is guessed that there must be a strategy to attract audiences to announce a queer film festival. However, many queer people who joined this event said there should be a film to deal with queer matters. After the first queer film festival in 1998, there were questions about defining queer film. This discussion could help to provide an opportunity to explore the meaning of queer in Korea. Indeed, the queer film festival in Korea could provide consideration concerning the existence of a minority living in Korea. However, these attempts did not fully welcome queer people. According to interviews (Kim, JeongMin, 2005), the voluntarily organised queer community could protect their identity behind opened space, but as the official event, the queer film festival was regarded as an unsafe place for queer people. This indicates that revealing their identity to the Korean public might be social suicide, with misunderstanding and prejudice. In spite of this concern for queer people in the late 1990s, the queer film festival attempted to announce the existence of people marginalised in Korea's gendered society and to reveal their political purpose, exposing a problem of

heteronormative norms particularly derived from hyper-masculinity. Therefore, the queer film festival in Korea could influence the expansion of their political purpose to the academic field alongside various queer activities such as queer pride parade and same-sex marriage. KimJho-GwangSoo and his partner got married in 2013 and attempted legally to register their marriage. However, their marriage was not accepted in the Korean legal system and they petitioned the constitutional court to legalise the same-sex marriage, although the constitutional law turned down its petition in 2016. The queer film festival could not progress until 2002 and the movement for same-sex marriage did not succeed, but these left a legacy to enable queer discourse in Korean gendered society. After the last queer film festival in 2001, Seoul queer film festival organisers attempted to keep their political activities within their queer film archive, exploring queerness as an institute to educate the public to a better understanding of homosexuality (Kim, JeongMin, 2005). Based on this continuous effort, the queer film festival could be a part of the Queer Cultural Festival programme in Korea, well known for its queer Pride parade.

3. From Korean Queer Festival to Korean Queer Cultural Movement.

Interest about queer, derived from the queer film festival, has helped to provide many opportunities to produce queer discourses in the academic field and pay attention to people marginalised in Korean society. At the presidential election in 1997, candidates discussed homosexual issues in public. One candidate, Kim, Dae-Jung, who became the 15th president of Korea, mentioned that there is no discrimination towards people based on their sexual orientation, in terms of human

rights, although he said he could not personally accept homosexuality (Kim, Won-Jin, 2017). This would not be possible if there were no homosexual issues derived from queer film festivals. In particular, in official debates with all candidates, they were asked if they watched films dealing with queer matters. They answered they were interested in queer matters with queer films in terms of human rights. In this way, queer films could help queer issues to rise to the surface of Korean politics, providing the trigger to recognise homosexuality in Korean society. In fact, like other countries, queer is very controversial issues for politics, particularity to politicians. 17th president, Lee, Myoung-Bak, revealed his strong opinion that homosexuality is abnormal behaviour, not socially accepted, so he was condemned for what he said by queer people and activists for human rights (Na, YoungJeong, 2016). Likewise, in the presidential debate in 2017, all candidates were subjected to similar questions about queer. This debate about queer matters gained considerable attention from audiences and voters because many Western countries, including the USA, passed a law for same-sex marriage and equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation (Kim, Won-Jin, 2017). Thus, queer matters were important topics for discussion in the presidential debate. With the exception of one candidate from a radical party, all candidates hesitated to answer the question about same-sex marriage. Furthermore, their debates were limited to whether they individually accept homosexuality. Compared to previous debates in a different period, in 2017, those concerning queer matters were evaluated in that understanding of queer matters in Korea was not developed in terms of their stance and attitude (Kim, Won-Jin, 2017). Although there were similar perspectives that there should not be any discrimination, based on human rights, overall, opinions were that homosexuality is not acceptable or not ready for

discussion in Korea. In particular, one candidate from a conservative party kept asking other candidates if they could agree to legalise homosexuality in Korea. It can be seen that queer matters in Korea are still limited and at an immature stage regarding in-depth discussion, unlike Western countries.

In order to understand the advent and rapid development of the queer movement, there must be an explanation for exploring the Korean context. In fact, similar to South Korea's experience in compressed modernisation and rapid development, the Korean queer movement has had comparable experiences. After the first queer film festival in Seoul and the controversial issues emanating from *Happy Together* (1997), many Korean homosexuals from various queer communities decided to join a political movement to announce their existence and change misunderstanding and prejudice about homosexuality. In 2000, several researchers and LeeSong-HeeII attempted to start the first queer cultural festival in Seoul. Although this festival was a minor event, with a small number of participants, it could gain great public attention because this was the first official event to talk about what homosexuality is. From this event, Korea Queer Culture Festival (KQCF) has an important role in integrating ideas from different queer communities and organising various activities, including the queer film festival (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). In particular, KQCF has continuously attempted to plan a Pride parade inside the centre of Seoul in order to encourage many participants and reveal their political standpoints.

With a rise of the queer issue in 1997, in 1998 many activities, including the queer movement, occurred as a reaction against the huge pressure on Korean society, ruled by hyper-masculinity. A failure of hyper-masculinity during the IMF period

exposed how gendered society had caused serious problems. Thus, its failure might expose issues that existed in Korean society and marginalised people did have a look at opportunities to take part in a political movement, infiltrating the moment to reveal their political voices and to criticise an ignorance that Korean society had never considered. Indeed, from the year 1997, many various political attempts were possible in Korea.

In 1997, South Korea was bankrupted, caused by the Asian economic crisis. Many big Korean companies were bankrupted, and many Koreans lost their jobs. During this period, called the IMF crisis, the international society asked South Korea to reconstruct its economy, and many Korean companies were sold to other international corporations. Since 1993, this was an unintentional market open to the world against developmentalism. A failure of hyper-masculinity in the Korean economy during the IMF crisis thus triggered many changes in every field, looking into the meaning of the nation's failure and its impact on Korean society. Furthermore, it meant an unexpected political and economic shock. This shock made a possibility for marginalised people to speak out. That was an opportunity. Thus, various voices from marginalised spaces, such as homosexuality, could emerge, revealing their existence. Indeed, the IMF debacle was a serious economic crisis in South Korea, but this presented an opportunity for South Korea because the year 1997 was the weakest for hyper-masculinity since the Korean War. In particular, due to the IMF crisis, Korean society required flexible thought and needed new perspectives to suggest changes to Korea and to cope with the economic crisis at the same time. In addition, 1997 was the year for a new presidential election and for the first time since

the Korean War, the Democratic party could take over the Korean government from the Conservative party.

After the IMF crisis, many companies have taken a look at their opportunities in the global market. Likewise, the new regime, chosen in 1998, attempted to cooperate with many different countries to solve Korea's considerable economic and political issues. In particular, South Korea has started to discuss Free Trade Agreements with various countries in the Kim, DaeJung regime. This flow of globalisation for the Korean economy has enabled Koreans to change their perception towards the notion of a global citizen. Although South Korea experienced hosting the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1998, many Koreans had no chance to consider of themselves as global citizens beyond their mere Korean identity. However, with the development of information technology, Koreans could put themselves into the identity of global citizens. Furthermore, throughout the Korea-Japan World Cup Game in 2002, Koreans could change their perception about the Korean nation, in comparison to Japan, which was regarded as one of the well-known developed countries in the world. In fact, compared to other developed countries in the Asian region, South Korea's reputation was limited in their political situation with North Korea. Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan have been at the centre of finance in Asia and in particular, Japan leads the most 'high-tech' manufacturing industry in the world. But, the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup game enabled Koreans to find the confidence that 'we can', and it also influenced a change of perception about their own country, South Korea. With a great desire for education, learning a new language, particularly English, has become very important for Koreans. Gradually, Koreans have focused on looking at new opportunities in global markets. Indeed, going out to other countries to learn new language skills has

become a trend and seems to be almost mandatory for Koreans. The Korean government and privatised education institutes began to hire many English teachers from English-based countries, mostly the USA and UK. This implies there has been inflow of many foreigners to Korea since 2000 (Kim, Jeong-Ryeol, 2007). Naturally, unlike their elders, the young generation could have a chance to experience foreigners and to learn about the similarities and differences between them, whilst also exploring global citizenship. This free interaction with foreigners in Korean society could enlighten Koreans to consider what they could not acknowledge.

Going out to the street with crowds was usually regarded as a way to protest in order to achieve specific goals or purposes, via speaking out with a political voice. However, during the World Cup game in 2002, many Koreans went out to public spaces, such as in front of city halls to support and cheer their national team. This was a new experience for Koreans. Going out into the streets with massive crowds did not have to imply any sort of protest. That was a festival, like a concert, with many strangers, including foreigners, visiting Korea during this period (Lee, Yun-Hoe, 2003). This became a new Korean culture that Koreans could enjoy together, beyond differences. In 2016, Koreans showed that even the protest to demand the resignation of their 18th president, Park, GuenHye, could be a cultural event or festival, with crowds displaying their political messages. Their candlelight protests occurred peacefully and nationally, involving more than 1 million Koreans, with various cultural events, including music concerts, every Saturday from October to December 2016, without any accidents or incidents. Foreign media viewed this candlelight protest in Korea as a huge concert (Kim, Sun-Chul, 2017). They said that this protest in Korea proved how democracy could work peacefully against injustice (Kim, Sun-

Chul, 2017). Indeed, the meaning of ‘going out to the streets to protest’ in Korea changed after that World Cup moment in 2002.

In order to understand why the Korean queer movement became possible since 1997 and how Korean queers could decide to organise Korean Queer Culture Festival (KQCF) in 2000, looking at the context is very important. In terms of globalisation, many Korean queers could interact with many foreigners and adopt what other countries had already attempted. However, Western strategies might not have applied to the Korean situation due to political, economic and cultural differences. Although there were attempts to show queer films in film festivals, most of them were produced in other countries (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). Thus, there was a huge demand from queer audiences and activists to watch queer films involving Korean queers, so it could be possible to make queer films in the Korean mainstream film industry in response to such a requirement. Indeed, after 2000, queer films dealing with queer matters in Korea have gradually come out in the Korean film industry. *Camellia Project-Three Queer Stories at Bogil Island* (2005), consisting of three different indie films directed by three different film directors, including LeeSong-HeeIl might be a result of audience demand. Needs and requirements to promote human rights about queer people alongside the Seoul queer film festival were continuously grown in queer communities. Thus, through these demands, the first Korea Queer Culture Festival could be organised in 2000 and among many staff and organisers, LeeSong-HeeIl became the first chairman of this event (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005).

The purpose of KQCF is to bring about a change of perception towards homosexuality in Korea. On its official website, KQCF declares there is no ‘later’:

now is the right time to change. In fact, KQCF seems to adopt many ideas, such as the Pride parade, from what other western countries have done in their Pride parades. However, unfamiliar activity, such as displaying half-naked bodies, seems to bring out a negative reaction in visitors watching the performance in queer parade. Despite the negative reactions, KQCF keeps continuing parades with various performances, such as a half-naked march. In fact, at early KQCF, there were difficulties attracting enough participants because of worries about revealing homosexual identities in a public space. In addition, to show one's own sexual identity in a private sphere might be unfamiliar behaviour for some queer people. Therefore, early KQCF tended to focus on seminars or conferences with some intellectuals and researchers who were devoted to promoting queer rights in Korea.

When looking at the first KQCF events, there were discussions about what constitutes homosexuality and juvenile homosexuals in Korea, in relation to human rights. Gradually, KQCF has attempted to show various events, like a photo exhibition, related to homosexual issues and the realities of queer in Korea, such as AIDS/HIV issues or a queer's life in Korea. Most of these events at early KQCF happened at nearby universities to JongRo, a famous gay town in Seoul, South Korea. Indeed, their purpose in organising this event was to make changes concerning inaccurate perceptions and misunderstandings towards homosexuality in Korea. Furthermore, the first celebrity, Hong, Suk-Cheon, who officially came out to the public and media, might have provided motivation for the queer community to announce that homosexual identity is not a status to be judged or criticised. When he revealed his gay identity, many people and even gays criticised his decision because they said he could live in Korea as usual, hiding his identity. Yet this had a

considerable impact on Korean society because there was not any recognition of coming-out in Korea. Due to blame and public judgement, Hong, Suk-Cheon had to stop his acting career for three years, having been abandoned by the entertainment industry.

KQCF has expanded its political activities not only in Seoul but also in the other big cities in Korea. In particular, it has attempted to attract participants, including many foreigners. According to Bell and Binnie (2000), all citizenship is sexual citizenship. Basically, all individuals living in society have their own sexual identities. Their sexuality is constructed in a notion of society or where they belong. KQCF has attempted to bring many ideas and adopt various activities and innovations from what Western countries have already done and devoted itself to guarantee homosexuals the same rights as heterosexual citizens. Although there might be a difference based on the varying contexts between Western countries and Korea, obviously there are common elements to approach to reveal homosexual concerns and problems in terms of rights of citizenship. First of all, looking at the notion of family, most of the notions illustrate that the family is a sexualised construction to suggest appropriate or inappropriate roles (Bell and Binnie, 2000). In Korean society, values of family, derived from Confucian values, have been important. In order to maintain solid family values, heteronormative education seems to be mandatory in Korea because Confucian values are basically based on the gender binary system. This implies that Korean society is institutionalised in a heteronormative way to keep the rights of family values. In particular, having a family in Korea means to be raised in a norm of heteronormativity, taking an obvious sexual role. Thus, homosexuality might not be considered in terms of these family values in Korea. It should be denied in the family

and Korean gender norms because homosexuality could threaten values of family because it seems unable to explain the role of gender in a sexualised construction that Korean family values pursue. However, KQCF has criticised this institutionalised or forced traditional gender meaning because its values are limited in gender binary from sexuality or masculinity. Indeed, in terms of hyper-masculinity, homosexuality should be ignored and cannot be discussed. However, if hyper-masculinity is a fundamental norm to rule Korean gendered society, Korean queer people can speak homosexuality, revealing their violated human rights rather than putting more efforts to prove the existence of homosexuality.

There must be considerable invisible discrimination and violation of homosexuals. In particular, the 2016 medical report about young Korean homosexuals, related to psychological behaviours, shows how Korean society has ignorance of homosexuality because it focuses on the static results of how Korean adolescents could easily fall into depression or alcohol problems rather than finding out why they were likely to be influenced towards drugs or alcohol (Lee, Dong-Yun, Kim, Seo-Hee, Seok, Young-Woo, Youn, Byoung-Koo and Cho, Doo-Seok, 2016). Likewise, in sexual education concerning sexually transmitted disease, AIDS is still regarded as a sexual disease exclusively derived from homosexuality (Ju, Hey-Ju, 2008). Although there have been many efforts to promote homosexual rights and effect a change of perception of homosexuality since the late 1990s, the existence of homosexuality in Korea is still treated as abnormal, with homosexual citizens unable to acquire the same rights of citizenship as heterosexuals. Thus, KQCF's early purpose seemed to be to announce the existence of homosexuality in Korea, organising several seminars to discuss the reality of homosexuality (Suh, Dong-Jin,

2001). Indeed, the early KQCF was apt to focus on its movements related to improving human rights. According to Suh, Dong-Jin (2001), who was the chairman at the second KQCF in 2001, the early approach towards homosexuality was thinking about rights to pursue a different life as a minority in Korea, criticizing heteronormativity.

Citizenship means a relationship between nation or community where individuals belong that can affect an individuals' life, identity and belongings (O'Byrne, 2003). In Korean society, this concept of citizenship has a limitation in heteronormativity, representing the meaning of normality as a privilege. Thus, queer is described as an abnormality. When heterosexuals enjoy a privilege without any reason to reveal their identity, sexual minorities like queer people tend to find a place where they belong and reveal their identity and where they might not experience discrimination and exclusion. In particular, some people could be treated as disturbing or threatening; one who could harm public safety, order and benefits for the nation and its citizens (Na, Young-Jeong, 2016).

According to Na, Young-Jeong (2016), when minorities who could not be included in mainstream society revealed their political opinions or required rightful citizenship in Korean society, they are usually called JongBuk Bbalgaeng-I, which means pro-North Korea. In fact, in Korean society, radical ideas against dominant government norms are regulated as a threat to the conservative regime. It has become a tradition, since the Korean War, to distinguish between conservative and radical values. Indeed, many people who attempted to discuss new perspectives about North Korea were prosecuted and jailed in terms of violating national security law, although

they did not have any connection with the North Korean regime. Thus, it is easy to find situations with which to judge or frame people who have radical ideas or a political perspective, calling them left-sided-pro-North Korea. In particular, some people are calling minorities who demand to make anti-discrimination laws, which include a prohibition on gender discrimination, JongBuk Gay, which means pro-North Korea gay (Lee, Ju-Yeon, 2013). In Korea's conservative values, sexual minorities, such as homosexuals, are potential threats to harm a system based on heterosexual family norms and marriage and could badly influence a healthy sex culture. Thus, sexual minorities in Korea are framed in a pathologised and criminalised concept. Indeed, this shows how discourses derived from the medical and science worlds could play an important role in practising supporting a legitimate ruling nation (Na, Young-Jeong, 2016)

In order to achieve the political purpose for homosexuality in Korea, KQCF might need to suggest new images with which to steer away from the wrongly-framed meaning of homosexuality. Thus, they might have attempted to adopt successful strategies of other western countries' queer movements (LGBTs, 2016). In particular, KQCF has asked several global companies, such as Google, to support KQCF and invited many foreign ambassadors from the USA and European countries each year. Indeed, these tactics, with famous global companies' sponsorship and foreign affairs chiefs, could bring great attention and change towards both heterosexuals and homosexuals in Korea (Lee, Jeong-Yeon, 2017). Likewise, these could encourage many foreign participants to support KQCF's events (Lee, Jeong-Yeon, 2017). Indeed, KQCF has attempted to introduce various examples about how queer Pride festivals in other countries promote their events with citizenship, regardless of any prejudice.

Participation in global companies and the influence of many foreigners could provide an opportunity for Koreans to think about flexible citizenship. This means that Koreans can pursue it throughout immigration and self-development. Besides, in terms of queer liberalism (Duggan, 2003, Puar, 2007), Korean queers can explore their queer citizenship. Thus, KQCF helps to produce queer discourse with an ideological concept related to citizenship in queer liberalism.

KQCF also provides a sexual education to both homosexuals and heterosexuals about how to protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases, such as the HIV virus, trying to change a misunderstanding about AIDS transmitted by only gays. In fact, there are many criticisms that this sexual education in KQCF looks very radical in terms of Korean sentiment/'Korean-ness', because education on how to use a condom or selling a soap looking like genitals is not familiar in Korean culture (Baek, Sang-Hyun, 2017). However, as an educational sphere, KQCF explores various ways to reduce misunderstanding towards homosexuality in Korea.

The meaning of citizenship is gradually becoming important for queer society in Korea. Compared to KQCF's early stage, many activists aggressively adopting or benchmarking foreign countries' strategies to promote queer rights have attempted to reveal their political behaviours to Korean political society, supporting a radical party which can be an alliance. In particular, KimJho-GwangSoo officially showed his same-sex wedding to his partner to the public, although their same-sex marriage was not accepted in Korean law. In addition, he and his partner submitted their marriage registration form to the community centre to be accepted as a married couple. This political activity, or performance, had a huge impact on Korean society because same-

sex marriage was not considered until their first challenge, although Korean society recognised that several Western countries and the USA already recognised same-sex marriage. From this event, Korean society could regard same-sex marriage in terms of citizenship and many Koreans supporting homosexuality has gradually required the same rights as heterosexuals' citizenship. Indeed, in a debate with candidates for a new presidential election in 2017, same-sex marriage was a hot controversial issue for all candidates. Although all major candidates, with the exception of a radical party, did not support same-sex marriage in Korea, many media and famous homosexual celebrities, including LeeSong-HeeIl and Hong, Suk-Cheon, said that it was a very meaningful moment for the nation to deal with this as a public issue (Lee, Ga-Young, 2017).

It might be very controversial to deal with queer citizenship from only gay males' perspectives. However, in Korea, strategy dealing with queer citizenship is greatly associated with Korean males' duty and privilege throughout mobilisation, modernisation and industrialisation for economic development and a duty of national defence. Gay males have been involved in this privilege and duty. As male citizens, Korean males were mobilised for the development of a modernised and industrialised nation and had to complete their military service as a forced duty. This has enabled them to take privileges as the dominant gender in Korean society. In fact, although taking this privilege requires a sacrifice and duty based on national leading policies with military values, many Korean males could receive compensation, being prime subjects in many fields such as politics, the economy, culture and so on. However, relatively, Korean male gays seem not to be excluded from benefits of compensation. In terms of citizenship, gay males try to speak out that they are neglected in

heterosexual Korean society, ruled by masculinity. Despite the fact that they have the same duty and responsibility as heterosexual Korean males and complete their service for Korean society, they seldom reveal their political voices to claim the same benefits as heterosexual males. However, with the advent of the queer community and KQCF, they have started to show their political intentions to expose unjust treatment towards male gays in terms of citizenship (Han, Ga-Ram, 2014).

When considering the Korean pop music industry, there are interesting issues related to Korean gay males' images to Korean girl fans, like Boys Love / Girls Love novel or fan fiction²³. This is a new trend for young Korean girls towards queer culture, using Korean boy's band in K-Pop industry to expand a new perspective of queer (YonhapNews, 2018). Although there have been several Korean films and Korean dramas dealing with gay male characters as marketing to promote their products, this phenomenon derived from the Korean pop music industry has come spontaneously into being, and this proves that the queer image can be consumed and expanded in Korean society. Consequently, KQCF and the queer movement focus more on the younger generation. According to a survey about same-sex marriage in Korea, younger generations tend to be more open to easily accepting same-sex marriage (Park, Se-Hoe, 2017). In particular, more than 50% of teenagers and those in their twenties replied that same-sex marriage should be accepted in terms of equality. This could be probably be explained in that the younger Korean generation, after 1990, might be easily exposed to foreign culture and environment in terms of

²³ With a growing popularity of Korean pop music (K-pop), fans of K-pop create a novel called Fan fiction in cyberspace. In particular, they tended to write a homosexual love story called Boys Love (BL) or Girls Love (GL): boys and girls in the K-pop industry (Jo, Hyun-Jun, 2009).

globalisation: they are freely open to homosexuality through positive perspectives of world trends about same-sex marriage (Park, Se-Hoe, 2017). Furthermore, homosexuality for them might not represent political concerns but could be cultural, because of their familiarity from pop culture and fashion trends. Although same-sex marriage might be socially accepted in a short time, due to the conservative environment derived from patriarchy based on family values and religious reasons, especially Protestantism, younger generations replied that Korea might not be able to ignore it. Therefore, they declared that same-sex marriage would soon be accepted, as Korea usually accepts Westernised or world-based values from other countries.

Indeed, in the same way, this positive atmosphere in younger generations has encouraged sexual minorities to openly come out to society and to speak out in their own voice. Many sexual minorities have started to communicate with heterosexuals on various channels such as Youtube, Facebook, afreecaTV and so on. They attempt to talk about their life as a minority in Korea and encourage other people who are suffering from identity issues. This activity for queer people, who reveal their identity online, attracts many young people and provides opportunities to get rid of prejudice towards the queer image (Maeng, Ha-Kyoung, 2018). Although much content related to queer people has a limitation within entertainment, only to attract interests, this could bring a positive change towards the queer image in Korea. In addition to the political movement, this spontaneous activity from an individual queer person, therefore, enables heterosexuals to be interested in exploring the meaning of gender and allows them to join a queer festival, supporting its political purpose. Indeed, young heterosexual Koreans have gradually explored the queer festival in Korea. With this increased interest from young generations, queer people living in local cities

organised a local queer film festival in locations such as DaeGu and Busan, two of the metropolitan cities in Korea. DaeGu queer festival has been held since 2015 and Busan queer festival was held in 2017 (Hwang, Sun-Yun, 2017). Indeed, unlike before 2010, many heterosexuals have gradually joined this local event to support queer rights in Korea, and they appear to strive to embrace queer in their life, although some of them might be interested in participating in an unusual event as a festival. Probably, the queer festival in the 2010s might attract many people who do not recognise the existence of queer and enlighten them about unfair situations such as discrimination and violations towards queer people in a heteronormative society.

4. Anti-Queer Movement and Homophobic Koreans..

Gradually, the queer movement in Korea has been well organised and growing in strength since 2010. Many participants who are involved in this movement do not hesitate to reveal their identity and attempt to communicate with heterosexuals who are barely interested in queer. This voluntary and aggressive movement could not only bring a positive influence to expanding the meaning of gender in Korea, which usually explores gender in a binary way between male and female but could also bring a considerable threat to people who have their own beliefs about traditional sexuality (Na, Young-Jeong, 2016) When the queer film festival and KQCF were planned and organised, there was not huge opposition towards queer people although there were several editorials criticising or analysing these new types of movements by sexual minorities (Kim, Jeong-Min, 2005). Due to the ignorance and indifference about homosexuality prior to 2010, some heterosexuals might not pay attention to this movement organised and run by minorities in Korea. However, as the minority

becomes more mainstream and attracts more attention from society, a backlash against the queer movement and queer people has emerged and reveals an unpleasant attitude about queer (Ha, Ji-Yul, 2016, Hwang, Sun-Yun, 2017).

When Hong, Suk-Cheon and Ha, Ri-Su revealed their identity in the Korean entertainment industry, the news was consumed merely as an unusual or specific entertaining feature. Although they have strived to introduce the existence of queer in Korea, many Koreans looked at them merely as entertainers to differentiate from others. Thus, their activities in Korea were regarded as entertainment. Indeed, Ha, Ri-Su grew a reputation representing a transgender who plays a female regardless of her sex change. Likewise, Hong, Suk-Cheon also has a reputation representing a safe male who will never sexually harass women. These distorted interpretations of queer people in the Korean entertainment industry did not threaten heterosexuals, who hold strong beliefs about a dichotomous gender perception. Thus, queer people could seldom reveal their identity due to these constructed, distorted images of queer in Korea (Lee, Jin, 2013). Likewise, homosexuality represented in the media was portrayed in a tragic way, facing death. In particular, many media in Korea have reported that sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS, are caused by homosexual behaviour and showed how they face their life in tragedy, waiting for death (Berry, 2000). Furthermore, in the Korean medical industry, homosexual behaviour and identity issues are still regarded as a mental disease. These fears, encouraging Koreans to think that homosexuality could threaten society, spreading HIV or sexual diseases, might make queer people hesitate to reveal their identity. In addition to this social prejudice and misunderstanding, many Korean expressions degrading them might regulate queer people to join the political or social movement. As a result of these perspectives about

homosexuality, the queer movement had not been regarded as a threat to Korean society until the advent of a liberal government in 1998. During almost 10 years, when the liberal government emerged, people were able to practice free political movement and speech. Thus, queer people could directly reveal their political messages and actions, organising various events, such as the queer movement, queer film festival and conferences at universities. Indeed, they have attempted to enlighten the ignorant about homosexuality, especially the younger generation. Their various activities usually took place in universities, encountering college students involved in a social movement (Cho, Song-Pae, 2003). Gradually, many college students have become interested in gender studies, including feminism, and this has provided opportunities to look into homosexuality. During this time, Hong, Suk-Cheon, and Ha, Ri-su received invitations to many places where they could share their thoughts and life as a queer person living in Korea (Lee, Jin, 2013). However, these political and cultural movements have gradually worried people, groups and organisations with their heteronormative and Confucian values.

Traditionally, heteronormativity has interacted with various institutions such as religion, education, medicine and family (Elia, 2004). In order to understand heteronormativity in Korea, it is very important to know that sexuality has been regulated and taught in these institutions. In fact, a concept such as heteronormativity had never been doubted until the word 'homosexuality' was introduced in Korea. This implies that many Koreans who had a strong belief influenced in institutions with heteronormativity did not pay any attention to widespread homosexuality.

Since the Korean War, Christianity has influenced Korean society in many ways. Foreign Protestants and leaders of Korean Christianity were devoted to recover the damages of war and take care of the many victims. These efforts of Christianity following the Korean War helped to reconstruct South Korea and they attempted to conduct missionary work with a religious purpose. Indeed, Christianity has become the main religion in Korea since the Korean War. Many Christian schools and universities were established to develop students with Christian values and they have strived to spread out Christian values into Korean society. There are more than 80 private universities and colleges established with Christian values, while Buddhism has 5 universities, including one Won Buddhism establishment (Academyinfo, 2018). Although more than 50% of universities based on Christian values are theological, this shows Christianity has gradually influenced South Korea. It has become a group with huge political and economic power beyond religion. In order to explore how Protestants have been able to realise broad political influences, it is very important to look at the historical background related to the colonised period and the Korean War.

Due to the lack of human resources to rebuild the country, Korea failed to eliminate a legacy of Japanese imperialism. In addition, with an ideological competition in the Cold War, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel between North and South, and experienced a tragic war in 1950, 5 years after from liberation from Japan. In these circumstances, naturally, people who came from the United States had an important role in rebuilding South Korea and constructing a basic system for the provision of law, education, politics, the economy and so on. Obviously, South Korea's most fundamental systems are those adopted from America. Thus, Protestant values could naturally settle with an inflow of people, including

Korean-Americans and Americans from the USA. In fact, Protestant values and beliefs could be used to eliminate social criticism for pro-Japanese in Korea. To avoid social blame and judgement, pro-Japanese seemed to decide to become Christian, exploiting a value of forgiveness in Christianity (Choi, Duk-Sung, 2003). Indeed, because of the lack of well-educated and knowledgeable human resources, many pro-Japanese would join in rebuilding South Korea, although they committed illegal acts to betray the nation. Thus, Protestants could easily establish their position in South Korea.

Christianity in Korea has had a huge influence on Korean politics and economy since the Korean war. In addition to these political and economic effects, Korean churches have expanded their influences in various areas, such as education and culture. Major Korean religions, including Catholicism, Protestantism and Buddhism own their media channels, such as newspapers, radio and television (Song, Min-Sun, 2000). They could propagate their religious values to their believers and the public throughout these channels, expanding their religious power in Korean politics. Likewise, with their knowledge resources from universities, media channels and churches that they own, they have built networking in government organisations, such as law, education, gender, administration, culture department and so on. This networking enables them to persuade people to embrace their values and beliefs. Of course, the development of Christianity gave positive influences to enlighten people with education opportunities and to build a modern society in Korea. However, the Protestants' growing political, economic and cultural power has also brought about various issues, such as corruption in Korean society, at the same time. Many religious leaders and politicians involved in a huge church and vast Protestant sects have

attempted to exploit their churches, avoiding tax for accumulating their wealth (Jo, Hyun, 2017). Paying taxes in Korean religions is still a hot issue because many religious leaders and some politicians insist that taxing is a religious persecution (Lee, Sang-Bae, 2014). Unlike Catholics and Buddhists, Protestants in Korea have attempted to refuse to pay a religious tax.

When looking at the history of Korean Protestantism, there is a very interesting point about how Korean Protestants are transformed in traditional Korean values. After the colonised period, pro-Japanese tended to attempt to cut relations with their shameful history, changing their religion to Protestantism. Traditional values for them were conservative and outdated things to discard. Thus, they have attempted to look down on traditional Korean values in Korean history, including Confucius and Shamanism and Buddhism. They tend to deny all kinds of ritual events in Korean traditional culture. Although Protestants admit them as a cultural heritage, they have politically sabotaged them to preserve a traditional event related to a ritual ceremony. Indeed, they attempted to remove all DanGoon statues erected in elementary schools (Kim, Ji-Ae, 2015). The DanGoon statue celebrates the birth of the Nation. In terms of the one and only god, this Myth of DanGoon cannot be accepted in their beliefs. However, interestingly, Protestants in Korea seem to adopt a specific value concerning Korean Confucius.

When the Korean queer culture movement was held in Seoul and DaeGu in 2017, many Christians from different sects of Protestantism also organised the anti-queer movement. Like anti-queer movements in other countries, many people protested their standpoints against the queer liberal movement. In particular, anti-queer movement

participants in Korea seem to be supported by a union of Protestants. But interestingly, their movement seems to be based on Korean values because some of the participants wore traditional Korean costumes, called Han-Bok. They brought other traditional instruments to the event and paraded in the same venue where the queer culture movement occurred. In addition, they blamed people who participated and supported KQCF, insisting that queer people are destroying a traditional gender system, which is in gender binary norm. Indeed, rather than extolling Christian values, their claims against KQCF were based on traditional values with traditional costumes and instruments. They insist that Korea used to be a clean nation without queers (ChrisitanToday, 2017). Their strategy opposing KQCF is to appeal that South Korea is a homogenous nation in the gender binary. When KQCF talks about no boundaries in terms of queer liberalism and citizenship, they focus on developmental nationalism. They look at how treasured they are in one great nation with homogenous values. Thus, Protestant churches attempt to get rid of threats from the outside world, using national values based in tradition.

In fact, Korean Protestants adopt specific Confucian values, hierarchy and family. Here, family can be meant as homogeneity and hierarchy mean obedience. These values seem very useful to Koreans and Christians at the same time, keeping their religious beliefs. Although Protestant values are different to Confucian beliefs within different religions, they share several common values. Thus, Christians could take advantage of these common values, hiding their Christian values and avoiding judgement or blame not to embrace queer with love. The narratives of the anti-queer movement, thus, can be left in Korean national values. As Koreans, they can excuse

themselves about why they wear traditional costumes in a Christian event and prove themselves to preserve traditional gender binary, which might be preserved in Korea.



Figure 10. Protestants wearing Korean traditional costumes in anti-queer movement from CBS Nocut News.



Figure 11. National flags rally for the release of Park, Guen-Hye impeached in 2017 from Busan-Yonhap News.

In Figure 10, many females wearing Han-bok perform traditional music with traditional instruments, with Korean flags and the USA flag. In fact, it is very easy to

find Korean flags and the USA flags in a conservative demonstration (Park, Jung-Ho, 2015). When people from conservative parties in Korea protest, they always bring Korean, USA and even Israeli flags to show where their beliefs and values are based. In Figure 11, there are many Koreans waving two nations' flags against impeachment of the former president, Park, Guen-Hye. This proves that a Protestant in Korea stands and supports conservative and traditional values that it wishes to preserve.



Figure 12. A Brochure about AIDS which can be transmitted by Homosexuality.

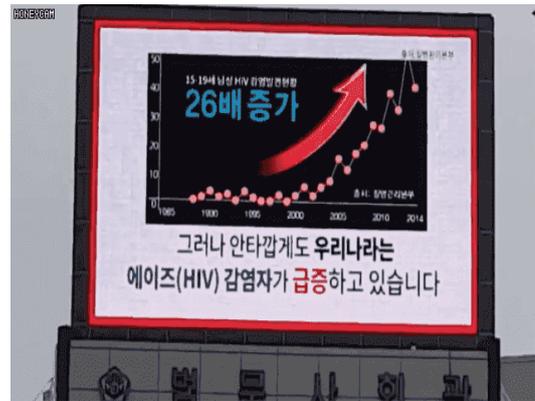


Figure 13. AIDS AD of anti-queer movement in the electronic board in Daegu.

Anti-queer movement and protests are well organised to disturb various activities and events related to the subject of queer. To prevent a screening of queer films, they usually book most of the tickets in the box office and cancel their booking before the screening. This strategy intends to stop the screening and harm the queer film-making environment. Likewise, they leave a lot of bad comments about released queer films to give a bad impression on websites for film rating (KimJho, GwangSoo, 2012). In addition to these activities, they often deal with queer issues like AIDS or sexually transmitted disease via their media channel, to give wrong information with a campaign (Figure 12 and Figure 5). When some politicians and human rights activists

attempted to add a line about homosexuality to a high school textbook in terms of anti-discrimination, they succeeded in preventing the mention of homosexuality (Kim, Sang-Gi and Baek, Sang-Hyun, 2017). Indeed, they have attempted to disturb all activities and cultural products dealing with queer subjects since they felt threatened by it.

Queer film-making and queer film festivals are the first footsteps to revealing the existence of queer in Korea, and they have expanded to cultural movements. Queer people, directors, and activists have strived to introduce new gender perspectives beyond the gender binary. Their efforts enabled them to show their political possibility in a gendered society, providing opportunity to reveal their political purpose to promote queer rights. In fact, anti-queer movement is not a threat to queer society. With a backlash against the queer movement, queerness could be the important matter of gender politics. When heteronormativity attempts to reveal hostility towards queer, a political meaning of queer can be easily revealed regardless of how heteronormative messages are critical or cruel. Thus, meaning of queer filmmaking in Korea enables to explore and expand queerness, which can provide a political and liberal path in gendered society. Furthermore, it can also contribute to create alternative perspectives of gender politics regulated by gender binary in Korea. This means that queerness from queer filmmaking has a possibility to break a limitation of how Koreans see the meaning of gender. In terms of gender binary, South Korea is gendered in heteronormativity. Majority of gender tensions and conflicts happens in the gender binary. However, queer filmmaking could bring attention to queerness, expanding a meaning of gender. And, it enables to reveal a naked and ugly truth of heteronormativity from anti-queer movement. Queer film

festival, queer cultural festival and anti-queer movement might be platforms for queerness, which queer filmmaking can make available. As a result, these platforms help to contribute to producing gender discourses beyond heteronormative norms.

Conclusion

This project has explored many contexts and texts to find out how different domains could affect formation for Korean queer cinema. Likewise, this looked into the role of queer throughout film in Korean society. The objective of this research was to show how a subject and representation of queer in film can politically influence Korean society. Furthermore, investigating queer in films shows that queer film making in Korea is a political behaviour to lead the queer movement, suggesting further gender issues. Thus, this research proved how queer in film making, exhibition and circulation is articulated within the contexts of politics and the economy.

The introductory chapter has explained the background of the Korean gendered society. In particular, this thesis has explored hyper-masculinity to observe how Korean society has been regulated in genders other than male. By looking at hostess genre films, this thesis has shown the concept of hyper-masculinity, proving how females were excluded from Korean society. In addition, the introduction chapter briefly dealt with one queer film made by KimJho-GwangSoo, to explain values of hyper-masculinity, even in male society. Without any information or background to the Korean gender society, it might be difficult to discuss queer. Likewise, the introduction has attempted to provide brief information about the meaning of queer, investigating Korean terminologies referring to homosexuality or homosexual behaviours in Korea. In fact, defining queer is not the main purpose of this research. Looking at various Korean terminology regarding queer or homosexuality is important to ascertain how Koreans or queer people perceive their reality. In addition to hyper-

masculinity, the introduction dealt with a different stance, such as soft-masculinity. This research theorises that the advent of soft-masculinity has been a transformation to hide the failure of hyper-masculinity. Although many media reveal an image of soft-masculinity, this paper hypothesises that the nature of masculinity has not changed so that the dominant gender power in Korea can be maintained. Based on these hypotheses and background, this paper has explored how queer or gender studies could be possible for the advent of hyper-masculinity. In particular, introductory chapter has attempted to secure a meaning of queer in South Korea.

The first chapter presented a political perspective of the Korean film industry, by looking at various types of political pressure and regulations. Substantial past researches have investigated the political environment in the Korean film industry: however, this thesis has attempted to focus on cases with the express aim of regulating the Korean film industry, providing evidence. In particular, this thesis has shown why films in Korea tend to be political and how they have been politically regulated by Korean governments. Rather than focusing only on the political history to oppress or manipulate the Korean film industry, the first chapter looked at various aspects, such as the rating system, black list, white list and political interaction between films and Korean society. There is evidence to support the hypothesis that film making in Korea can be political. The first chapter explored many Korean films from three major perspectives: first, exploring Korean films that could bring social and political influence to Korean society; second, examining Korean films produced to tackle social and political issues, criticising and exposing dominant powers' weaknesses; lastly, highlighting Korean films that were politically and economically regulated and supported by Korean governments.

By showing how Korean film making can be political, the first chapter demonstrated that queer filmmaking can be a political, participatory activity. Based on this assumption, this thesis argues that queer film making in Korea has expanded its influences on Korean society, underpinning many events, such as queer film festivals, pride parade and queer studies in academic. In addition, the first chapter has argued that queer films in Korea can be scripts to produce discourses related to gender beyond simply queer matters. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the political environment surrounding the Korean film industry and to reveal the political tone of Korean queer films which can help bring about social or political change and movement towards queer.

Film making might not be able to be free from capital investment. In order to further understand the Korean film industry, the second chapter investigated the structure of the Korean film market, regarding economy. The purpose of this chapter was to show how film making can be conducted as a particularity of the Korean film industry with regard to the power of capital. This chapter explored how the Korean film market has been dominated by several large Korean companies that have their own film production, investment and distribution businesses in a vertical integration system. In addition, it has also attempted to gauge which particular genres of films could successfully attract Korean moviegoers. Based on data and material published by the Korean Film Council, this chapter highlighted specific popular genres in Korea. The objective of this chapter was to show economic considerations behind Korean film making. In terms of return of investment, film making should establish strategies and tactics at the stage of choosing a genre. Considering a genre before queer film making can be a good strategy and tactic to deliver the chosen story in queer film

making, according to the purpose and intention. The chapter also covered the political economy of queer film making. It presented the relationship between the mainstream film industry and the independent (indie) film world. Queer filmmaking in Korea is normally practised in the indie-world. However, due to Korean audiences' lack of familiarity with queer subjects, queer film making is often unable to secure enough production budget or funding from investors. Likewise, the Korean indie-film world tends to maintain its independence from the capital. However, ironically, Korean indie-films usually depend on financial support from governments. This is significantly related to the political economy. Thus, the second chapter observed the political economy surrounding queer films in terms of film making, engaging with the production process, as well as distribution and exhibition.

Before looking at queer films, the third chapter investigated several films in terms of queer reading. Korea's history concerning queer filmmaking is brief. However, there are many films that can be read in a queer way, such as cross-dressing and bromance in specific genre films. By analysing films with a possibility of being viewed in a queer reading, the third chapter discussed various gender discourses from film texts. In the third chapter, finding ambiguity and unfamiliarity in conventional or traditional readings is a starting point to read in a queer way because ambiguity and unfamiliarity have different meanings. Cross-dressing in a comedy genre and bromance in buddy films reveal a difference and they are based on distancing from texts. Finding a difference enables audiences to have distance from conventional readings and queer reading becomes a possibility. The purpose of this queer reading chapter was to show a possibility of the queer reading of several Korean films dealing with cross-dressing and bromance. Without directly confronting a prejudice about

queer subjects, queer reading politically enables Korean audiences to expand the meaning of gender including queer beyond hyper-masculinity.

The fourth chapter has investigated queer films and queer directors. The aim of this chapter is to further understand Korean queer films and to seek implications about the political purpose of them and queer film making in Korea. In particular, the fourth chapter has explored why filmmakers and producers such as KimJoh-GwangSoo and LeeSong-HeeIl produce queer films. Thus, the fourth chapter has focused on discovering a goal and purpose of queer filmmaking, looking at the contexts of politics and economy. Furthermore, it has also looked at several films dealing with queer matters in film making in a heteronormative film industry. By investigating queer directors and analysing queer films, the chapter has attempted to discuss the representations of queer people in films. Thus, the main body of this chapter has demonstrated that queer film making is particularly associated with social, political, cultural and economic contexts. It has hypothesised that there are certain ways to represent queer characters in contexts around the heteronormative film industry. From different queer aspects, the fourth chapter has opined that queer filmmaking and queer films in Korea have a political purpose and goal to change the perception of queer in the Korean gendered society. It is a political and economic challenge to the heteronormative film industry with its traditional values of hyper-masculinity.

In fact, the films investigated and analysed in chapters 3 and 4 are responses to reading various gender situations, including queer, in Korea's gendered society. In this research, those films engage with a history of gender that portrayed how genders other than male were regulated in a hyper-masculine society. Although some of them seem

to support values of hyper-masculinity, they can be discussed in the light of society gendered by hyper-masculinity.

The last chapter has attempted to include all queer rights' activities and movements. In particular, it has attempted to explore how queer films played an important role as a counterpart in the public sphere by providing alternative possibilities for the queer movement beyond queer film making. In addition, it also deals with backlash anti-queer movement and activities. The purpose of this chapter was to show how the queer movement is politically practiced in Korea: the minority movement usually works together with queer films throughout the queer film festival. Indeed, many activists for queer rights are queer film directors or producers and have contributed towards events such as queer pride parades and film festivals in Korea. Since people have worked for queer filmmaking in the Korean film industry, interest in queer rights has steadily increased. Queer films have encouraged attention to gender equality issues beyond queer rights. Thus, this chapter showed the expansion of queer film politics and provided queer film possibilities and alternative perspectives, confronting queer issues in a real political space.

To sum up, queer films and queer filmmaking in Korea employ politics to bring social change in the Korean gendered society. Their ultimate purpose might be gender equality; championing the eradication of discrimination against other genders that have been marginalised and regulated by hyper-masculinity. In fact, this thesis focused on the political possibility of films in a queer way to encourage a change of perception towards queer. The research encompassed various contexts, many issues and real cases in a political space. In addition to queer films, it looked at films in a

queer reading, queer film festivals, queer pride parades, blacklisting and whitelisting conducted to regulate the Korean film industry, and so on. It aimed to cover all aspects concerning queer matters in Korea, although this research is based on film studies and attempted to demonstrate how queer films can negotiate politics in queer film making to elicit profound social change. In particular, in a rigid political and economic environment, this thesis has attempted to prove that Korean queer films can induce positive social change for queer rights.

Further Studies and Discussion

It is difficult to find many studies to explore Korean queer in a PhD level. Due to the lack of resources about queer matters in Korea, it was challenging to pursue this project. In particular, there is not enough information or researches, covering a history of queer in Korea. For example, when looking at a specific terminology to refer to queer people, like gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender in Korean, there are few professional researches and articles concerning only these. Although some theses attempted to define and explain a history of these Korean terminologies regarding queer, their researches and studies were limited in providing a basic description to explain their sexual position or role in sexual intercourse. Likewise, this project also has similar limitations. There are specific terminologies to describe and define queer people in Korean, unlike other countries: however, exploring these terminologies might be an entirely new PhD project, demanding considerable effort and time based

on interviews with Korean queer people. However, many older queer people seem to avoid talking about their life. This implies that there are many prejudices, bias and difficulties for researchers who might be interested in queer studies. Indeed, looking at Korean queer terminologies and exploring a history of queer in Korea would be very interesting work.

This project has contributed to providing an overall knowledge of Korean queer cinema. Furthermore, it attempted to look at political influences and possibilities of queer films and queer film making in Korean society. Most researches and studies dealing with queer in Korea tend to focus on pathological or psychological perspectives to see how queer people face mental or physical risk. Rather, this study's approach towards queer is based on confronting prejudice and misunderstanding from pathological and psychological perspectives. It also attempted to find out why genders other than male have been regulated and pressurised through hyper-masculine values. Thus, the thesis contributes to recognising the problems of a gendered society. Beyond queer, this project revealed the existence of hyper-masculinity. As I already looked into the change of Korean masculinities, the advent of queer studies could be possible with the change of Korean masculinities. In particular, Korean queer cinema is not only describing queer matters but also dealing with the various political, economic and social issues beyond gender issue in South Korea.

Thus, Korean queer cinema can help to expand knowledge of Korean studies and Asian studies. While teaching at the University Central of Lancashire, my research attracts lots of attention from students and other researchers because of the popularity of the Korean entertainment industry. They asked me how bromance images in boy-

bands in Korean-pop industry could be consumed with foreign fans. Indeed, there are many boys trying cross-dressing and dancing girl band. They already understand that Korean society is gendered by strong traditional values, such as Confucian value. However, they asked me how this could be possible in Korea. When I discussed the queer image in the K-pop industry with their interests, they and I partly agreed that these exposing queerness in the Korean entertainment industry could bring a possibility of queer reading. I see the enormous opportunities for my project after talking with my students. Likewise, this project could be a milestone for other researchers interested in conducting comparison queer studies between Asian and western. The development of queer studies in Korea is different from western countries'. I believe that there must be a further study to look into Korean queer beyond the border in a transnational way.

When I went to the Association for Asian Studies' (AAS) conference held in Toronto in 2014, I attempted to address the history of Korean masculinity, analysing a hostess genre film, *YoungJa's Heyday* (1979). I used this concept to explain how Korean society is gendered in hyper-masculinity and presented the fact that queer could barely be discussed in Korea. Many researchers and attendants who came to a panel of 'Gender and Sexuality in Contention: From Minority to New Subjects in South Korea' were interested in the concept of hyper-masculinity. They seemed to look for a new approach and tool to analyse the gender situation in South Korea. In particular, many researchers in the Korean studies department were interested in the development and transformation of masculinity in terms of mixed values relating to the military and Confucius. I was told that this project could be expanded in a different discipline. Investigating hyper-masculinity in a different discipline would be

very interesting work. In sociology and gender studies, hyper-masculinity could help to give a new perspective to the Korean gender society. Studying Korean masculinity will be useful work towards understanding Korean society.

Hyper-masculinity can be a useful concept with which to analyse several Korean genre films, such as a gangster and noir, to deal with strong male protagonists. When looking at the Korean film industry, there are only a few films each year with a female protagonist. It means there are many films dealing with mainly male characters. Indeed, gangster genre films are steadily popular in the Korean film industry. Interestingly, gangsters' image and representation in this gangster film genre have been changed by time, reflecting the change of masculinity in Korean society. Although most characters still represent a strong masculinity, such as hyper-masculinity, their images have been transformed from mobsters in an old alley or town to mafia wearing a nice suit in a skyscraper. Hyper-masculinity might be able to explain how its values have influenced a transformation of gangsters in terms of politics and economy. Likewise, it will further explore a space of masculinity in films beyond the gangster film genre. When looking at a backdrop, such as a big city in Korean films, the spaces seem to be full of complexity between modernity and tradition. I think there must be a connection between hyper-masculinity and spaces in films.

A limitation of this study is the examination of queer films mostly about gay identity. In fact, it is difficult to find films portraying lesbians in Korea. This might be related to similar issues in that the Korean film industry is gendered in hyper-masculinity. According to Kim, Hey-Soo's interview (she is an actress in South

Korea), there are difficulties raising a production budget to produce films that portray female characters as the main protagonist. Indeed, before *Default* (2018), which relates the 1997 Asian economic crisis, was about to be filmed, film investors and some male actors requested changing the main protagonist from female to male (Jeon, Hyung-Hwa, 2018). This shows how feminist films or films dealing with female characters face discrimination and exclusion in the Korean film industry. More than likely, this might be a potential threat to queer film making in Korea because it could be bound by only gay characters. Like KimJho, GwangSoo said (2012), there must be many lesbian directors and feminist directors and they should work hard to voice their rights. Indeed, when gay society and lesbian society were separated in the mid-1990s, lesbian society criticised Korean gays because they already had the political benefit of sexuality as males and practised a masculine power in queer society. Ironically, lesbian society revealed the masculine problem of gays even in the Korean queer society. Looking at this relationship between gays and lesbians in Korea would also be interesting work. However, to investigate queer films, this must include gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual films, etc. If there were more films dealing with various queers, they would be very useful texts for further study.

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APPENDIX 1

The Programme List for the Queer Film Festival in 1998.

Source: Seoul Queer Film Festival Organisation in 1998

	Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
Opening Film	Never met Picasso	Stephen Kijak	U.S.A	100 mins	1996
Closing Film	The River	Tsai Ming-liang	Taiwan	115 mins	1997

1. The Trajectories of Queer Cinema : Re-writing of Histories of Queer Cinema					
	Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
The Works of Tom Kalin (1989-1994)	Are Lost to Vision Altogether	Tom Kalin	U.S.A	18mins	1989
	Kissing Doesn't Kill		U.S.A	1min 30s	
	Finally Destroy Us		U.S.A	4mins	1991
	Nation		U.S.A	1min	1992
	Nomads		U.S.A	4mins	1993
	Darling Child		U.S.A	2mins	1993
	Confirmed Bachelor		U.S.A	4mins	1994
	I Hung Back, Held Fire, Danced&Lied		U.S.A	5mins	1995
	Information Gladly Given But Safety Requires		U.S.A	1min 10s	1994
Tongues United		Marlon Riggs	U.S.A	55mins	1989

Young Soul Rebels		Issac Julien	England	103mins	1991
Zero Patience		John Greyson	Canada	100mins	1993
For a Lost Soldier		Roeland Kerbosch	Netherland	92mins	1993
Totally Fucked up		Gregg Araki	U.S.A	85mins	1994
Glitterbug		Dereck Jarman	England	52mins	1994
Midnight Dancers		Mel Hionglo		100mins	1994
Nitrate Kisses		Babara Hammer	U.S.A	67mins	1992
The Works of Saddle Benning	Jollies	Saddle Benning	U.S.A	11mins	1990
	모든 소녀들에게 일기가 있다면		U.S.A	6mins	1990
	A place Called Loverly		U.S.A	20mins	1991
	Welcome to Normal		U.S.A	19mins	
	Living Indside		U.S.A	4mins	1990
	Me and Rubyfruit		U.S.A	4mins	1989
	A New Year		U.S.A	4mins	1989
Only the Brave		Ana Kokkinos	Australia	62mins	1994

2. New Currents of Queer Cinema(1) : Homo Boys Go to Theatre				
Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
The Attendant	Issa Julien	England		1992
Like Giants of Sand	Ryosuke	Japan	129mins	1996

	Hashiguchi			
Indian Summer	Nancy Meckler	England	100mins	1996
Chocolate Babies	Stephen Winter	U.S.A	80mins	1997
My Summer Vacation	Sky Gilbert		95mins	1995
The Second Coming	Jack Walsh	U.S.A	53mins	1995
The Toilers and The Wayfarers	Keith Froelich	U.S.A	75mins	1995

3. New Currents of Queer Cinema(2) : Dyke Girls Go to Theatre

Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
She doesn't fade	Cheryl Dunye	U.S.A	23mins	1991
Inn Trouble	Christina Rey	U.S.A	92mins	1996
Hide and Seek	Su Friedrich	U.S.A	63mins	1996
MURDER and Murder	Ybone Rainer	U.S.A	113mins	1996
The Midwife's Tale	Megan Siler	U.S.A	75mins	1995
Chahaath	Lily Gupta	Canada	6mins	1996
Interpidissima	Marta Balletcoll	Spain	7mins	1992
K	Choi, So-Won	Korea	13mins	1997

4. Queer Cineverlite

Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
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Not Just Passing Through	Jean Carlomusto, Doles Perez, Catherine Saalfield, and Polly Thistlethwalte	U.S.A	60mins	1997
Minoru & Me	Nakata Toich	Japan	45mins	
Private Wars	Nick Deocampo	Phillipines	65mins	1996
Changing Our Minds : The Story of Dr. Evelyn Hooker	Richard Schmiechen	U.S.A	75mins	1991
It's Elementary	Debra Chesnoff	U.S.A	80mins	1997
Outage '69 : The Question of Equality(Show 1)	Arthur Dong and Testing The Limits	U.S.A	56mins	1996
Generation Q : The Question of Equality(Show 4) The Question of Equality(Show 4)	Testing The Limits	U.S.A	56mins	

5. The Immigrants of Light. The Residents of Darkness : Queer Diaspora				
Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
Not Simply a Wedding Banquet	Mickey Chen and Ming-Hsly Chen	Taiwan	50mins	1997
A Moffie Called Simon	John Greyson	Canada	15mins	1987
Khush	프라티바파마르	England	24mins	1991

Dirty Laundry	Richard Fung	Canada	30mins	1995
Blending Milk and Water : A sex in the New World	Paul Wong	Canada	28mins	1996
Lotus Sitters	Wayne Yung	Canada	5mins	1996

6. Kaleidoscope of Metamorphoses					
	Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
	Fresh Kill	Shu Leacheang	U.S.A	90mins	1994
	Black is... Black ain't	Marlon Riggs	U.S.A	88mins	1995
	Cat swallows Parakeet and Speaks~	Ileana Pietrobruno	Canada	75mins	1996
	Isle of Lesbos	Jeff B. Harmon	U.S.A	98mins	1996
	Dangerous when wet	Diane Bonder	U.S.A	8mins	1992
Homo-comics	맹목적인 아름다움	David Weissman	U.S.A	7mins	1986
	Law of Average	James Duesung	U.S.A	14mins	1996
	late at Night	Stefanie Jordan	Germany	4mins 29s	1997
	Ambiguously Gay Duo	JJ Sedelmeier	U.S.A	12mins	1997
	Mayday	Stefanie Jordan	U.S.A	2mins	1997
	My Moon Her World	Vicky Smith	England	7mins	
	Achilles	Barry Purves	England	11mins	1997

	I really wanted you	Anjall Sundaram	U.S.A	2mins 30s	1995
	Queercore	Sott Treleaven	U.S.A	21mins	1997
	Epidemic	John Greyson	Canada	4mins	1987

7. AIDS Show					
7-1. Silence is Death : A Tribute to Aids video Activism (Special Program 1)					
	Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
	Role of AIDS Activists		U.S.A	29mins	1993
	In the Traditions of Stonewall, Queers Fiting AIDS		U.S.A	29mins	1994
	By Any Means Necessary		U.S.A	6mins	1994
	Political Funerals		U.S.A	29mins	1995
7-2. AIDS View					
	Silverlate Life : The View from here	Tom Joslin and Peter Friedman	U.S.A	99mins	1993
	Bolo! Bolo!	Saxen and Ian Rashld	Canada	30mins	1991

8. Gender Outlaws					
	Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
	Sunflowers	Shawn Hainsworth	U.S.A	50mins	1996

Transsexual Menace	Rosa von Praunheim	Germany & U.S.A	60mins	1995
Shinjuku Boys	Kim Longinotto & Jano Williams	England	53mins	1995
Juggling Gender	Tama Gold	U.S.A	27mins	

9. Different Bodies / Different Gaze : Lesbian - Gay Films in South Korea (Special Program 2).				
Title	Director	Country	Running Time	Production Year
과대망상	Park, Ki-Hyung	South Korea	45mins	1996
경멸	Kim, Jin-Hwan	South Korea	30mins	1994
허스토리	Min, Gyu-dong	South Korea	45mins	1995
새가 없는 도시	Gwack, Yong-Su	South Korea	25mins	1996
J	Choi-, So-Won	South Korea	14mins	1997
K	Choi-, So-Won	South Korea	16mins	1997