Friends, Foes, or Family?: Love and Enmity in Inter-Korean Relations

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Abstract

This thesis examines how aesthetic and cultural production open up spaces to understand inter-Korean relations differently, through alternative bonds of antagonism, kinship, and love. I discuss how the affective stakes of border-crossing and citizenship persist long after wartime or highly mediatised events. Fractured kinship relations and Korea's system of national division highlight the emotional dimensions of citizenship, which move beyond overdetermining geopolitical discourses that structure inter-Korean relations. The three case studies provide insights into the lives of individuals affected by national division and colonial occupation, exploring how their experiences reshape dominant narratives of love and enmity.

The first case study delves into Kim Jinyeol's documentary *Forgotten Warriors* (2005), exploring the affective bonds and struggles of women communist guerillas who fought for the North during the Korean War and were imprisoned by the South Korean government. The analysis frames questions around the politics of repatriation, unification, and gendered biases in film activism, discussing the complexities of the subject's personal testimonies and relationships with director Kim. In the second case study *To Kill Alice* (2017) by Kim Sangkyu, the thesis examines the experiences of Shin Eunmi, a Korean American tourist and public speaker facing social alienation and legal battles in South Korea. The questions posed explore Shin's struggles and societal expectations of "model citizenship," offering insights into how the imperatives of citizenship influence mutual understanding in inter-Korean relations. The third case study focuses on Joseph Han's novel *Nuclear Family* (2022), which fictionalises the afterlives of national division through the possession of Jacob Cho by his grandfather's ghost, who is trying to find his missing family in the North. Instead of simplified or sensationalist accounts of border-crossing that structures inter-Korean politics, I explore how the novel uses places like the

DMZ and Hawai'i to examine how border-crossing is mediated through connections between the physical and spiritual world, and through the media's transmission of affect.

Through an intermedial approach that incorporates documentary films, fiction, and travel writing, this thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how aesthetic experiences complicate prevailing notions of cultural or political purity in the context of North-South Korea relations. The research questions explore the enduring consequences of the Korean War, affective transformations, and the intricacies of emotional citizenship in a divided Korea.

Abstrait

Cette thèse examine comment la production esthétique et culturelle ouvre des espaces pour comprendre différemment les relations intercoréennes, à travers des liens alternatifs d'antagonisme, de parenté et d'amour. Je discute de la manière dont les enjeux affectifs du franchissement des frontières et de la citoyenneté persistent longtemps après la guerre ou des événements hautement médiatisés. Les relations de parenté fracturées et le système coréen de division nationale mettent en lumière les dimensions émotionnelles de la citoyenneté, qui vont au-delà des discours géopolitiques surdéterminants qui structurent les relations intercoréennes. Les trois études de cas donnent un aperçu de la vie d'individus touchés par la division nationale et l'occupation coloniale, explorant comment leurs expériences remodèlent les récits dominants d'amour et d'inimitié.

La première étude de cas se penche sur le documentaire Forgotten Warriors (2005) de Kim Jinyeol, explorant les liens affectifs et les luttes des femmes guérilleros communistes qui se sont battues pour le Nord pendant la guerre de Corée et ont été emprisonnées par le gouvernement sud-coréen. L'analyse aborde des questions autour des politiques de rapatriement, d'unification et des préjugés sexistes dans l'activisme cinématographique, abordant la complexité des témoignages personnels du sujet et de ses relations avec le réalisateur Kim. Dans la deuxième étude de cas To Kill Alice (2017) de Kim Sangkyu, la thèse examine les expériences de Shin Eunmi, un touriste coréen américain et conférencier confronté à l'aliénation sociale et à des batailles juridiques en Corée du Sud. Les questions posées explorent les luttes de Shin et les attentes sociétales d'une « citoyenneté modèle », offrant un aperçu de la manière dont les impératifs de la citoyenneté influencent la compréhension mutuelle dans les relations intercoréennes. La troisième étude de cas se concentre sur le roman Nuclear Family (2022) de

Joseph Han, qui fictionne les survivances de la division nationale à travers la possession de Jacob Cho par le fantôme de son grand-père, qui tente de retrouver sa famille disparue dans le Nord. Au lieu de récits simplifiés ou sensationnalistes du passage des frontières qui structure la politique intercoréenne, j'explore la façon dont le roman utilise des lieux comme la DMZ et Hawai'i pour examiner comment le passage des frontières est médiatisé par les connexions entre le monde physique et spirituel, et par la transmission des émotions par les médias.

Grâce à une approche intermédiale qui intègre des films documentaires, des fictions et des récits de voyage, cette thèse vise à contribuer à une compréhension plus approfondie de la manière dont les expériences esthétiques compliquent les notions dominantes de pureté culturelle ou politique dans le contexte des relations nord-sud coréennes. Les questions de recherche explorent les conséquences durables de la guerre de Corée, les transformations affectives et les subtilités de la citoyenneté émotionnelle dans une Corée divisée.

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Introduction

In his 2002 State of the Union speech, then US President George Bush called the DPRK (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Iraq, and Iran an "axis of evil," linking an affective sense of enmity to a geopolitical interpretation of these nations as enemies of the USA (Bush par. 21). However, narratives of enmity were produced even before US forces had landed in Korea. Hugh Deane points out in *The Korean War, 1945-1953* that "the Korean people were to be considered enemies of the United States" because there was popular support for an independent, democratic People's Republic of Korea; the US allied with the existing Japanese colonial government and with rightwing Koreans to crush mass political organising that "stood in the way of US plans" (Deane, Landsberg par. 8).

Byong-Moo Hwang's "Revolutionary Armed Struggle and the Origins of the Korean War," builds on John Merill's perspective of the Korean War's origins, viewing it as the culmination of internal violence from 1948 to 1950. The lead-up to the Korean War occurred in six stages, beginning with political antagonism among various factions[1] followed by a period of lull in guerrilla activity as rival governments were established. After the Korean War, the peninsula was split into North and South Korea along the Korean demilitarised zone (DMZ). South Korea was a US-backed dictatorship from 1948-1988, and then following democratisation in the 1970s-1980s, experienced a brief rapprochement or thawing in relations with the North during Kim Dae-jung's presidency before returning to anti-North Korean sentiment.

Geopolitical discourses are imbued with totalising structures of kinship, affinity, and enmity. In Seo Joong-Seok's *Korean Nationalism Betrayed* and Steven Gowans' *Patriots,*

[1] On 3 April 1948 "a group of leftists, protesting the US military government's decision to uphold an election on May 10 to set up separate governments in Korea, attacked police and right-wing paramilitary groups. The combined forces of the US military and the South Korean police hunted down insurgents and burned entire villages in a manner that anticipated tactics used in the Vietnam War" (N. Lee 59).

Traitors and Empires: The Story of Korea's Struggle for Freedom, betrayal is an affective mode that shapes the division of Korea and creates different political economies, national cultures, and social contradictions. Existing scholarly debates on why one distinguishes between friends versus enemies during political conflict focus on the power of rhetoric, representation, and perception.

Ofer Zur argues that "The processes of splitting, exaggerating, polarising and rigidifying the ability to differentiate are at the heart of enmity" (Zur 346). While Zur states that there is a concrete practice of differentiating between real and perceived threats during wartime, writers like Jean Genet problematise Carl Schmitt's concept of absolute enmity by conceiving of the political as not limited to affirming ideological positions, but rather "inscribed, in a displaced manner, in apparent digressions that turn out, retroactively, to be a space where ideological stakes are at play" (Bougon, qtd. in Marson 153). As William Blum states on shifting narratives of absolute enmity: "one month the new resolute and evil enemy is North Korea, the next month the big threat is Libya, then China, or Iraq, or Iran, or Sudan, or Afghanistan, or Serbia, or that old reliable demon, Cuba—countries each led by a Hitler-of-the-month, or at least a madman or mad dog, a degree of demonizing fit more for a theocratic society than a democratic one" (Blum 33). Moving beyond Schmitt's concept of absolute enmity, Lauren Berlant argues that a political concept of love requires "a form of affective solidarity that admits the irrationality of the principled attachment" (Berlant 686). Berlant states that one's optimism of attaining an attachment to the world is bound up in "architectures of trust that are built from within the process of being in life," which includes the desperation people feel when there are no reliable anchors for trust (687).

Differentiating between friends and enemies in inter-Korean relations is complicated by monopolies of knowledge about the North that use affects of enmity as a stand-in for historical-materialist analysis. I am interested in the affective bonds that are structured by what Christine Hong calls "postsocialist counterconstructions of North Korea [that] are themselves articulations of power staged on asymmetrical geopolitical terrain" (Hong 722). For example, celebrity defector Yeonmi Park's assertion that "There is no word for 'love' in North Korea" reveals how abstractions of North Korea are effective in creating affects of enmity and sympathy as a pretence for regime change and military encirclement instead of diplomacy and deescalation. Scholars like David Shim argue that the dehumanising, generic use of images of North Koreans as brainwashed and miserable "serves particular purposes and allows the formulation and implementation of policy practices that would otherwise raise strong qualms and resistance" (Shim 6).

The weaponisation of affect is also seen in South Korea's National Security Law (NSL), which I discuss throughout the thesis. The NSL dates from 1948 under Syngman Rhee and has been used to imprison and repress those who are said to be North Korean sympathisers. There are reports that this law has been used to suppress people's constitutional rights, as the NSL criminalised those who criticised the United States and anti-communist dictators Syngman Rhee (1948-1960), Park Chung Hee (1963-1979), and Chun Doo Hwan (1980-1988).

However, the relationship between North and South Korea is not only elaborated in geopolitical discourses of friends and enemies, and this binary is a limited and simplistic way of capturing the reality of Korea's national division.. I examine how aesthetic and cultural production open up spaces to understand the place of North Korea differently, through different bonds of antagonism, kinship, and love. My thesis focuses on how aesthetics of love and enmity

complicate notions of cultural or political purity that structure dominant understandings of North-South Korea relations. I am interested in presenting different case studies that reenvision the North and its cultural and knowledge production, especially focusing on what Crystal Mun-hye Baik calls "diasporic memory works": "diasporic memory works catalyze moments of return and remembering that denaturalize naturalized temporalities, solidified presumptions, and historical knowledges" (Baik 6). The case studies in my thesis are the documentary films *Forgotten Warriors* (2005) by Kim Jinyeol and *To Kill Alice* (2017) by Kim Sangkyu, and the novel *Nuclear Family* by Joseph Han.

Research Methodology

My thesis combines close readings of documentary film and literature with historical context of inter-Korean relations, drawing from Cold War studies and media analysis to examine the affective stakes of border-crossing and citizenship. Suk-Young Kim's *DMZ Crossing: Performing Emotional Citizenship Along the Korean Border* explores the concept of "emotional citizenship" as a framework and practice to understand how crossing the DMZ "is never simply a neutral matter of traversing the border between North and South, but instead a high-stakes performative act with consequences for the successful border-crosser, such as ideological reorientation, 'emotional deterritorialization,' and 'reterritorialization'" (S. Kim 7). Suk-Young Kim argues that Korea's system of division produces people's affiliation to the state as "defined not by what they support but by what they oppose", as shared historical and cultural affinities are lost in the formation of citizenship (6). I use the concept of "emotional citizenship" to discuss how the fluctuations in North-South Korea relations show up in popular culture and private affective practices.

The first chapter discusses how Kim Jinyeol's documentary film *Forgotten Warriors* represents affects of love and enmity from the subjectivity of women ex-POWs who were imprisoned by the South Korean government for being communist guerillas and spies for North Korea during the Korean War (1950-1953). The brief thawing in inter-Korean relations during Kim Dae-jung's presidency allowed for former communist partisans and ex-POWs living in South Korea to repatriate to the North in the early 2000s, and for their stories to be documented through film activist organisations like Docu Purŭn. Ex-POW Park Soonja and director Kim Jinyeol discuss their own feelings on inter-Korean relations and male-dominated activist spaces. Kim's expressed desire to record the unknown histories of women guerilla fighters who struggle with life in South Korea post-imprisonment provides rich insight into how the affective directives to choose between North and South play out in everyday life, and among two generations of women who are understanding their place in history through intimate forms of sociality represented on film. *Forgotten Warriors* illustrates how Kim's close relationship with her subjects informs her documentary approach, shaping the audience's perception of the women as legitimised agents of memory.

Organisations like Docu Purŭn were affiliated with KIFA (Korean Independent Filmmakers Association), which was central for film activism during the democratisation movement in the 1970s-1980s. By examining how the politics of film activism in South Korea in the early 2000s shaped director Kim's treatment of the women partisans, I show how *Forgotten Warriors* produces affect that connects Kim's documentary techniques with her message regarding the women partisans' evolving sense of emotional citizenship as they were subject to persecution by the South Korean state. I argue that complex forces of love, antagonism, and gender solidarity shape their experiences of reconciliation and social marginalisation. As they

navigate a society where national policies of enmity prevent them from being recognized as legitimate bearers of memory, their experiences highlight the challenges of their emotional citizenship as ex-POWs struggling for unification and socialism in a divided Korea.

The second chapter focuses on Kim Sangkyu's documentary film *To Kill Alice*, which chronicles the circumstances of Shin Eunmi, a female South Korean born American citizen who faces social alienation for speaking about her quotidian experiences of visiting North Korea, as the South Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* and mainstream media outlets accuse her of spreading "pro-North Korean propaganda". Shin is disowned by her family, survives a terrorist attack at a lecture she is giving on her experiences in North Korea, and faces deportation and legal battles because of the South's National Security Law. Policies like the NSL connect the three case studies, as the mobilisation of affect surrounding those who express affinity with North Korea are deemed as carrying out "anti-state activities", exacerbating bilateral enmity in inter-Korean relations.

In this chapter, I use my own close reading of Kim's documentary film *To Kill Alice*, Shin's Korean-language travel book *A Korean American Woman Goes to North Korea: The Most Beautiful and Saddest Trip of My Life*, and my email correspondence with director Kim Sangkyu to discuss how the documentary is "not Shin's story of North Korea, but the image of us from Shin's perspective" (Kim par. 2). The documentary's framing of Shin as an "emotional citizen" who went from understanding inter-Korean relations as an indifferent tourist to someone who writes travel books and does speaking tours to promote mutual understanding between North and South reveals how her public speaking is an emotional performance of kinship in response to the expectations of "model citizenship" in South Korea. Shin's case reflects longstanding debates

regarding whether or not certain representations of border-crossers like Shin, who were able to travel freely between North and South Korea, are considered as (supporting) propaganda.

The third chapter features the novel *Nuclear Family* by Joseph Han, a fictional story in which Jacob Cho, the son of a Korean American family living in Hawai'i, is possessed by the ghost of his grandfather Baik Tae-woo, who tries to use Jacob's body to find his missing family members in the North by attempting to cross the DMZ. A video of Jacob trying to cross the DMZ goes viral on the Internet and ruins the reputation of his family's restaurant. Han states in an interview with Audrey Fong:

> When we think about Korea, we always think about South Korea, first and foremost, with North Korea as its antithesis and as an enemy. In having a book titled *Nuclear Family*, it's also a play on these kinship structures that have been disrupted across the peninsula and across the division, because these are our brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, grandparents, elders in the north, who continue to be forgotten behind this veil that is the DMZ, which ultimately needs to be dismantled first in our consciousness as a way for us to imagine what peace can look like on the Korean peninsula, which is absolutely necessary because the Korean War is ongoing and has not ceased without a formal peace treaty. (Han, qtd. in Fong par. 15)

The novel shows how the Korean body's hunger for food, recovering lost family ties, and discovering alternative ways of sustaining an attachment to the world can find expression even as the geographical and generational distance among families endures. In *Nuclear Family*, simplified portrayals of DMZ crossers are challenged by the enduring impact of border-crossings on subsequent generations of Koreans. The novel underscores how these aftereffects, transmitted through the media and interconnected spiritual and physical realms, shape personal and historical memory. It highlights the lasting influence of border-crossings on individuals, emphasising the intimate and shared social experiences of those involved.

As Han states on taking up Keller's metaphorisation of the DMZ to discuss the division of Korea's affective structures: "There are so many metaphors I've encountered through reading Korean American literature, poetry and fiction about the division, starting with Nora Okja Keller's image of the navel at the center of the peninsula. I wanted to write the 'spiritual' wall as part of that lineage of how Korean writers have metaphorized the division in ways that make it palpable and felt deeply" (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 20). By examining how national policies of enmity produce affective structures that have geopolitical and everyday, interpersonal consequences, I show how Han's novel of alternating perspectives and converging personal histories allows us to reencounter the enduring afterlives of the Korean War through reimaging one's sense of belonging amidst fractured kinship relations.

A recurring theme in these three case studies is that the media of documentary film, fiction, and travel writing affect the reception of the subject's border-crossing. The case studies shape the audience's views on the enduring legacies of the division of Korea, and the different types of affect that are mobilised through the border-crosser's performance of emotional citizenship. In *Forgotten Warriors*, the subjectivity of women communist guerillas is conditioned by Kim's grievances toward the male-dominated film activist collective's misuse of grant funds, reflecting the director and the ex-POWs' desire to highlight the role of Korean women in political struggle.

In *To Kill Alice*, the story of "us" from Shin's perspective largely comprises the South Korean rightwing who promote the idea of unifying the peninsula through "absorption by force" (Seo 3). Due to the current Yoon Suk Yeol administration's opposition towards diplomacy with North Korea, Kim Jong-un recently said "he no longer believed unification was possible and accused the South of attempting to foment regime change and promote unification by stealth"

(McCurry par. 2). While the ROK (Republic of Korea) military continues to be under US operational control during wartime (Botto par. 4) and the US imposed sanctions, travel bans for US citizens, and joint ROK-US war rehearsals persists, the North Korean government has now closed three unification and tourism agencies as a result of heightened tensions on the peninsula: the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification, the National Economic Cooperation Bureau and the Mount Kumgang International Tourism Administration (McCurry par. 4). The DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly states that these agencies are "tools which existed for (North-South) dialogue, negotiations and cooperation", but inter-Korean relations have deteriorated as the US, South Korea, and Japan have been carrying out combined military exercises "which Kim has condemned as invasion rehearsals" (Associated Press par. 4, 9).

In my view, Shin's expressed desire to be a bridge in inter-Korean relations reflects the desire that many feel to end bilateral enmity. Opportunities for North-South separated families to reunite are fewer than during periods like the post-June Inter-Korean Summit of 2000, and the division of Korea still persists. Novels like *Nuclear Family* use fiction to represent how spiritual and physical possession can be seen as an act of border-crossing that leads to affective transformation to bridge geographical and generational divides. Han states that Jacob's possession allows him to understand why his grandfather would stop at nothing to return to the North, and "that leads Jacob to the matrilineal story of his grandmother, whose tale of separation unlocks the heart of his own suffering, as it's connected to his parents and informed by the distances that continue to organize his life as a diasporic Korean and someone born on the other side of the divide" (Han, qtd. in Voulgares par. 35). While Jacob is not a real-life border-crosser like Shin Eunmi, they both embody the division of Korea in relation to how the outside world perceives them and the overdetermining oppositional discourses that structures inter-Korean

relations. My thesis shows how aesthetic encounters of love and enmity introduce complexities that challenge prevailing notions of cultural or political purity in shaping understanding of inter-Korean relations and its everyday stakes.

Chapter 1

Women in Film Activism and Guerilla Struggle: An Analysis of *Forgotten Warriors* by Kim Jinyeol

Forgotten Warriors (*Ich'yŏjin Yŏjŏnsa*, 2005) is a documentary film by Kim Jinyeol that follows the stories of women partisans who were imprisoned by the South Korean government for being communist guerillas (*ppalch'isan*) and spies for North Korea during the Korean War (1950-1953). Young-a Park states that "These women were captured and imprisoned by the South Korean government after North Korea retreated from the southern part [of] the Korean peninsula in the face of General Douglas MacArthur's successful Incheon landing…Now in their 70s and released from prison some decades ago, they reflect on their past and present" (Park 124). *Forgotten Warriors* is Kim's third documentary that premiered at the 6th Women's Film Festival "with enthusiastic response from the audience" and won the Women's Newspaper Award (Oh par. 1). While *Forgotten Warriors* features video testimony and documentary footage about former women comrades who knew each other from their long-term imprisonment, Kim's primary subject is Park Soonja (former name Park Suboon), a partisan in Mount Jiri during the Korean War. As Kim states at the opening of the documentary, "There was no particular reason for focusing on Park. Each of these women were important, but Park caught my eye for the thoughtful way she encouraged her comrades at gatherings. I wanted to hear her personal 'herstory' as a woman partisan (red guerilla)" (*Forgotten Warriors*, 0:02:35).

The kinships formed by figures like Park Soonja and Kim Jinyeol open up a space for them to contextualise their own feelings on the unknown shape Korean unification struggles and social relations will look like. The intimate video testimonies of these subjects and their trips to unification events, communal sleepovers for former women partisans, anti-imperialist rallies,

museums and tourist sites, workers' teach-ins, and their everyday struggles to live in a South Korean society that marks these women as "reds" reveals how the affective stakes of border-crossing continue long after these unconverted, long-term communist partisans were captured and imprisoned by the South Korean state.

In this chapter, I discuss how Kim's own journey to film the stories of these women ex-POWs reflects a desire to sustain an attachment to a world where repatriation, (re)unification, and recovering what has been lost from war are foreclosed to them. In spite of the myriad problems that arise from having oneself and family labelled as "reds" through South Korea's "guilt-by-association" and system of national division, the affective bonds formed by the women partisans and director Kim Jinyeol can be understood as their "making kinship a mode of recognition and legibility vis-à-vis [those who express affinity with] North Koreans by displacing the demonized anticommunist caricatures that had still been prevalent" (N. Kim 12). The women partisans and filmmakers referring to each other as "big sisters", "mothers", "young activists/comrades", and "friends" who promise each other that they are "all struggling for the same goal" towards unification reveals how these women are traversing an emotional terrain of "double warfare" in which they take up multiple social roles as an activist, mother, wife, and bridge between generations of women and North-South Korea relations. As Kim Jinyeol states in a voiceover inserted over clips of women partisans fighting with the North Korean People's Army during the Korean War, "They weren't just fighting the enemy, but also for survival as equals with their male comrades. It was double warfare for women partisans" (0:25:35).

I am interested in examining to what extent the women partisans and director Kim are "all struggling for the same goal" and how this is reflected through the politics of film activism in South Korea. How does the documentary frame the politics of repatriation, (re)unification, and

border-crossing through the women partisans' bodily intimacy and personal testimonies? How do women with different life trajectories like Kim Jinyeol and Park Soonja reckon with the realities of the division of Korea and the social contradictions that arise with South Korea's national policies of enmity towards those who express affinity with the North? While women ex-POWs like Park Soonja express an ongoing political affinity with North Korea as she is involved in unification and socialist activism alongside her husband, ex-POW Chung Soonduk renounced her ideological beliefs upon her release from imprisonment. Director Kim expresses a more detached connection to North Korea, as she states in the documentary that before filming her subjects, the North "had no special meaning" for her.

By examining how the making of this documentary allowed Kim to form affective bonds with her subjects while also allowing her to critique the gendered dimensions of activist filmmaking in South Korea in the early 2000's, I aim to show how evocations of enmity, love, loyalty, and betrayal structure affective bonds that depart from overdetermining discourses of cultural and political purity surrounding these womens' social locations in Korea. Kim's treatment of the women partisans' bodily intimacy, their private and public testimonies, and their shared (and sometimes diverging) politics is in dialogue with women documentarians who employ a female aesthetic that "frequently leans towards producing and transmitting affect that expressly connects to communicating individual female experience and the creator's or subject's feelings about that experience" (French 83-84). Both the women partisans and director Kim provide commentary on the limits and possibilities of communal activist culture that has been traditionally based on male leadership and representation. The documentary film shows how Kim's intimacy with her subjects is part of her documentary process, and this affects the audience's reception of the women as legitimised agents of memory. By highlighting the women

partisans' changing sense of personal belonging, the documentary reframes the audience's understanding of the emotional dimensions of citizenship through these figures who were subject to persecution by the South Korean state and the affective directives of picking a side between North and South during wartime.

The limits and possibilities of women in film activism

Kim's experiences with working on the documentary film *Repatriation* at Docu Purŭn show how gendered biases prevent women from being political actors on the same level as their male counterparts—this is for both director Kim and for the women guerillas who were lumped together as "mothers". In Young-a Park's *Unexpected Alliances: Independent Filmmakers, the State, and the Film Industry in Postauthoritarian South Korea*, the author provides intimate insight on Kim's motivations behind making *Forgotten Warriors*. Young-a Park was able to meet Kim (aged 28 at the time) at a 2001 Docu Purŭn documentary workshop where Kim was a lecturer, and their relationship evolved as they participated in a documentary study group which aimed "to provide Korean documentary filmmakers the opportunity to juxtapose their work with the work of their counterparts in Western realist documentary filmmaking and to reflect on their own films" (Park 109).

Docu Purŭn was central for film activism (*yŏnghwa wa undong*) during the democratisation movement. After the democratisation movement, organisations like Docu Purŭn distributed "personal" films that represented a departure from the "socially conscious"/"political" documentary films that the Korean Independent Filmmakers Association was known for (Park 72). Docu Purŭn members made films framed from their experiences in radical student activism during the 1980s, but Kim did not have the same activist background. Kim was majoring in English as an undergraduate student during the mid-1990s, "often described by members of the

3-8-6 generation[2] and the liberal media as a time of 'political vacuum' filled with 'apolitical kids'" (Park 110). Kim joined Docu Purŭn after quitting her job as a news reporter because "there wasn't much human connection" among her subjects. Young-a Park states that although Kim had already completed two successful documentaries[3] that were shown at the Seoul Women's Film Festival and other small festivals before joining Docu Purŭn, "she wanted 'systematic support' from an organization", as "she was sick of being lonely and of working alone" (114).

Kim states that she was inspired after seeing a television documentary on "a heart-wrenching encounter between North Koreans and South Koreans at the Yalu River". Kim appreciated the intimate interviews in the documentary, and she decided to quit her job to study filmmaking (111). At Docu Purŭn, Kim was working as an assistant director to Kim Dong-won for his documentary film *Repatriation* (2003), which is where she developed contacts with former guerillas and spies who were imprisoned in South Korea for decades and were able to repatriate to North Korea, "their 'ideological homeland'" (118). Kim Dong-won found these ex-POWs after receiving a phone call from a Catholic priest (acting on behalf of Mingahyŏp, the Association of Family Members for Democracy) who asked if he could drive them to a shelter where he was living nearby after they were released from prison (119). As Park states, "These South-Korean-born POWs were shunned by their family members and relatives, who suffered persistent abuse by the police only because they were related to 'reds,' easy targets of persecution in South Korean society" (120). While the "guilt-by-association" system was officially revoked in the late 1980s, the family interviews of the guerillas featured in *Forgotten*

[2] "3-8-6" is the generation of South Koreans born in the 1960s who were instrumental in the democratisation movement in the 1980s.

[3] Kim Jinyeol's previous documentary films are *The Marriage Story of Kim Jin-ok, a Disabled Woman* (1999), which recorded the married life of a disabled woman, and *Land, Making Rice* (2000).

Warriors that I will discuss later reveals how South Korea's national policies of enmity towards those who express affinity with the North constitutes a "kind of social and political exclusion [that] was based on one-sided information, one-sided knowledge, and one-sided stigma" (Kim Dong-choon, qtd. in Em, Henry, et al. 843).

Kim Jinyeol was "shocked" and "irritated" at the realisation that there were women among the communist guerillas she worked with on the filming of *Repatriation*, as at Docu Purŭn female guerillas were not considered fighters in the same way that the men were. The women were referred to as "mothers" at the AMFD while the men were addressed with the honorable title *sŏnsaegnim* (meaning "teacher"). By lumping together the AMFD's "mothers" with the women guerillas, "To Jin-yeol, this showed the inability of the AMFD and Docu Purŭn to find a proper place for female guerillas" (Park 122). Young-a Park states that Kim "was struck by the realization that she had been looking solely through the lens of Kim's [Dong-won] project, which was, in a sense, an embodiment of Kim's gendered vision. This hindsight encouraged her to start thinking about her own project of filming the female POWs" (122). Despite her male activist colleagues' characterisation of Kim as a filmmaker who is more invested in "personal" rather than "political" subjects, Kim's motivation to attend rallies "in search of women like Park" and to form personal relationships with the women guerillas reveals how even in leftist/activist spaces there are gendered biases which hinders conceiving of "women as political actors on the same level as their male counterparts" (Park 123). As Park states, "Carving out spaces for representation of women other than as wives, mothers, and daughters was as challenging in the movement subculture as it would be in any other place in Korea…Jin-yeol, with a sense of bitterness about the absurdity of calling all guerilla women 'mothers,' mentioned at the end of our conversation, 'Some female guerillas never married, after all'" (Park 123).

Bodily intimacy and the subjectivity of women communist guerillas

Kim creates bodily intimacy by focusing on close-ups of faces, shots of the women partisans sharing communal spaces, and everyday scenes and testimonies. This reveals how alternative forms of sociality can be produced against the South Korean state's marginalisation of these women who are adjusting to life after imprisonment. *Forgotten Warriors* begins with shots from a 14 April 2002 gathering of former communist POWs at the 2nd Anniversary of Tongil Gwangjang (reunification activist group). Kim Jinyeol's voiceover in these clips states, "I first met Park Soonja at a gathering for unconverted long-term communist prisoners[4]. I attended gatherings and rallies in search of women like Park. Having belatedly realized that there were women among the communist prisoners, that they were still actively working for reunification, I reached for my camera" (0:01:04). The attendees at this gathering are singing a political song in Korean with the lyrics "In memory of those behind bars fighting for national reunification and democracy." There are close-up shots of former women partisans featured in the documentary with their names and ages written on-screen: Byun Sookhyun (aged 79), Park Jungsook (aged 86), Kim Sonbun (aged 78), Chung Soonduk (aged 68), and Park Soonja (aged 72).

The documentary's title card appears with an old photo of Park Soonja, and we see scenes of Park in her home in Gwangan-ri, Busan. In *Forgotten Warriors*, Park Soonja is the first subject to tell the story of her political and personal journey. Park was born in 1930 in Hadong, South Gyeongsang Province, South Korea to a farmer's family and she was the youngest of four children. Kim Jinyeol's voiceover states that "Park started delivering messages for communist fighters at age 15, influenced by her older brother who'd been a leftist since the Japanese occupation" (0:07:02). Park would send the messages to far-off villages while pretending to be a

[4] "Unconverted long-term communist prisoner" refers to political prisoners who refused to denounce communism in spite of pressure and torture to convert. See Park, *Unexpected Alliances*.

travelling peddler of cosmetics “and stuff for rich ladies”: “I didn’t think it was wrong at all, felt like this was my destiny. I was enjoying myself, because back then, women were told to stay at home. We had to slave at household chores all day, had no time to ourselves. We were taught to sew and embroider, because education would only spoil us. That was our lot back then” (0:07:14). Park saw her friends being dragged away by their parents and married off, “and later Park turned to communism as a philosophy and a political movement that would liberate her from the confines of the Japanese colonial social hierarchy and patriarchal system that rendered her as a second-class citizen” (Park 124). Park joined the North Korean guerilla struggle in 1950 and was captured in 1954, as she states, “I was arrested much earlier than that and was in prison. Anyway, since then, I’ve poured my life into the struggle” (0:08:30).

Kim says that Park was “uneasy about living with a camera” and it was hard to film her in the beginning. The director made the conscious choice to begin by just filming Park’s life activities outside the home so she was more comfortable in front of the camera. There are shots of Park getting acupuncture with her husband Choi Sangwon (aged 80), and we see footage of the couple at a reunification rally on 27 July 2002 to honour the 49th day since the death of Hyosoon and Misun, two schoolgirls who were killed by a US Army vehicle in the 13 June 2002 Yangju highway incident. Choi is identified in the documentary as “Advisor, Busan branch, South HQ, Pan-Korean Alliance for Reunification”. Kim’s voiceover states, “The long-term prisoners who’d refused to denounce their communist beliefs became socially active during the democratization movement in 1987[5]. That’s when Park and Choi became active again. To the couple, rallies were the way to meet and identify with the young generation of activists”

[5] Namhee Lee conceptualises South Korea’s democratisation movement in three key areas: the university student movement, a reinvented traditional folk theatre, and the intellectuals’ alliance with workers. See Namhee Lee’s *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea*.

(0:04:20). While Kim Jinyeol is more removed from the political struggles of former partisans like Park and Choi who are actively working towards unification and socialism, the documentary shows how two generations of women embody the division of Korea's affective structures through their expressed desire to highlight the role of women guerillas and their material conditions post-imprisonment.

David Shim argues that "issues of daily life—that is, conditions of living, dwelling and being—carry significant weight in governmental and non-governmental approaches to North Korea" (Shim 12). I would include to Shim's argument that a rigorous analysis of the images, texts, and contexts used to represent the everyday lives of these women partisans who fought for the North during the Korean war is important in considering how these representations are parts *of* world politics. The director states over close-ups of the former women partisans at a gathering of long term ex-prisoners during the 14 August 2002 Eve of Independence Day Rally at Konkuk University, "In the faces of the women, I could sense the national history they had lived through" (0:09:20).

[6]

Christine Hong states that the Korean War was crucial to US imperial state building and global capitalist hegemony from mid-century onward: "the national security state, the military industrial complex, and the perpetual war economy, all cushioned within a self-serving regime of forgetting" (Hong 598). Hong identifies an inversion of cause and effect which contributes to present-day consequences such as the decontextualization of North Korea's nuclear self-defense, leading to justifications for deferring peace, potential preemptive violence, and calls for regime change. Hong argues that framing North Korea as solely responsible for the Korean War, particularly in state-level US and South Korean commemorations, obscures longer histories of imperialism, colonialism, and anticolonial struggles in Korea and across Asia.

This historical perspective challenges dominant narratives and underscores the complex dynamics that continue to shape memory politics in inter-Korean relations. Kim Dong-won states in *Repatriation*: "In a bid to show the superiority of the South, the government decided to clear

[6] My own screenshot from *Forgotten Warriors*.

away all communist prisoners, not by releasing them but by forcing them to convert" (*Repatriation*, 00:25:21-00:25:35). The fact that these unconverted women partisans were marginalised in contemporary South Korean society indicates the degree to which the complexity of the past and of the Korean War has been flattened and oversimplified for those who refused to renounce their political beliefs. However, *Forgotten Warriors* may be limited in its focus on the individual, private experiences of the women ex-POWs at the expense of a deeper analysis of the state's role in the formation of citizenship for those who were forced to convert.

At a sleepover after the Independence Day Rally, there are shots of the women partisans sitting together on the floor as they recount their time in prison. Kim Jinyeol says in a voiceover that "The women met one another 50 years ago as partisans or communist agents. They were arrested during the Korean War for Security Law [NSL] violations, and got to know each other while in prison." The National Security Act (the NSL) was created at the [formation] of the South Korean state under the dictator Syngman Rhee: "The law had been enacted in 1948 in response to threats from communist North Korea, but has long been used by the government to silence legitimate opposition in South Korea" (Kraft 627). The NSL's stated purpose is to "prevent anti-state acts from threatening the security of South Korea" (Kraft 628), but the ambiguous meaning of "anti-state acts" allows for the weaponisation of the NSL to suppress political dissent and restrict freedom of speech. National policies of anti-communism were used "to fracture solidarity and to suppress labor, starting from the colonial period and continuing down through the postliberation period under American occupation" (Kim Dong-choon, qtd. In Em, Henry, et al. 846).

The affective bonds the women partisans have made during their political persecution reveals the complicated social contradictions that arise with South Korea's national policies of

enmity towards those who express affinity with the North, as after independence from Japanese colonial rule and the division of Korea, “there was no nation to which they could offer their hearts” (Seo xv). While Park Soonja mentions that only male commanders used weapons as the guerillas in the Women’s League were mostly in the lower ranks as medics, messengers, or spies, for partisans like Oh Youngae, Park Sookhyun, and Park Soonja, they trace their experiences of state violence in South Korea with the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945). In a sit-down interview with Oh, there is text on the screen which says she “turned to communism through her family’s influence”. Oh states, “Before the Korean War, they’d already killed 6 of my family members. So for me, it was either run or be killed. I was blazing with hatred. To me, from a young age, they were the enemy, plain and simple” (0:14:58).

Park Sookhyun, a partisan in Mount Hwemun, turned communist through husband’s influence, as she says, “I saw my husband’s comrades, and it was women’s lib[eration], even back then, and therefore treated equally. Women and men were educated equally. It was my kind of world. Back then my family had slaves, and little kids were bossing gray-haired old people because they were slaves. And the slaves would take that shit from their young masters. I was horrified by the unfairness. And because of my husband, I realized this was another thing we had to condemn and abolish” (0:15:25). Park Soonja says her mother was from a poor family and she got married at age 15: “She was nothing but a slave in her in-law’s family all her life. I grew up watching her and felt the need for women’s liberation from a young age. It was something I believed in fervently, regardless of my political convictions” (0:16:12). Kim Jinyeol’s voiceover states that “During Japanese Occupation, constantly in danger of sexual slavery to Japanese soldiers, these women, though still very young, could see that class society and patriarchism

were social contradictions to be condemned. To them, leftist ideals were the road to freedom" (0:16:34).

In the documentary, the women partisans go to a museum of an "Exhibition Hall showing suppression of partisans in Mt. Jiri, opened in 2002". Mount Jiri is where Park Soonja comes with young people every year, and it is where Park's brother was killed and buried during the Korean War. Park fled to the mountains from Sobuk Youth League, then went to Busan, where she hid her identity and worked for 2 years. There are shots of the People's Army taking over Seoul, with video footage of the Women's League: "People's Army took over Seoul. For 90 days from June to Sept. 1950, Seoul was DPRK territory." There is footage of the Sobuk Youth League (also known as the Northwest Youth League), "a right-wing group formed in 1946 by North Koreans who'd fled to the South to the mountains in 1947". Kim states that "Sobuk League was infamous for their cruelty in wiping out left-wing activists […] There was no hope once you were arrested, especially if you were a woman" (0:19:34).

Over clips of women partisans "moving into action", Park Soonja says that "if an enemy soldier appeared, we had to run like mad to keep up with the men. I was strong both mentally and physically. People used to call me 'steel woman'" (0:24:56). Park says that the women guerillas' husbands were targeted by the Sobuk Youth League because they were left-wing leaders, and they sexually tortured women. As Kim Jinyeol reflects on the museum's representations of the guerilla struggle, she states over photos of women partisans who were captured and tortured during the Korean War, "The Exhibition Hall had turned the partisan struggle into lifeless artifacts, but the past was vividly alive in the women […] To women partisans, being killed was preferable to being captured alive. They were forced to marry officers, or subject ot near-fatal torture" (0:25:29-0:26:24). When the armistice treaty was signed

on 27 July 1953, Kim states that "authorities launched an all-out crackdown," as "Park's Gyeongnam Provincial Party had to face a life-and-death showdown in Nov 1953 [...] 3 in the morning of 13 January 1954 marked the end of Park's partisan struggle. She'd spent four years in the mountains. She was 24" (0:27:08).

Byun Sookhyun reflects on her experiences as a woman guerilla during the Korean War. While trekking Cheonwang Peak on Mount Jiri, Byun sings about the young fighters who participated in the partisan struggle. She recounts meeting with her husband, a partisan on Mount Taebaek, in 1951, marking their last encounter. Byun joins the trek to locate the hideout of the Jeonnam mobile unit headquarters at Mount Hwemun, where she had been with her newborn baby in 1949. Byun shares her role as the only female partisan in the mountains, emphasising that gender was inconsequential at the time: "We were all just human beings united in our will to stay alive til the People's Army returned…There was just one thing—with barely enough time to pee, I couldn't just turn around and do it like the men...Besides that, I didn't feel any different just because I was a woman" (0:32:11). Leaving her baby behind, she reflects on the sacrifices made for the guerrilla struggle, expressing determination to create a better world: "I trudged on, thinking, good bye, baby, be strong, I'll make a better world for you" (0:34:21). When asked about living a normal life without leaving her child, Byun affirms that she made the right choice.

Byun's reply to Kim's question is representative of the former women partisans' desires to form affective bonds of kinship through what Suzy Kim describes as a "maternal feminism" that "was not imposed upon Korean women by maintaining traditional Confucian gender roles or by idolizing Kim Il Sung's mother and wife, but began as an international strategy during the Korean War to demand peace in the name of mothers" (S. Kim 22). For women in the Korean communist movement, "the mother and maiden best depicted the revolution as one waged not by

extraordinary men but by ordinary people. Moreover, repressive colonial conditions enabled women to stand in for men, who were either imprisoned or co-opted by colonial rule [...] they realize[d] the futility of waiting for a savior and take charge of their own destinies, in this shift becoming revolutionaries themselves" (S. Kim 214). While Byun asserts that she made the right choice as a mother by joining the guerilla struggle to build a better world for her son, Park Soonja has conflicting feelings towards being a mother to her disabled child Hanshil, as having a family with her husband Choi prevented her from repatriating to the North. The documentary's reflection on Park's private struggles as she balances being a mother with continuing her political activism is discussed later on.

Park Jungsook, born in 1917, moved to North Korea in 1950 with her family but returned secretly as a spy in 1951, leading to her arrest and a 10-year prison sentence. Ham Gimyun, a student activist in 1948, worked in the People's Army propaganda bureau in 1950, got arrested in 1951, and served six years. The women fondly remember Kim Sungkun, a comrade from North Korea who died during imprisonment. Park Sookhyun, born in 1923, engaged in partisan struggle, got arrested in 1952, and was released in 1960. Oh Youngae, born in 1935, worked as a medic, got arrested in 1951, and served seven years. Byun Sookhyun and Oh Youngae reunited in 2000, over 40 years after their release, facing challenges in reconnecting with their communist contacts and overcoming societal scrutiny. The testimonies include reflections on their personal struggles, imprisonments, and efforts to rebuild their lives post-release. Kim Jinyeol's voiceover states, "It was difficult for them to get back in touch with their communist cell, and they had to make a living and face the cold looks of people around them" (0:14:38).

For the women guerillas featured in Kim Jinyeol's documentary film, the title *Forgotten Warriors* is representative of the limits of the South Korean state's mobilisation of national

memory which relegates ex-POWs like Park Soonja to the margins of history. Kim's focus on these women's bodily intimacy and personal testimonies through close-up shots of the women eating, cleaning, socialising, caring for their families/communities, and participating in rallies and commemorative events gestures towards a vision of intimate sociality for these women partisans that was not on offer for Kim during the making of the documentary. The male-dominated film activist spaces Kim experienced while making the documentary reframed my own understanding of the limits and possibilities of women in South Korean film activism.

When the director joins the women on a leisure trip, Oh Youngae tells the group, "Tonight you said you'll be my big sisters. I truly feel like we're family now. Can I really call you sis?" The women say "yes!" and Oh addresses director Kim Jinyeol and her team as "young activists" (1:03:08). When Oh asks what she should call them and Kim says to simply say use her name, Park Jungsook interjects, "She's supposed to be 'young comrade from Purŭn Productions' but now that we're friends, I just call her name" (1:05:40). Park Jungsook makes the filmmakers promise to join them at rallies, as she tells them:

> We're your big sisters, all struggling for the same goal…It may seem like the men have led society, but we women have pulled out weight, too. We're half the population! But the problem is we don't see many women at places like this. Few women comrades in the frontlines. So we have an important role to play. And young women have to inherit that role. The young women who brought us here and you two, recording our lives on film. You're all such precious people. We're grateful. But remember, this isn't everything. You must aim higher. You must continue what we've begun, okay? (1:06:23-1:09:10)

A woman named Sang from Park's hometown says, "A lot of the organizers are women. We need more opportunities to meet. Tonight's one opportunity to join hands" (1:09:12). The women use a North Korean term to cheers while saying, "*Chukbae*, to speedy reunification and to our struggle!" (1:10:01).

I read Park Jungsook describing Kim Jinyeol as "young comrade from Purŭn Productions" differently after reading about Kim's grievances toward Docu Purŭn when she realised that the grant money she had received to make *Forgotten Warriors* went into a communal account that was used for payment for dining-out instead of supporting the now elderly communist guerillas, as Kim states:

> The folks whom I'm filming, such as the elderly women who fought as communist guerrillas during the Korean War, still live in poverty. And I would like to bring small gifts or food for them when I visit them. But without the grant money that's not going to happen. The thought of my grant money being used for Docu Purũn's *hoeshik* [collective dining-out] and other activities really bugs me. Although Docu Purũn is going to be credited as the producer, my project is my baby after all. (Kim, qtd. in Park 117)

Although Kim Jinyeol and the ex-POWs have had different life trajectories, they all express preoccupations with archiving and highlighting the role of Korean women in political struggle. Towards the end of the documentary, Park and Choi are invited to speak at a teach-in with the KCTU (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions) to discuss their long-term imprisonment and political journey. Park says to an audience of male organisers, "I'd like to ask unionists to recognize and recruit more women leaders…When I started out, there were few women. It was hard fighting alongside male comrades. They treated me well and everything, but there are things only women understand" (1:29:32). The affective bonds between the women shown in the documentary are complicated by the overdetermining discourses of cultural and political purity surrounding these ex-partisans' decisions to repatriate to the North, renounce their political beliefs to live as normally as they can in South Korean society, or to continue struggling for socialism under harsh national policies of anti-communism.

For example, when Park visits Chung Soonduk in the hospital, there is a glimpse of the complicated relationship unconverted ex-POWs like Park have with Chung, who publicly

denounced her beliefs upon getting released from her long-term imprisonment. Chung, the last partisan to be captured, states that Park was the only comrade who allowed her to live with her upon release (0:53:02). Chung spent 23 years in prison and, with no family to return to, resided at the House of Reunion in Seoul, a community for long-term prisoners. Despite being dubbed the "female general of Mt. Jiri," she faced health challenges, as captured in a heartfelt message to her repatriated comrades in 2001. When Kim asks, "When do you most miss the comrades who've returned to the North?" Chung says, "When I'm eating…because I can't cook for them anymore…It's my biggest regret. We had to be frugal, so I couldn't feed them good food…I wonder what I can send them as a gift. Do you think I could send food?" (1:00:10).

Kim's voiceover reflects on the divergent trajectories of Park and Chung's lives, attributing their differences to the enduring impact of the Korean War. Kim says, "Chung has personally recorded the names of comrades who'd died and how they died" over shots of her notebook filled with names (1:00:52). Kim states, "Chung and Park were intimate comrades, but they can't spend the rest of their lives together. Park married a comrade and is still an activist, while Chung is bedridden and all alone. What had made their lives so different?" (1:01:45). The funeral of Chung Soonduk in 2004 prompts an emotional speech from Park Soonja, expressing regret for being harsh with Chung for renouncing her political beliefs: "She used to say to me, 'Sis, you're my reason to live.' But I was so mean to her, blaming her for converting, for distorting the history of our women partisans' struggle, for shaming all of us. I was so mean, but she was so loving, always so grateful to her comrades" (1:32:53). While it is unclear how many former partisans have renounced or changed their affiliations with the North, Chung's relationship with partisans like Park reflects the complicated emotional bonds of kinship for these women trying to adjust to South Korean society post-imprisonment.

The documentary also details moments of temporary kinship among the former partisans—Park Soonja's enthusiastic participation in the October 2002 Inter-Korean Women's Reunification Rally and the subsequent gathering at Mount Kumgang highlight the South and North Korean women's dreams of unification. Crossing the Northern Limit Line for the first time, the women express excitement and solidarity, singing songs and playing games. Kim captures emotional moments of connection and shared aspirations, illustrating the complex affects experienced by those living in a divided Korea. The temporary bonds formed during these encounters underscore Kim's focus on the human stories behind the geopolitical dynamics on the Korean Peninsula and the ongoing Korean War.

Kim's voiceover says, "Byun became godmother to her North Korean guide, and gave her as a token the blouse she'd been wearing" (1:23:34). There is footage of the women crying because they have to part ways, and when the North Korean guide tries to give back the blouse in case they can never meet, Byun insists she keep it and the women exclaim, "Oh no, how can we part? This isn't happening…Goodbye! Let's meet again!" (1:24:13). Kim's voiceover says over shots of a North Korean reporter who smiles directly to Kim's camera while filming her himself, "As I bid North Korean reporters farewell, I too felt strange. It had only been 3 days, the north didn't have special meaning for me, so why did I have tears in my eyes? I was born in an already divided land, didn't experience the suffering of division, but now, having gone to Mt. Kumgang, I have a deeper understanding of these women" (1:24:37).

For these women communist guerillas, the emotional dimensions of citizenship are bound up in the contested terrain of belonging in their private bonds of kinship versus state-level commemoration in both North and South Korea. The scenes of the women partisans at the Exhibition Hall in South Korea show them at a distance as they watch videos and artefacts of

their struggles in Mount Jiri. The scenes of the women's enthusiastic participation at a reunification rally in North Korea inform director Kim Jinyeol's understanding of the women's affective attachment to their Northern counterparts. I read the mutual gaze shared between director Kim and a North Korean reporter as a temporary moment of shared kinship, where the camera plays a role in mediatising the emotional dimensions of citizenship. However, unlike the highly televised family reunions after the 2000 Inter-Korean Summit, the mutual gaze shared between an independent South Korean director and a North Korean reporter reveal how private affective practices come about when the figures behind the camera acknowledge each other as subjects who are also affected by the moments caught on film.

[7]

South Korea's "struggle for memory" in everyday life

Kim's intimacy with her subjects engages the audience in a viewing process in which the formal features of independent documentary filmmaking—such as close-up shots and personal

[7] Screenshot from *Forgotten Warriors.*

confessions—reflect the affective bonds of kinship shared by these subjects who are relegated to the margins of historical memory in South Korea. Park Soonja, her husband Choi Sangwon, and Park's step-son Choi Gibong discuss how south Korea's national policies of enmity towards communists, former partisans, and their families are still in practice even after the "guilt-by-association" system was officially revoked in the late 1980s. For Park Soonja, the affective and material stakes of her being an unconverted long-term ex-POW are expressed in her believing she had "failed to make a better world or be a good mother," as she states:

> Married life has actually been harder for me than the partisan struggle. Maybe I'm just not cut out of domesticity. Sometimes I think it would've saved us all a lot of grief if I hadn't gotten married. The kids wouldn't have had to suffer, Hanshil wouldn't have been born…Then I think, she's not to blame, it's because our country's divided, so I keep doing what I can. (0:38:36)

When Kim Jinyeol asks Hanshil, "As a woman, what do you think of your mother's Life?" Hanshil says, "Why did she get married?" and Park replies, "She's saying, why did I get married and put all of them through this suffering…" (0:39:47-0:40:13). Hanshil expresses how she wished her mother could go to North Korea and repatriate, but Park could only repatriate if she went alone and left her family behind (0:40:46). Park's situation parallels Byun Sookhyun's story of leaving her baby behind to join the guerilla struggle. The Manichean narrative of good versus evil, where South Korea and its allies represented the former, and North Korea and its allies represented the latter, is a simplistic account of these women's social locations in Korea. The documentary complicates the ex-POWs and their families' experiences of reconciliation and social suffering as they try to live in a society whose national policies of enmity prohibit their being legitimised agents of memory.

Choi's youngest son Choi Gibong [Park's stepson] talks about how they were spied on by detectives: "even though I was young, we kids all knew they were watching our parents. My big

brother was real careful, even burnt his diary in case it fell into the wrong hands" (0:46:50). Gibong discusses how his family's ostracisation influenced his perception of South Korean society, and it was a society he did not want to be a part of:

> It was a circus back then, in the 70s, with detectives raiding the school. The only one who took my side was my senior year English teacher. He had an older brother who had been imprisoned for left-wing activities, so he was sympathetic. He said, "the shit you and I put up with 'cos of our families"...I learnt later on that guilt-by-association was still practiced in the 80s under dictatorship. I faced discrimination for being from a left-wing family. My abilities didn't count… (0:48:25)

The documentary's premiere five years after the reunions of separated families in August 2000 following the June Inter-Korean Summit is representative of a narrative shift that occurred as an outgrowth of the ongoing democratisation process in South Korea, which had been unfolding since the 1980s. As Nan Kim states, the controversies surrounding historical memory in South Korea became a focal point of public discourse in the final decade of the twentieth century. Historian Chung Yong-Wook reflects on this evolution, stating, "If the 1980s marked a period of political struggle [over democratization], the 1990s witnessed the 'struggle for memory' in interpreting contemporary history within Korean society…These phenomena indicate that the 'official view' [of] contemporary Korean history was weakened by post–Cold War Korean society and its democratisation. Consequently, social forces engaged in a competition over historical interpretation and vision within civil society" (Wook, qtd. in N. Kim 16).

Forgotten Warriors is especially important in South Korea's "struggle for memory". Kim Dong-choon states on his work as a former standing commissioner with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRCK), which investigated state violence committed by US and ROK forces during the Korean War:

> Armed guerillas were not civilians and cannot be considered victims of state violence […] Many children of victims know little to nothing about their parents' (or parent's) past. For those families victimized by the anticommunism of South Korea's Cold War culture, the removal of the label of "ppalgaengyi" (Red) and "enemy," and an official recognition of their parents' innocence are enormously important. Yet, among those who did not come forward, there were some who were very proud of their parents' activism and who therefore did not seek any exoneration from the South Korean government. (Em, Henry et al. 844-845)

Park Soonja, her husband Choi Sangwon, and Park's step-son Choi Gibong all faced social ostracisation in South Korean society. Their testimonies reveal how affects of enmity and betrayal shape controversies surrounding historical memory in South Korea, especially for armed guerillas who were victims of South Korea's anti-communist system, but did not seek exoneration from the government. Choi Bibong's assertion that he is living in a society he did not want to be a part of shows how there are generational effects of South Korea's "struggle for memory" in everyday life.

Kim Jinyeol represents the women's bonds through filming them in public and private spaces, where there is room for intimate forms of sociality. Kim's intimacy with her subjects is part of her documentary process, and this affects the audience's reception of the women as legitimised agents of memory. These would not have been recorded if Kim did not pursue her project of filming women ex-POWs against Kim Dong-won's male-focused *Repatriation*. While *Repatriation* won the "freedom medal" at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival, *Forgotten Warriors* did not get as much international or national attention. Kim's own journey as a filmmaker in male-dominated film activist spaces that designated the women partisans as "mothers" involves traversing an emotional terrain of "double warfare" shared by two generations of women.

In the next chapter of my thesis, I continue to explore documentary film as a mode of representing the emotional dimensions of citizenship through Kim Sangkyu's *To Kill Alice* (2017). While *Forgotten Warriors* focuses on border-crossings from the subjectivity of multiple women communist ex-POWs who were part of director Kim Jinyeol's documentary process, *To Kill Alice* centres around Shin Eunmi, a South Korean born American citizen who travels to North Korea as a tourist and gives speaking tours about her personal experiences. Despite the different social locations and life trajectories of figures like Park Soonja and Shin Eunmi, both of the documentary films I discuss as my case studies examine how the affective directives to pick a side between North and South Korea are bound up in their responses to what South Korean society imposes as "model citizenship".

For example, both documentary films discuss the weaponisation of South Korea's National Security Law and reveal the complicated social contradictions that arise with national policies of enmity towards those who express affinity with the North. This includes figures like Shin Eunmi, who promote the peaceful unification of Korea through performing an emotional kinship with the North Koreans she has met on her travels to her largely South Korean audience. Park Soonja was a communist guerilla who fought for the North during the Korean War and we follow her journey to continue her activism in South Korea. By contrast, women like Shin Eunmi play a role in unification politics and inter-Korean relations that is complicated by her and her husband's insistence in the documentary that they are not unification activists.

Like *Forgotten Warriors*, *To Kill Alice* reveals emotional bonds of kinship and enmity that structure the affective directives to choose one Korea over the other. This is highly mediated through the media spectacle and hostile anti-North Korea protests that follow Shin throughout her speaking tours after she associates with Hwang-sun, former deputy spokesperson of the

South Korean Democratic Labor Party who illegally crossed the DMZ twice to North Korea and went to prison in the South. Through examining how these two documentary films portray subjects who are marginalised in South Korea's cultures of enmity, I suggest that the act of Shin's public speaking and Park's personal testimonies can be read as emotional representations of citizenship that move beyond the boundaries of Korea's national division.

Chapter 2

Shin Eunmi's Emotional Citizenship: An Analysis of *To Kill Alice* by Kim Sangkyu

To Kill Alice (2017) is a documentary film by Kim Sangkyu about Shin Eunmi, who is the author of *A Korean American Woman Goes to North Korea: The Most Beautiful and Saddest Trip of My Life* (2012). The documentary's allusion to *Alice in Wonderland* reflects how like Alice, Shin's travels transform her physically and emotionally. Both Alice and Shin are trying to make sense of the world they find themselves in, and as director Kim stated in my email correspondence with him regarding the documentary's title: "You can understand the reaction of Shin Eun-mi when she returned from a trip to 'Strange Country' and talked about her experiences around her. I thought Shin Eun-mi's situation was similar to 'Alice.'"

Shin's book is a Korean-language travel journal about her experiences of everyday life as a tourist in the DPRK that she created when her friends encouraged her to talk publicly about her three trips to the North from October 2011 to May 2012. Shin initially published her trips on the South Korean website "ohmynews". *To Kill Alice* is Kim's directorial debut that was featured at the DMZ International Documentary Film Festival in 2017, and went on to earn the Audience Award at the Seoul Independent Documentary Film Festival and a selection at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in 2018 (Conran par. 6). The documentary focuses on Shin's speaking tour that started in Seoul, South Korea on 19 November 2014, and follows along with Shin's road trip to the cities Gwangju, Daejeon, Daegu, and Iksan.

In the documentary, Shin faces social alienation for speaking about her experiences of visiting North Korea, as the South Korean rightwing newspaper *Chosun Ilbo*, its offshoot TV Chosun, and the former President of South Korea Park Geun-hye accuse her of spreading "pro-North Korean propaganda". Shin is publicly disowned from her family, survives a terrorist

attack by a radicalised high school student at her lecture in Iksan, is banned from travelling to South Korea for five years, and faces legal battles due to the South's National Security Law. Shin's experiences of being vilified in South Korea's cultures of enmity reflects Achille Mbembe's argument that "every feasible means is put to work in order to impose a regime of separation whose functioning paradoxically depends on an intimate proximity with those who have been separated" (Mbembe 24).

For example, one of the main conflicts in the documentary surrounds Shin's insistence that her talks to promote mutual understanding in North-South Korea relations are based on her own personal experiences as a tourist. This occurs while she is also walking on an affective tightrope between her ostensible political neutrality and the emotional bonds of kinship Shin shares with North Koreans and those who support peaceful unification. South Korean conservatives derogatorily refer to those who express political allegiance with North Korea as *jongpuk*, "those who follow and uncritically accept both the North's ruling political power and its leaders" (Kim par. 16). As I will examine later on, the weaponisation of South Korea's National Security Law reveals how the accusation of being "pro-North" can be used as a pretext to persecute labour activists, pro-unification groups, and to punish those like Shin who are deemed as carrying out "anti-state" activities.

Shin's husband Chung Tae-il states that "No other people in the world would be this vicious to their own people", and while she is punished in myriad ways in her private and public life, she develops new affective bonds of kinship with Hwang-sun, former deputy spokesperson of the south Korean Democratic Labor Party who illegally crossed the DMZ twice to North Korea and went to prison in the South, and with Seolgyeong, a North Korean tour guide whom Shin adopts as her god daughter. Whether or not the sensationalised accusations against Shin are

true, the mobilisation of affect against someone like Shin raises interesting questions on her multiple social locations as a Korean American, a writer/lecturer/musician, mother, border-crosser, Christian, and a person who wishes to act as an affective bridge in North-South Korea relations. Moreover, the stakes of Shin's border-crossing transmits to Hwang-sun, as she is charged for violating the NSL for doing a "pro-North" lecture and "praising, encouraging, and aiding the enemy" with Shin in November 2014. The South Korean Democratic Labor Party and its merger with the Unified Progressive Party are now banned/dissolved political parties[8].

In this chapter, I will examine how Kim's *To Kill Alice* and Shin's *A Korean American Woman Goes to North Korea* in light of the abrupt turn in reception of Shin's border-crossing and public speaking. I am interested in how Kim and Shin's personal insights and motivations reframes my understanding of what the documentary film is doing on an affective level, as Shin is a person who wishes to act as a bridge in North-South Korea relations. As Shin states at a press conference featured in *To Kill Alice*:

> Being a Korean holding another country's passport, I have the rather sad privilege of being able to travel back and forth between the two Koreas. But until the day that everyone can travel between the two Koreas I want to act as a bridge between the two and deliver a message of love while exchanging news about how each side is doing. Hoping both sides won't lose interest in each other, I've been giving lectures. (*To Kill Alice*, 00:26:14)

How do we understand Shin and her struggles to sustain an affective attachment to North and South Korea, especially in light of the Biden Administration's renewed travel ban which prohibits US citizens from travelling to the DPRK? How do Shin's citizenship, class, gender, and

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[8] See Park Tae-woo's "Culture ministry recalls 'pro-North Korea' book by recently deported Korean American"; Daily NK's "Hwang Sun Charged for Pro-North Activity"; Reuters' "South Korea court orders breakup of left-wing party".

social location affect the charged emotional responses to her, as seen in the rightwing protests which criticise Shin for being a communist sympathiser and someone who romanticises the DPRK?

By analysing Shin's case through Suk-Young Kim's notion of *emotional citizenship*, I will show how the documentary represents Shin as a victim of South Korea's cultures of enmity and the ways this is reinforced by the South Korean judicial system, rightwing media outlets, and the instrumentalisation of Korean unification that occurs across the political spectrum. *To Kill Alice* uses Shin's story to comment on the role of the media in preventing mutual understanding among South Koreans about North Korea. While there are multiple types of inter-Korean border-crossers, the film's sponsorship by the DMZ Docs Fund and the Ministry of Unification suggests that Shin is being represented as a border-crosser who is potentially capable of facilitating new affective bonds to counter the hostile bilateral enmity that structures inter-Korean relations. In an interview with Hyun Lee, Shin states that her upbringing in a conservative Christian family made her believe "without question that the North Koreans were our enemy" (Shin, qtd. in Lee par. 5). Her journey from being part of a children's performance troupe called the Little Angels "which toured the world to project a positive image of South Korea" to her longing for a unified Korea as she performs an affective attachment to the North for her largely South Korean audience, reflects how the documentary is "not Shin's story of North Korea, but the image of us from Shin's perspective" (Kim par. 2).

While the documentary focuses on "the image of us from Shin's perspective", it also shows how Shin's performance of emotional kinship is a response to what South Korea considers as "model citizenship" and "anti-state activities". I define her public speaking as a performance of emotional citizenship that moves beyond the boundaries of Korea's national division, as I

argue that the documentary presents Shin's perspective on unification and inter-Korean relations against the South Korean rightwing who promote the idea of forceful unification by absorption. The "us" that Shin encounters (i.e., Shin's audience, her critics and supporters, and South Korean mainstream media outlets) are affected by the ways her public speaking exposes long standing tensions among South Koreans and the system of national division's affective structures which have serious material, bodily, and social consequences. Shin's unwillingness to be an ideal (or silent) border-crosser in the eyes of South Korean conservatives reveals how the system of division "aspires to produce citizenship based on oppositional forces…alienation from the other Korea has become a prerequisite for being an ideal citizen in both regimes" (Kim 6). I use Suk-Young Kim's concept of "emotional citizenship" to discuss how the mediatised affects of enmity directed towards Shin underscore her unique position as a border-crosser, whose reception undergoes drastic shifts. Shin's ability to travel back and forth between North and South Korea shapes her performance of emotional kinship with the North through her speaking tours and writing. This comes with material and affective consequences because of the negative press that follows her throughout her van travels, as she and Hwang-sun are labelled as carrying out "anti-state" (meaning "pro-North Korean") activities.

The spectatorship surrounding Shin's border-crossing and public speaking raises questions on what South Korean society deems as "model citizenship", as Kim takes up Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho's understanding of "emotional citizenship" that can be used to "restore what the system of national division has aggressively eliminated from a more complex human existence" (10). As Ho asks, "First, what are the emotional representations associated with citizenship, and by whom and for what purposes are such discourse constructed? Second, what types of

emotional subjectivities emerge in response to citizenship governance, and how do they influence political and social behavior?" (Ho, Kim 10).

The making of *To Kill Alice* and Shin's border-crossing

To Kill Alice reveals how the journey to form alternative affective bonds against the overdetermining geopolitical structures of North-South Korea relations involves traversing an emotional terrain that is full of hatred, violence, longing, love, heartbreak, and embodied sensations that inform what it means to belong or to be vilified. "How Red Are You?" is an ironic teaser phrase used to promote the documentary in Korea. Kim stated in his email, "I wanted to capture the image of [South] Korean society that is not free from ideological media and red complexes." Kim made the film because of his personal interest in Shin's lectures, as he states, "her experience as a Korean was a very interesting story." Shin's position as a South-Korean born American citizen who visited North Korea as a tourist is notable among the North Koreans she encounters in her travel book, as a North Korean chef at an Italian restaurant tells Shin after she asks how he remembers her on her second trip, "Overseas Korean guests are so rare that I cannot forget them" (Shin 216). Kim stated that he initially planned to interview not only Shin, but also North Korean defectors, humanitarian aid organisations, and other individuals who have been to North Korea: "However, as soon as I started filming Shin Eun-mi, the events in the movie took place one after another, so I eventually made a movie focusing on the events that Shin went through."

To Kill Alice beings with an opening title card written in Korean and English that states:

> World War II left the Korean Peninsula divided. The South Korean government remains hostile to the North, declaring anti-communism as a national stance and regarding any unauthorized civilian exchanges to be illegal. After the 2000 Inter-Korean Summit relations briefly improved, South Koreans were allowed to visit the North for the first

time. But this was discontinued after a few years. To this day North Korea remains a taboo subject in the South. (00:00:01)

The Inter-Korean summit was a meeting between the DPRK's Chairman Kim Jong-il and the ROK's President Kim Dae-jung held on 15 June 2000. Seo Joong-Seok states that this televised event was surprising for the majority of people in South Korea, as prior to this date North and South Korea never held any summit meeting due to intense Cold War antagonism between the two states. As a result of these talks, Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine policy aimed to facilitate reconciliation with North Korea, and there was renewed national consciousness among South Koreans across the political spectrum regarding unification and dominant narratives about North Koreans. There were popular discussions on reexamining the education policies about North-South Korea relations, as under former dictator Park Chung-hee's Yushin system teachers were mandated to follow guide books for the South's anti-communism curriculum in primary, secondary and high schools which promoted the idea of unifying the peninsula through "absorption by force" (Seo 3). Shin's speaking tour was organised by the Southern Committee to Implement the June 15 Joint Declaration and endorsed by many other civic groups (Lee par. 23).

In the opening scenes of *To Kill Alice*, Shin is singing in Korean and playing on a piano in her home in Los Angeles. There are photos of Shin posing at Kim Il-sung square, of North Korean citizens, Shin with her husband and her "foster daughters" in North Korea, and a photo of Shin and her husband posing with arms linked with North Korean soldiers. The camera focuses on the Citizen Journalist Award Shin received for "Outstanding Contribution to Unification" for her travel book that was eventually pulled from the market and taken off the South Korean Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism's Excellent Literature list after Shin was investigated for violating the NSL. Park Tae-woo's article on *Hankyoreh* states that "After Shin's book was designated by the Book Culture Foundation as an excellent work of literature in 2013,

it was provided to libraries, welfare facilities, correctional facilities, and rehabilitation centers" (T. Park par. 5). Despite the Ministry's decision that "the book was not designated as a work that supports North Korea", "the Book Culture Foundation sent a notice to the Ministry urging them to retract the book's selection, and on the following day the Ministry decided to remove the book from the recommended reading list" (T. Park par. 1,10).

There are shots of Shin at a Korean church in Los Angeles where she is signing autographs of her book for the audience who came to her talk. Shin says she initially refused her husband's suggestion to visit North Korea for a vacation: "He found an American travel agency offering tours to North Korea and that any non-Korean passport holder could travel there. We're American citizens, so we could go. At first I said no. I mean, how could we? I'd rather travel to the moon. I told him no way. But as time passed I grew curious" (00:03:41). Then the scene cuts to 2013 clips from Shin's trip to North Korea: Shin and her husband are travelling with a tourist yelling "*Mansei!*" (a common cry for independence meaning "May Korea live for 10,000 years!") on a mountain tour in North Korea; tourists and North Korea tour guides are in a van singing the North Korean song "Nice to Meet You" with the lyrics "compatriots, brothers, it's so nice to meet you/I'm so happy I hug you with a smile/I'm so happy I hug you in tears".

Shin states in the synopsis for her book that before her husband's suggestion to visit North Korea, "I was indifferent to North Korea and the people living in North Korea, but after my first trip, the people I met in North Korea caught my eye and I quickly prepared for a second trip…Now that I am preparing for my fourth trip to North Korea again, my one wish is for the unification of the country, and for the tragedy of young children from North and South Korea to grow up and point guns at each other to end." Shin discusses how "this trip allowed me to look back on my false beliefs and life," as she had previously not been interested in unification or

learning about North Korea because of her anti-communist upbringing. While Shin states in her book that she "doesn't know anything about politics or economics," her personal and religious motivations "that South and North would become one, and that God's will for the world would be realized" (Shin 109) evoke the powerful affective experiences of kinship she formed through bonding with North Koreans like her tour guide Seolgyeong. Shin states in a present day voiceover over clips of them at the beach in North Korea: "We ate, slept, travelled and shared our most personal stories with one another. We became so close. It felt like we were mother and daughter. She told me whatever was on her mind" (00:05:43). There are shots of Shin and her husband getting Seolgyeong baby supplies at Target in the United States for their next trip to north Korea; upon leaving Seolgyeong after Shin's first trip to north Korea, Shin learned that "these people are just like us": "When eating food, visiting historical sites, or sharing the joys and sorrows of life…The more I felt a sense of kinship, the more my sadness doubled or tripled" (Shin 163).

Later on in the documentary, we see footage of Shin in this follow-up trip to North Korea delivering the baby supplies to Seolgyeong's house as they embrace each other excitedly. Shin gives advice to Seolgyeong to take care of herself after delivering her baby, and Shin, her husband, and Seolgyeong's family are sitting at a dining table with cut-up fruits as they are happy to be reunited. Shin's voiceover reflects the affective bonds of kinship she feels with Seolgyeong, her sister Seolhyang, and the North Koreans she has met on her trips: "Having such lovely foster-daughters in North Korea fills me with joy in every moment…because we are from the same people those barriers [worries she had before about North Koreans] just melt away. It's like we already knew each other for years and years" (00:53:38).

Kinship, enmity, and Shin's image of "us"

The documentary presents Shin's perspective as an image of "us" (i.e. her largely South Korean audience), revealing how her emotional performance of kinship is a response to the expectations of "model citizenship" and the accusations of "anti-state activities" in South Korea. Shin's public speaking transcends the confines of Korea's national division, offering her views on unification and inter-Korean relations in contrast to the South Korean right-wing's advocacy for absorption by force. The scenes of familial warmth appear in the documentary as a brief reprieve from the enmity and anger expressed by South Korean conservatives and mainstream media towards Shin because of her public speaking. A recurring problem with the media's representations of Shin and Hwang-sun (who accompanies Shin on her speaking tour to discuss her own journey to North Korea) is that they are labelled as giving "a pro-North Korean talk" for saying that "many North Korea defectors had a desire to return home one day" and that "the rivers in the People's Democratic Republic were much less polluted than those in South Korea" (Stout par. 4). An article in *Chosun Ilbo* describes Shin and Hwang-sun's public lectures as "a series of forums where they allegedly spoke out in favor of North Korea and made claims that have upset defectors, including that a vast percentage of them want to go back to North Korea," and that Shin's position as a tourist "left her with the impression that things are not as bad as everyone thinks" (*Chosun Ilbo* par. 5-6).

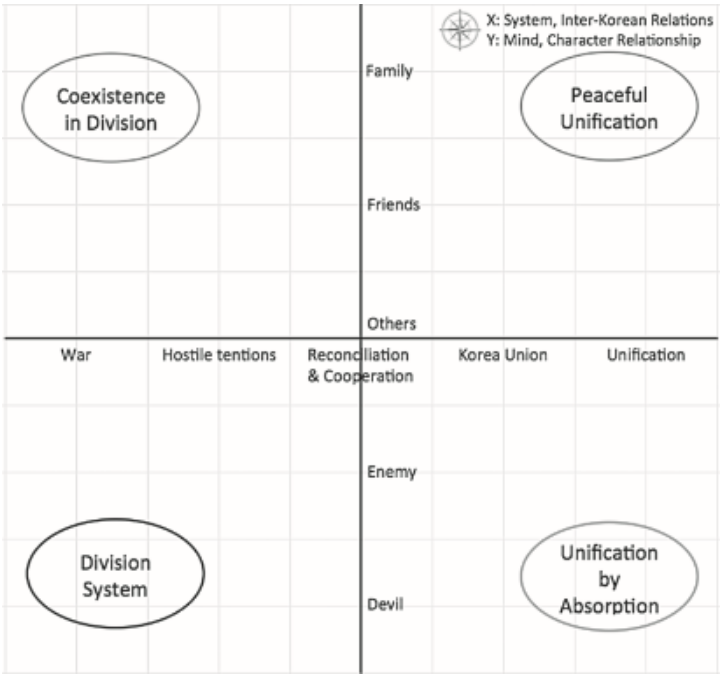
A National Assembly member in Seoul cancels his scheduled debate with Shin because of the negative press about her, and Shin states at a press conference that is held along with Hwang-sun and Shin's attorney Kim Jongkwi on 2 December 2014:

> The streams in North Korea are clean. North Korean beer is delicious. The people have high hopes for their young leader. How is this praise for North Korea? Right-wing news outlets like TV Chosun are distorting an innocent talk we gave, by labelling it a "pro-North Korean talk show". They lied about us calling North Korea heaven on earth.

> Fabricating stories about us praising their hereditary dictatorship. They've even claimed that we received orders from North Korea, attacking us like some kind of modern day witch hunt. (00:12:04)

The stakes of Shin's border-crossing reveals how betrayal is an affective mode that shapes the division of Korea and creates different political economies, national cultures, and social contradictions. The historian Fujii Takeshi states that in the case of inter-Korean relations, "a state of war consists not only of conflict between the two sides but also of internal conflict within each of them…it always led to a question of taking sides between the two" (Takeshi, Kim par. 39). However, as Seo suggests, the "national character" of the divided Koreas does not fully explain the bilateral enmity that structures North-South relations; Seo focuses on the compounding factors of South Korea's "ultra-rightist anti-communism", such as the influence of pro-Japanese collaborators in South Korean social and political life, the National Security Law, the military dictatorships of Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan, and state suppression of the democratisation movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Seo argues that "division-based statism" should not be confused with the principles of nationalism, as he argues that "Division-based statism was based on the binary construction of a 'sacrosanct self' versus an 'evil other'. This polarized worldview created the conviction that the other side was to be destroyed 'even by dropping a nuclear bomb', as Rhee Syngman once remarked" (Seo 12).

In "Inter-Korean Integration Mirrored in Division Films: Changing Collective Emotion in South Korea Toward Inter-Korean Integration", Lee Woo-Young and Kim Myoung-Shin trace the change of collective emotions in South Korea toward inter-Korean integration that is seen in "division films" like *Shiri*, *Joint Security Area*, *Secret Reunion*, and *The Berlin File*. The authors represent the different approaches toward inter-Korean integration in the compass below:



[9]

While *To Kill Alice* does not follow a narrative arc like the fictional movies in the authors' study, the documentary still reveals how "The character relationships can represent the level of conflict integration of the mind as the nature of the relationships changes according to how each character perceives the other" (Lee, Kim 28). For example, there are emotional bonds of kinship and enmity that structure the affective directives to choose one Korea over the other, and as Shin's attorney states in the December 2014 press conference, "Labelling someone a 'pro-North Korean' is a scarlet letter that socially condemns a person. In turn, it prevents rational discourse on North Korea" (00:12:46). Shin's refusal to perform the act of "picking a side" between North and South is seen in her answer to reporters regarding the North Korean state's provocations towards the South, as she responds to the clamouring news reporters, "Everyone, this is what I believe. North Korean defectors speak from their experience and I am speaking from my experience. I never once said that what I saw and heard is the entire truth about North

[9] Inter-Korean Integration Compass (Lee, Woo-Young, and Myoung-Shin Kim 28).

Korea. Narrowing this debate of their version of North Korea against my version of North Korea is a tragic oversimplification" (00:27:02).

When I asked director Kim about his impression of Shin and if her experiences of being vilified made her more politically conscious, he stated that the Shin he met "is not a political figure": "She happened to share her experience online and when it became unexpectedly popular, a unification organisation in Korea invited her to give a lecture. While oppression and trials can submissively tame a person, some recognize social contradictions through them…Shin Eunmi seems to be closer to the latter." An article in The Korea Times about the documentary states that "Director Kim said he wants audiences to make their own, impartial judgments" regarding Shin (Kang par. 12). This is underscored by the director's inclusion of shots where Shin, her husband, and their speaking tour team are staring at a television screen or reading news headlines of the media spectacle surrounding them. Scenes of the camera following the press and protestors that follow Shin throughout her travels also highlight the director's focus on the reception of Shin, and how she is affected by the media's representation of her on an emotional level.

Shin states in an interview with Hyun Lee that she grew up in a Christian conservative family, which shaped her perceptions of inter-Korean relations. Shin's grandfather on her mother's side was a member of the Constituent Assembly during Syngman Rhee's rule, and he played a key role in railroading the National Security Law; he fought on the South Korean side during the Korean War, and the cultural imperative to "pick a side" during wartime is a significant reason as to why Kim Dong-Choon states that "[inter-Korean] politics is reduced to confronting the enemy, including enemies among 'us'" (Kim, qtd. in Em, et al. 838). As Shin states on the cultural imperative to choose between "us versus them" as a young child who felt proud that she was "the daughter of a war hero", the spectre of external and internal enemies was

evoked in everyday experiences (such as her art class) through representations of North Koreans as emotionless, hyper militarised, and subhuman:

> The North Koreans I drew always had devil-like red faces with horns and a tail. I wrote in big letters, "Crush all commies!" I won awards in anti-Communist writing and speech-making contests. I imagined North Koreans as having no human emotion, always carrying guns, and ready to die for their party and country. I imagined children snitching on their parents and their parents being dragged away by the police in the dark…My trip to North Korea in 2011 completely changed my thoughts about the people of North Korea. Ironically, I eventually became the victim of the NSL [National Security Law], which my grandfather had helped to establish. (Shin, qtd. in Lee par. 5-6, 7)

In Shin's book, she states that her first trip to North Korea transformed her curiosity into "a sense of duty," as on her second May 2012 trip she planned on going with a group of friends to work with a North Korean charity to help with daycare centres; to provide school and medical supplies; and Shin was recommended to be part of a Korean-American art troupe's trip to North Korea's "World Friendship Art Spring Festival" in April 2012 by her friends who knew she had visited North Korea previously (Shin 177). Shin states that when she informed her family about these upcoming trips, "they came out more forcefully than during the last trip" to stop her from going (178). Later on in the book, Shin discusses how she experienced betrayal after her North Korea trips made her learn that Park Chung-hee, who she admired since she was a child, "became an officer in the enemy army, and served as a [pro-Japanese] collaborator": "I don't think my grandfather can escape responsibility for allowing a collaborator like Park Chung-hee to become an officer in the Republic of Korea Army, which was established after independence" (338).

To Kill Alice reveals how Shin's citizenship, class, gender, and social location affect the charged emotional responses to her, as seen in the rightwing protests which criticise Shin for

being a communist sympathiser, a North Korean spy, and someone who is labelled as romanticising the DPRK through her public performance of affective kinship with North Koreans she met during her trips. However, Shin states in her interview with Lee that there were no problems with her previous speaking tours she gave in the South Korea in 2012 and 2013:

> In April last year, just six months before the most recent tour, I had done the same speaking tour, organized by the same people. We stopped at even more cities and I gave about 20 lectures without incident. The previous year, in 2013, the Ministry of Unification praised my book and produced a documentary about me. The same media that recently accused me of being 'pro-North' had done interviews with me and praised my book. But suddenly, this time, it was exactly the opposite. *Tongil* (unification) became *jongbuk* (pro-North). I don't understand why the same lecture became so controversial. (Shin, qtd. in Lee par. 29-30)

The protestors who object to Shin and Hwang-sun's talks include rightwing and conservative groups such as the Korean Parent Federation and the Korean Disabled Veterans Organization. In the documentary, Shin is sometimes seen wearing a yellow ribbon bracelet: the yellow ribbon is a symbol from the Candlelight protests that occurred after the Sewol Ferry sinking on 16 April 2014. An article on Hankyoreh called "Right-wing groups received funding for pro-government demonstrations" reveals how groups like the Korean Parent Federation staged counter protests against the Sewol families' hunger strike, and in December 2014 this group joined with other conservative and defector groups, including the Committee for the Democratization of North Korea, the NK Refugees Human Rights Association of Korea, the Defectors Parents Federation and the One People Youth Alliance to launch the Inter-Korean Conservative Coalition: "The coalition was established with the goals of defending South Korea's system of liberal democracy and wiping out forces sympathetic to the regime in Pyongyang" (Ko et al. par. 17). As protestors in Daegu clash with South Korean police while

Shin and Hwang-sun are scheduled for a talk at Dongsung Art Hall, one protestor shouts angrily, "Can we just let Hwang-sun and Shin Eunmi praise North Korea under the guise of a talk show? It's degrading to the people of Daegu", while another protester wears a sign from the Patriotic Citizens' Union that states, "Some communist bitch is messing with unification. Stop spreading lies. Kim Jong-un is a beast who executed his uncle" (00:17:51). A man who looks like a South Korean veteran praises the man with the placard, as he says "South Korea exists thanks to people like him" (00:18:36). The documentary frames Shin's performance of emotional kinship with North Koreans as a response to societal expectations of citizenship norms and allegations of "anti-state activities" in South Korea. The discourse surrounding Shin's "pro-North Korea" talks extends beyond the constraints of Korea's national division, as the documentary presents her views on inter-Korean relations in opposition to the South Korean right-wing's endorsement of forceful integration.

The weaponisation of the National Security Law and Korean unification

When I asked director Kim if including Hwang-sun in Shin's talks was part of the abrupt negative reaction towards her speaking tours, he stated that while "Shin was invited to Korea several times before to hold a talk…I think the sudden issue was because she was with Hwang-sun": "Because the National Security Law prevents individuals from being curious or interacting with North Korea, those who go against it are subject to very strong legal restrictions. Hwang-sun may have acted as a danger because [s]he is a person who is receiving attention from prosecutors, police, and conservative organizations in Korea." In order to understand the cultures of enmity surrounding Shin and Hwang-sun, we need to look at the controversies surrounding South Korea's National Security Law, the consolidation of the anti-communist political structure that was facilitated by the United States to confront communism across Asia, and the

weaponisation of Korean unification that occurs across the political spectrum. The National Security Act (NSL) was ostensibly created to address threats from North Korea, but it has been widely utilised to quash legitimate opposition within South Korea. Characterised by its broad scope, the NSL extended beyond criticisms of the United States to encompass any dissent against the ultra-right anti-communist South Korean dictators. This legal framework, rooted in anti-communist policies, has been historically employed to fracture solidarity and suppress labour, spanning from the colonial period through the post-liberation era under American occupation.

We see the affective stakes of the NSL in a sit-down interview between Shin and an interviewer that occurs after a legal investigation into whether or not her book is in violation of the law. In this more private, intimate interview that is at the temporary home where Shin and her husband are staying, the interviewer says to Shin, "You are well-educated and would be considered an intellectual here in South Korea. So whatever you say can have a lasting effect on South Korean society. Someone might ask, 'Aren't you concerned that North Korea could be using you to help romanticize their belief system and country?' There were parts about poor people, but only on a few pages. Some might say that what you portray is not the objective reality of North Korea, but a staged and romanticized version of it" (00:56:22). As the interviewer types Shin's answers, she responds, "Well, I did go there as a tourist. They keep saying, 'You should have visited the concentration camps and homeless kids. Why did you only visit the nice parts?' But no country would take foreign tourists to see concentration camps and jails" (00:57:02). Shin's husband interjects as he says in an exasperated tone to the interviewer, "Oh, this interview is useless…because in this country, you can't say any nice things about North Korea. This is useless! You're only allowed to say bad things about the North. If you think those

are real people living up there, they call you a commie. No other people in the world would be this vicious to their own people. When we said 'The rivers in North Korea were clean' the media said, 'They don't have proper sewage treatment, so how can it be clean?' You can't even say one nice thing" (00:57:27).

The rightwing groups that protest against Shin and Hwang-sun's talks openly state that Shin is violating the National Security Law, and the situation intensifies when a radicalised high school student named Oh Sehyun attempts to assassinate Shin at her talk in Iksan by sneaking in homemade explosives in a lunch box. Before the bomb attack, Shin is trying to do her talk while being interrupted by Sehyun who asks her "You said North Korea is heaven on earth, right?" Shin tries to focus on her talk by expressing her wish to go back and forth between North and South Korea to build a youth centre in the North to support young people, and as Hwang-sun tries to interject to Sehyun's interruptions by saying "Every country has slums and parts that are better off—" Sehyun throws the explosive at Shin and a worker at the venue named Seongjun saves Shin's life by protecting her from the blast with his body (00:28:12). Seongjun appears later in the film, and he survives the attack with what looks like severe burns on his body and face.

As a result of the hostile protests surrounding Shin and Hwang-sun's talks, Shin and her husband are banned for ten days from leaving South Korea to return to the United States. The government ban comes from the authority of former South Korean President Park Geun-hye, as she states on national television: "Recent conflict over the pro North Korean talks has reached a serious level. Some people who have only visited North Korea a few times have turned a blind eye to the human rights violations and suffering there describing their limited experiences as though it were the entire picture, twisting the facts, exaggerating and causing trouble"

(00:41:37). Throughout the documentary, there is tension between Shin and her husband requesting for police protection that culminates in Shin and Hwang-sun being investigated by the police, as it turns out that TV Chosun reported them and "a rightwing organisation" filed the complaint. The attorney Kim Jongkwi says to Shin and her husband: "The president put an end to it by using the phrase 'pro-North Korean talks'. She condemned it as pro-North Korean. Now the police can't say otherwise. That's how it goes. Because the president issues that statement, the investigators and prosecutor will pressure you even more, trying whatever they can to reach that conclusion. They will go above and beyond to get to you…In the Korean judicial system, innocent people can be indicted" (00:42:01).

Kim was able to get an interview with Sehyun in person to ask him about his background, motives for the crime, and changes in his thoughts after the attack. Kim stated in his email to me that "For him, [being] anti-North Korea was established as a belief." In the documentary, Sehyun expands on his motivations to Kim: "It was a kind of test of my beliefs. I wanted to do something. I saw on TV Chosun that Shin Eunmi was coming to Iksan. I hated her for it. There are so many people suffering in North Korea and despite all objections she was still going to go through with her talks. I hated her for it. I had to stop it" (00:30:50). Later on, we see an online post Sehyun made that states: "I've drunk a bottle of strong liquor and have made up my mind. I'm at the unification talks. Perfect disguise, isn't it?…Channeling the independence fighter Yun Bonggil[10]…Can't wait to go to the talks. I've finally found my purpose. Shin Eunmi is giving a

[10]Yun Bonggil was a Korean Independence activist who killed Kawabata Sadaji, government prime minister for Japanese residents in Shanghai. A lunchbox bomb was supposed to be used by Yun to commit suicide right after but the bomb failed to detonate and Yun was captured and beaten by Japanese authorities. ("Yun Bong-Gil – the Unsung Heroes Who Fought for Independence!" par. 4)

pro-North Korean talk in my neighbourhood. If you hear she was killed by a bomb, know that it was my doing" (00:33:20).

Sehyun's labelling of Shin's lectures as "unification talks" is contradicted by Shin's husband in a previous scene, where a talk they are scheduled for gets cancelled due to the organiser's fears that they will be shut down if Shin gets on the microphone in front of her audience. When someone on Shin's team suggests that they go through with the talk anyway, Shin's husband says, "But that sounds like something a unification activist would do. That's not how we do things. We are not unification activists. That's how activists deal with their problems. We were invited here as guest speakers. Charging in when things get hostile is what activists do. It wouldn't look good" (00:15:10). Here we see the implications of Shin's ostensible political neutrality and the emotional bonds of kinship she shares with Koreans who support peaceful unification and improving North-South relations. Is Shin a "unification activist" or someone who simply gives lectures on the subject of unification? Why are Shin and Hwang-sun objects of hate from the perspective of South Korean conservatives who may also wish to reunify the peninsula for different reasons?

Myungji Yang's study of the New Right movement in South Korea in the early 2000s expands on how the affective structures of the right's "antinationalist narrative" is shaped by their defense of South Korea as the "superior" or "legitimate" Korea, as she states:

> The New Right tried to weaken the Left's legitimacy by rejecting nationalism as an emotionally driven, divisive, and barbaric ideology. As a consequence, defending the legitimacy and superiority of the South Korean state—the Republic of Korea—as the antithesis of leftist nationalism and North Korea became an ideological strategy for the New Right. The New Right's unique stance on nationalism in South Korea reveals how specific domestic political struggles can affect discursive strategies on the right. (Yang 357)

While Shin insists that she is simply a Korean American woman who is sharing her personal experiences, there are several moments in the documentary which raises the affective stakes of her performance of being a bridge in inter-Korean relations as she aspires towards unification. As the noise of news reporters and flashing photography dissipates towards the end of the December 2014 press conference scene, a frustrated and hurt Shin states, "All my friends and family have shunned me for being accused of being a commie. Is this what the media calls its effort to bring harmony to the Korean people? I originally announced my intent to leave South Korea, but am too devastated to. If I left now you'd celebrate, saying I ran with my tail between my legs. This isn't right. I am being misrepresented" (00:13:04). The audio of Shin's talk is silenced as texts appear on the screen from her mother and sister: "(Mother) Have you read what's online? Are you mad? Have you been possessed? Why are you on TV so much? I'm too embarrassed to leave the house. Why are you causing such trouble? Think about your kids! Stop this and go home. I can't see you anymore. I will pray you return to your former self. (Sister) As long as you keep doing this it's better for me to keep away and pray" (00:13:37). In a later scene, Shin's husband is reading a newspaper article with Shin's face with the headline "My own mother sent a text message saying 'Let's not see each other again'" (1:00:55).

Shin's anger towards the media for misrepresenting her, along with a brief scene where Hwang-sun types out on her laptop "I went to the police station and met the boy who set off the homemade bomb. No matter how it looks, I don't think that boy was responsible for blowing that bomb up" (00:35:54) reveals how one's emotional attachment to citizenship is bound up in the affective terrain of differentiating between "us" versus "them" in unification politics. The documentary focuses on how the media and national policies like the NSL play a significant role in shaping South Korea's cultures of enmity towards North Korea and peaceful unification

efforts, which is reflected in a scene at the Seoul prosecutor's office with two reporters discussing how even though they doubt "she [Shin] deserved it…if they do get deported at least it will be newsworthy…if they don't we have no story" (00:49:32). Shin's forming of proxy kinships with her North Korean tour guides, Hwang-sun, and her supporters happens against her family publicly disowning her and the scenes of angry protestors who evoke betrayal by saying, "Arrest and indict Shin Eunmi, who claims North Korea is her mother country!" (00:46:20).

While there are valid reasons for and against Korean unification that do not fit the scope of this chapter, I am interested in how two very different figures such as Shin and Sehyun are grappling with their affective sense of belonging, nationhood, and the way unification is instrumentalised across the political spectrum. Both Shin and Sehyun state that the topic of North-South Korea relations has given them a renewed purpose in life, yet their perspectives on the topic are totally different. In the documentary, we see online posts of Sehyun telling the story of his arrest as the "Lunch Box Bomber", and there is a photo of him with a conservative group leader who was previously seen at one of the protests against Shin's talk at a rally with the caption: "Iksan's champion, Oh Sehyun and I attended a protest against labor unions. Oh is being tried in civil court. We patriots must help him" (1:08:30). While Sehyun is let out of prison and attends antiworker rallies with the rightwing groups that vilified Shin and Hwang-sun, we hear a news report with the headline "Shin Eunmi Deported…'Like Being Betrayed by Beloved'"; the news states that there is an arrest warrant for Hwang-sun and the Constitutional Court accepted the Ministry of Justice's request and dissolved the South Korean Democratic Labor Party, and progressive lawmakers also lost their seats in the National Assembly (1:07:31).

The emotional toll on Shin is seen in her meeting with Seongjun after she finds out about her deportation from South Korea, as she says, "I was just being honest about my feelings. Aside

from my physical being, it really felt like they were restraining my mind. Trapping me with their fake news" (00:59:43). As Shin and Seongjun say goodbye, she tells him, "I say this to everyone: my mind is being deported, but they can't deport my spirit. I will always be with you. And I will continue to do what I can in the US" (1:00:08). Towards the end of the documentary, Shin lands at an airport in Los Angeles and she is surrounded by an angry Korean mob and members of her church who give her flowers as they try to help her get out of the airport. We hear cries for Shin to "Go back to North Korea!" and the other people in the airport seem amused at the spectacle of Koreans fighting with airport security and yelling at Shin (1:09:20). The documentary ends with a clip of Shin singing at her church: "By the grace of God, I am what I am. The grace of God surrounds my life. I walk this land without wavering" (1:11:10). An ending title card states that Shin and Hwang-sun were acquitted on the talks they gave, but when Shin tried to contest her deportation order, "The court ruled that the deportation order was lawful because while Shin Eunmi's words did not violate the NSL, they could have brought harm to South Korea's interests and public safety" (1:11:52).

Rodney Barker argues in *Making Enemies* that "treachery is the accusation that transforms a domestic antagonist into an enemy, and not simply an internal enemy, but one in league with enemies abroad": "To be a traitor is to break from something that is presented as organic, naturally embedded, and not simply a matter of choice or even of faith or commitment. It is breach with or an offence against a tie that cannot 'naturally' be broken, and is not a matter of reason or will, but of essence" (Barker 56). The imperatives of cultural and political purity that structures inter-Korean relations from the point of view of someone like Shin—such as what constitutes the representation of North Korea as an external threat in the eyes of South Koreans and Korean Americans—suggests that enemies are cultivated through the narrator's claimed

community and the community of the depicted enemy. This occurs despite the fact that questions regarding essences neglects how "there is no single 'true' account of the social identity of a person or group, and the number of meaningful and not inaccurate statements that can be made about them is infinite" (6). We see evocations of Shin's betrayal being countered through moments such as when she is questioned by police for singing the North Korean song "The Person in My Heart" at her talks, even though this song has been sung by the South Korean singer Keon Haehyo and the president of Donna News, and performances of this song are posted on YouTube without any prior problems with South Korean police or civil society institutions (00:48:16).

While emotional citizenship offers affective bonds and a sense of belonging that transcends state boundaries, we still need to find actionable ways to lessen bilateral and intra-Korean hostility through people-to-people encounters that are seen in efforts such as Women Crossing the DMZ and the Korea Education and Exposure Program (KEEP) trips to North Korea, as well as through proposals to slowly improve the security dilemma by attending to the national security concerns of both North and South Korea and their alliances with China and the US[11]. Moreover, the revealing conversation between the reporters, who facilitate the enmity narratives surrounding Shin in order to have a story to report on, suggests that media outlets like TV Chosun and their material and affective ties with South Korean conservatives are a major hindrance to inter and intra-Korean dialogue.

If border-crossing is a way to reckon with the realities of the division of Korea as Suk-Young Kim suggests, there still remains the problem "that the collective emotions toward inter-Korean integration have changed in the face of reality and the growing indifference toward

[11] See Pascal Lottaz and Heinz Gärtner's "Dual-neutrality for the Koreas: a two-pronged approach toward reunification".

unification" (Lee, Kim 43). The enmity directed towards Shin reveals how state violence against civilians that occurs under the guise of ensuring national security shapes the views of "conservative successors of the authoritarian Park and Chun regimes [who] saw their political legitimacy and symbolic currency as dependent on economic development and a capitalist victory over North Korea" (Yang 348). As Yang argues, "the rise of former student and labor activists, whom conservatives considered pro-North Korea 'commies,' as a new mainstream political force in the early 2000s enhanced a sense of fear and crisis among conservatives…who had until the democratic transition held a monopoly on state power and were easily able to repress oppositional voices" (Yang 348-349). Lee and Kim's definition of collective emotions as "emotions synchronously converged by large numbers of individuals as a result of shared events and experiences" (25) is useful in examining Shin's attempt at forming alternative affective bonds in inter-Korean relations, while contesting state and national boundaries that affect her sense of belonging. *To Kill Alice* challenges the audience's understanding of the system of national division's affective structures, as Shin being labelled as a threat to South Korean society implicates the media and the NSL for perpetuating the division of Korea. The spectacle surrounding Shin's border-crossing and her limits as an emotional citizen who does not have a place to call home in South Korean society exposes the issues of differentiating between "us" versus "them" with a certainty that fails to consider the overdetermining force of collective emotions in shaping national memory.

In the last chapter of my thesis, I examine how Joseph Han's novel *Nuclear Family* uses fictional storytelling to represent the interplay between the spiritual and physical world that underscores the enduring impact of border-crossings on subsequent generations, challenging simplistic narratives and highlighting the complexities of personal and historical memory for

those reckoning with national division and colonial occupation. While *To Kill Alice* is a documentary film and Shin's *A Korean American Woman Goes to North Korea* is a travel book about her personal experiences, there are similarities between the documentary film and Han's novel, as both director Kim Sangkyu and Joseph Han portray how border-crossing is mediated through the media's transmission of affect. Moreover, both case studies show how the affective stakes of border-crossing persists long after the highly mediatised moment.

While *To Kill Alice* presents "the image of us from Shin's perspective," Han is preoccupied with how places like the DMZ and Hawai'i, and the diasporic Korean body reflect the geopolitical liminality of Korea and diasporic subjectivity. The protagonist Jacob's liminality, facilitated by the DMZ and his position as a queer Korean American who is connected to the world of the dead, enables him to traverse generational and geographical distances within his family as he is possessed by the ghost of his grandfather who tries to use Jacob's body to find his missing family in the North. Shin Eunmi reckons with the liminality of her subject position as a Korean American who faces deportation, a travel ban, vilification in the media, and legal battles which shakes her efforts to sustain an affective attachment to the North in a divided Korea. Even though the story of Jacob in *Nuclear Family* is fictional, it gives expression to the political forces interrupting cultural and historical cohesion in a similar way that Shin tries to do through her public lectures and performance of emotional kinship.

Chapter 3

The Afterlives of Border-Crossers: An Analysis of *Nuclear Family* by Joseph Han

Nuclear Family (2022) is a debut novel by Joseph Han that centres around the Chos, a Korean American family who own a Korean plate lunch restaurant called Cho's Delicatessen in Hawai'i. The novel is set in 2018, the year of the false missile alert in Hawai'i[12] that Han experienced in real life, as he was born in South Korea and grew up in Hawai'i like the fictional Cho siblings. Jacob Cho, the eldest 25-year-old son, is possessed by the spirit of his deceased grandfather Baik Tae-woo, who tries to use Jacob's body to find the missing family he left behind during the Korean War by attempting to cross the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into North Korea. A video of Jacob trying to cross the DMZ goes viral on the Internet and this ruins the reputation of his family's restaurant because of the community's presumptions of the DPRK, including those who cross the border to go into the North. Han was inspired to write about the afterlives of the division of Korea by Nora Okja Keller's novel *Comfort Woman*. He states in an interview that this text was "a starting point for my own investigation into my family's history and the connection to the Korean War" (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 9). Han uses fiction as a way to address how "the war is still ongoing", as he states on the inspiration for the novel's name:

> [...] I found it a way to address how Koreans have been made suspect regarding our allegiances to the US. I remember being asked as an immigrant to Hawai'i whether I was from South Korea or North Korea, which is an absurd question. How would I be here if I was from North Korea? Or they find out you have ties to the Northern peninsula, you are considered a threat or potential threat. And that just goes along with the larger American anxiety of invasion, which becomes the justification for military stationed in the name of

[12] On 13 January 2018 there was a phone alert for a ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawai'i that took 40 minutes to correct as a false alarm (HNN Staff).

> security and taking whatever measures possible to ensure our freedom when it comes at the cost of our health, our very lives. (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 31)

In this chapter, I discuss how Tae-woo's possession of Jacob and their border-crossing leads to affective and material transformation for the Chos, the Baiks, and for the living and the dead who reckon with the the division of their homeland and families as "a death without death…a form of bereavement in which loss is denied" (Grinker, qtd. in N. Kim 23-24). In Han's novel as in real life, a family divided stands in for a nation. This is evident in how the DMZ and the entire Korean peninsula becomes an affective terrain that impedes on the possibility of imagining family reunification. In particular, North-South relations are hindered by the revived antagonism of the current Yoon Suk Yeol administration's opposition towards diplomacy with North Korea. The Biden administration's renewed travel ban that prohibits American citizens from visiting North Korea and dominant cultural representations of North and South Korea as the "evil/puppet" versus the "good/free" Korea also hinders inter-Korean dialogue.

The novel represents North-South separated families (*nambuk isan'gajok*) and its themes of loss, betrayal, national division, sacrifice, generational trauma, and the liminality between the spiritual and physical world. The mediator of the shaman (*mudang*) is bound up in Han's thinking about how "Our reunification continues to be deferred and disrupted because of Korea's division. That was primarily the story I wanted to tell with the overall arc of Tae-woo's narrative" (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 28). The protagonist of the novel is Jacob, who left Hawai'i to teach English in South Korea but really wanted to spend time with his friend/lover Kai, as Jacob is not openly gay. When Tae-woo's possession of Jacob's body leads to physical and spiritual illness, he wonders if he was being punished "for rejecting the safety and comfort of having an immediate family and his grandmother's God—for thinking he could disappear without

consequence" (120). His sister is Grace, the perpetually stoned and hungry 21-year-old senior in college who works at the family restaurant as she reckons with the consequences of Jacob's border-crossing and her family's social location in Hawai'i. Jacob's mother and father (Umma and Appa) run the restaurant. They experience a fall from grace years after being featured on Guy Fieri's television show because they are suspected of being North Korean sympathisers after Jacob's border-crossing. Jacob's grandmother on his mother's side, Jeong Halmeoni, was separated from her sister in the North and helps Jacob navigate Tae-woo's possession of his body. Tae-woo, who left his first wife and son in North Korea during the Korean War, blurs the boundaries between his and Jacob's bodies and minds in order to satiate his hunger for food, interact with the physical world, and restore his lost family ties. The characters in Han's novel are all connected to the shared struggles among the living and the dead who must deal with how the division of their family and nation structures their affective sense of belonging.

In this chapter, I argue that the novel shows afterlives of border-crossers that materialise in different ways for second- and third-generation Koreans. Instead of simplified or sensationalist accounts of border-crossing, the novel uses places like the DMZ and Hawai'i to examine how border-crossing is mediated through connections between the physical and spiritual world. Border-crossing is also mediated through the Internet and television news, and the novel shows how the affective stakes of border-crossing persists after the highly mediatised moment. By imagining Korean (re)unification and the decolonisation of Hawai'i in the material and spiritual world, Han represents how the afterlives of border-crossers can facilitate affective transformation for those dealing with fractured kinship ties as a result of national division and colonial occupation.

The characters in Han's novel all desire alternative ways of sustaining an attachment to the world, and seek expression for this desire even as the geographical and generational distance among families endures. Tae-woo and Jacob's border-crossing—not just of the DMZ but also through the world between the living and the dead—constitutes a performance of "emotional citizenship" that measures the unending Korean War's affective structures by way of the family. As Han states in his review of Suk-Young Kim's *DMZ Crossing*, "emotional citizenship asks that you understand kinship through the lens of loss, where clarity is provided by remembering families being uprooted, geopolitical formations, and the shedding of blood…Emotional citizenship functions as both framework and practice, as a process of relation, where kinship and bonds must eventually translate to coalition building and change" (Han par. 2). *Nuclear Family* shows how personal and historical memory is produced through intimate, shared forms of sociality for border-crossers who experience the effects of their crossing long after the highly mediatised event.

Ghosts, possession, and liminality: the DMZ as a site of affect

Nuclear Family opens with an epigraph from Keller's *Comfort Woman*, which introduces the image of a navel at the centre of the Korean peninsula to metaphorise the division of Korea:

> It still seems strange to me to think of Korea in terms of north and south, to realize that a line we couldn't see or feel, a line we crossed with two steps, cut the body of my country in two. In dreams I will always see thousands of people, the living and the dead, forming long queues that spiral out from the head and feet of Korea, not knowing that when they reach the navel they will have to turn back. Not knowing that they will never be able to return home. Not knowing they are forever lost. (Keller qtd. in Han xiii)

The first chapter of the novel is from the perspective of Jacob's deceased grandfather Baik Tae-woo, who left his first wife and son in North Korea during the Korean War. Han takes up Keller's embodied metaphorization of the division of Korea by depicting the DMZ as a

"well-fed" wall that Tae-woo tries to break through by building a tower of ghosts to climb over to the other side. Tae-woo and the ghosts share in common "an unforgiving hunger" for food and attachment to their living kinship relations. Later on, we learn that if ghosts are fed through *jesa* (ancestral rites) food offerings they can become strong enough to interact with the physical world. However, as Tae-woo has died on the south side of the DMZ and the wall of ghosts he makes keeps falling down, "by the politics of the living and the laws of the dead, he could not be dead on the other side and return home" (Han 9).

In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery F. Gordon discusses Raymond Williams' notion that haunting is a structure of feeling, a social experience that is unique because it is "emergent": "it does not 'have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before [it] exert[s] palpable pressures and set[s] effective limits on experience and on action'" (Williams, qtd. in Gordon 201). The figure of the ghost in Han's novel reflects Williams' idea that haunting as a structure of feeling simultaneously sets limits and relates to a solution (201). For the ghosts who roam the DMZ, their haunting shapes the limits and possibilities of a mutual reckoning among the living and the dead to find out about their missing kin. The sociality of the ghosts is seen in how they are dealing with being separated by their kin relations in different ways. The narrator states, "The churchgoers who ended up like the rest of the dead retreated to their megachurches to pray," while other trickster ghosts felt sorry for Tae-woo because they were at least remembered and well-fed enough to cause trouble in the physical world: "Tae-woo spent most of his days hunched over, clutching his stomach as he walked around South Korea witnessing what it was becoming without him" (Han 118-119).

Tae-woo's possession of Jacob's body enables him to eat food in the physical world, and he gains enough strength to make Jacob run across the DMZ so he can try to reunite with his

missing family. However, Tae-woo's possession makes Jacob physically and spiritually ill. Jacob starts to lose control of his body, and he slaps himself in the face in a failed attempt to prevent Tae-woo from crossing the DMZ. Jacob's journey to return home to his family in Hawai'i and reclaim his body after this dangerous border-crossing parallels Tae-woo's reckoning with the emotional dimensions of citizenship: "You just have to slip through the barrier. You have to make it back. Why was the barrier there to begin with? When you died, why did you have to remain on this side?" (113).

Evocations of damnation, punishment, and purity are seen in the aftereffects of Jacob's border-crossing and how different generations of Koreans reckon with the DMZ's affective structures. Jacob left Hawai'i to teach English in South Korea but he really wanted to spend time with his friend/lover Kai, who has a girlfriend in Korea. Cho Halmeoni, Jacob's grandmother on his father's side, is a devout Christian who warned Jacob about going to hell for his homosexuality. She believes "It was the devil himself who whispered in her brother's ear and compelled him to act," while the virulently anti-communist "Cho Harabeoji practically denied Jacob existed" (Han 59-60) after the virality of his border-crossing. The grandmothers at Cho Halmeoni's church think the Chos "deserve their downfall because they care more about their business and money than praying and going to church" (83). As I will discuss later, Grace's reckoning with her family's social location in Hawai'i reveals how the stakes of Jacob's border-crossing remain long after the viral moment.

The chapters that are in Tae-woo's third person perspective discuss how he "hated the people who visited the DMZ. Folks from all around the world who got a cheap thrill from the proximity to North Korea" (3). For tourists, the DMZ is experienced as the "most dangerous place in the world," "a tourist attraction", "a thrill ride" that "You get close enough for a scare

but never so close as to actually get hurt" (17). For border-crossers like Jacob/Tae-woo, "This tour isn't meant for South Koreans. The DMZ wasn't something they had to visit to know it was a reality" (109). In a scene where Jacob/Tae-woo is on a DMZ tour, an American soldier gives a history lesson of the Korean War during the DMZ tour in which he "tells you the north attacked first, and it was only through the valiant and courageous effort of the United States and the United Nations that South Korea could be protected as they pushed the aggressors back," the narrator of this chapter discusses how he "intentionally left out the important details":

> like how the United States had promised Korea sovereignty after WWII and instead chose to occupy the peninsula as a strategic military location, a matter of convenience to Colonels Charles H. Bonesteel and Dean Rusk, who wanted to keep Seoul in their zone by pointing to the thirty-eighth parallel on a map to divide Korea in two; how the United States perceived communism as an ever-growing threat and thus made Korea a stage for democracy, until it became grounds for an international fight between superpowers rather than a civil war, grounds for the massacre of citizens they considered suspect in a war before the official war, leaving three million Koreans dead. (110-111)

Han included a squiggly line that represents the 38th parallel to divide sections of the novel, and he dedicates several pages midway to a visual representation of the DMZ. Han states on representing Tae-woo's border-crossing:

> I think, in a way, his drive to return to the northern peninsula inspired my own drive to figure out a way of how to address and depict the DMZ as a force beyond the physical and into spiritual realm…I wanted to create these moments of disruption where, as a reader, you are forced to—no, moved to—come up against a block in the text that you have to transverse in your push to understand these characters and what kind of barriers they pulled up within themselves, across their own relationships, and also in the way they are separated across chapters and come together in the book as a family or as siblings. (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 15-16)

Jacob's first encounter with Tae-woo happens on the subway after he is done teaching English at a *hagwon* (a for-profit private educational institution). However, Jacob's first encounters with the spiritual world happened when he was a little boy, as he used to see a ghost or *gwishin* (spirits that have not fulfilled their life's purpose and are cursed to roam the earth as a result) in his room. Jacob's connection to the spiritual world is shared with his grandmother on his mother's side, Jeong Halmeoni, who is the granddaughter of a *mudang* (shaman) in North Korea. Jacob visits Jeong Halmeoni in her nursing home and he shows her his mysterious rash that he got after encountering Tae-woo; she tells Jacob to see a *mudang* because he is being followed by a *gwishin*. While Jeong Emoh, Jeong Halmeoni's sister, tells Jacob to not pay attention to Jeong Halmeoni because she has dementia, Jeong Halmeoni intuits later on that Tae-woo is using Jacob's body to find the family he left behind in the North. Jeong Halmeoni is upset with Tae-woo for possessing Jacob in this way, but Tae-woo sees no problem with using Jacob because "The boy was merely a vessel for his wishes, like how all sons, and grandsons, ought to be" (177). Jacob tries to get rid of Tae-woo by going to church, praying, and buying a Bible but he will not leave Jacob alone.

Tae-woo lies to Jacob regarding his intentions as he gains more power over his body, and in a scene where Jacob goes out for dinner and drinks with his *hagwon* co-workers and boss, Tae-woo was "insisting he was there to serve as Jacob's guardian spirit, to make up for his absence in the family and atone by watching over his grandson" (141). Tae-woo tells Jacob that other ghosts would keep coming for him, knowing that Jacob could connect them back to the living world and "they would eat away at him until the sickness became worse" unless Jacob accepts his help (142). As Tae-woo keeps pushing the boundaries of his possession of Jacob's body, the narrator states, "His grandfather's insight into his life was invasive. To see Jacob's life

and longing put on display like a gallery they could loiter together. His parents didn't know him this way. Grace to a closer extent. He wondered what Tae-woo wanted from him" (145).

Tae-woo, who is surprised at the amount of control he can maintain over Jacob's body, invites Jacob's co-workers Erica and Chad to have sex together: "Initially they were going to invite Erica over, why not them both since it's what the boy preferred, why didn't Tae-woo see what it was all about. It wasn't too bad either. He had fun. They all did…It was nice being young again" (186-187). Tae-woo exhibits selfish behaviour in his possession of Jacob's body, as he figures keeping Jacob's body buzzed on alcohol is "what kept him in their body and kept Jacob from reclaiming himself" (188). Moreover, the other hungry, poorer ghosts who do not have families in the living world to feed them ask for Tae-woo's help but he rejects them: "Tae-woo shook off a hand reaching for their foot, kicking it away from another of the forgotten, pleading they be taken along as he continued to skip" (188).

Jeong Halmeoni's story of leaving one of her sisters behind in North Korea during the Korean War provides context regarding Tae-woo and the other ghosts reckoning with their longing for connection to the physical world. I read Jeong Halmeoni's ability to grieve with Jacob while assisting him through his possession as a key emotional turning point in the novel. Han's motivation for having her chapter be the only one written in first-person narration comes from honouring the real stories of his maternal grandmother and great aunt: "Though it feels uniquely personal, unfortunately, the story is not uncommon. There are countless stories exactly like Jeong Halmeoni's that many Koreans in diaspora and in Korea have. War and division continue to reverberate throughout their lives" (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 33).

In the chapter called "Eonni" (meaning older sister), Jeong Halmeoni tells Jacob the story of how Tae-woo left her and her daughters, as he had a younger wife and child he left in the

North, and Jeong Halmeoni's father also abandoned his family. Jeong Halmeoni's father was thought to have died on his way to the South, but when he was found alive he falsely claimed that they could not go back North to retrieve the two sisters that were left in the South. Jeong Halmeoni decided to go back to the North alone, but she was forced to leave one of her sisters behind. While Jeong Halmeoni understands Tae-woo's regrets and longing, she says that "he should leave Jacob alone," as "his grandson could not change the sentence of afterlife" (199). The narrator states, "Though a part of her wanted to see if he could make it and find her eonni, he had to save himself and return to his family" (200).

When Jacob goes to the *mudang* to get rid of Tae-woo's possession of his body, she tells him that he is spiritually and physically ill, and if he becomes a *paksu* (a shaman who employs magic to effect cures, to tell fortunes, to soothe spirits of the dead, and to repulse evil; Duignan par. 1) he will be cured and he will "live on a path toward helping others" (215). However, the *mudang* tells Jacob that it will cost money he does not have, and that if he does not choose the life of being a shaman and get his training as an apprentice he will die. The *mudang* tells Jacob before they start the ritual that ends up failing to get rid of Tae-woo, "Generally, shamanism is looked down upon [...] Your family will not understand, but perhaps they can help. It is a small price to save your life" (215).

Functioning as a site of charged affect, the DMZ illustrates that border-crossing is mediated through generations of Koreans who experience the division of Korea in different ways. Jacob's liminality, facilitated by the DMZ and his position as a queer Korean American who is connected to the world of the dead, enables him to traverse generational and geographical distances within his family. Tae-woo's possession of Jacob's body leads him to understand the extent of Tae-woo's efforts to reunite with his lost family. Simultaneously, it allows Jacob insight

into how Jeong Halmeoni's own border-crossing during the Korean War shapes her disapproval of Tae-woo's use of Jacob's body. The transformative journey of Tae-woo and Jacob, who ultimately become mediators and a "microphone" for separated families in the spiritual realm, extends into the physical world where Jacob palpably feels the liminality of the DMZ and the enduring impact of the division of Korea that is shaped by the afterlives of their border-crossing.

Nan Kim discusses how "through the experiences of separated families, the enduring costs of unresolved war are evident as liabilities not only in diplomatic and military terms, but also in the subtle dimensions of everyday life, kinship, and personhood" (N. Kim 17). For North-South separated families who experience "the territorial and subjective dimensions of the peninsula's national division", they are

> comprised of individuals who have been inescapably entangled in the historic enmity between two states, through a kin member who is known or believed to be on the other side of the divide. However, the lack of all contact or communication among ordinary people across the 38th parallel meant that their absent kin would remain indefinitely suspended between life and death, leaving their families also in an indefinite state of uncertainty. (N. Kim 21)

Nan Kim states that the risks "attached to being related to someone across the divide meant that the missing family member underwent a social death" (20). Kim Dong-choon states that the term "living death" (*sarainnŭn songjang*) comes from the stigmatisation involved in physical separation from the community, as seen in the case of Cho Pong-am: "twice presidential candidate and leader of the Progressive Party in the 1950s, was arrested and charged with being a North Korean spy in 1958 (he was executed in 1959), following the Chosŏn dynasty practice of *cordon sanitaire*, his house was cordoned off with a rope (*kŭmtchul*). In social life, that kind of *kŭmtchul* existed until very recently, and those separated out no longer belonged to the realm of ordinary people" (Kim Dong-choon, qtd. in Em, Henry et al. 842-843).

Tae-woo, Jacob, and Jeong Halmeoni are separated from ordinary people in different ways. While Tae-woo is literally separated from the physical world because he is a deceased ghost, his persistence in finding his missing family because he does not have lots of kin who remember and feed him marks him as different among the other richer, well-fed ghosts. Jacob is separated from ordinary people through his position as a queer Korean American who is under suspicion from the whole world after his border-crossing goes viral. Jacob is described as a quiet, sensitive person who is the golden child of the family, yet he is also marginalised by his grandparents on his father's side for his sexuality. Jeong Halmeoni has dementia and although she clearly sees how Tae-woo is possessing Jacob's body and she helps him navigate the spiritual world, characters like Jeong Emoh tell Jacob that she is speaking nonsense.

While Jeong Halmeoni says that it is wrong for Tae-woo to blur the boundaries between the spiritual and physical world by using Jacob's body for his own ends, this shared kinship also allows for their mutual transformation in spite of Korea's national division. Jeong Halmeoni's story of leaving her sister behind leads Jacob to apologise to his sister Grace for "thinking he could leave without consequence". Instead of Tae-woo ending up permanently separated from his family because of the DMZ and the division between the spiritual and physical world, at the end of the novel the ghost of his first wife Min-jung eventually reunites with Tae-woo at the DMZ because their living son still remembers them both. Tae-woo listened to the stories of ghosts who had missing family members and "he couldn't help joining them in tears" as he became a mediator in the spiritual world: "The dead in the south used Tae-woo and that big mouth of his as a microphone, putting out the signal daily how the south remembered the north" (Han 280). Tae-woo decides to wait for Jeong Halmeoni's sister and call out her name for her, and Tae-woo's attempt to use Jacob's body to correct his mistake of choosing the wrong side of the

DMZ to die on is remedied by him letting Jacob go. I read Jacob "not seeing himself as a part of a heteropatriarchal framework, which prompted his leaving [for Korea]" (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 24) as part of his coming-into-being as a liminal and queer subject who generates affective transformation in the aftermath of post-conflict reconciliation processes occurring on a national scale.

Liminality is a process of transitioning for the border-crossers in Han's novel. The concept of liminality was first theorised by French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold Van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage*:

> Van Gennep analyzed the transitions between key stages in life, such as puberty, marriage, parenthood, and advancement to a higher-status position, by mapping the dynamics of ritual action that separates the initiates and the uninitiated by an intermediary domain, the "limen," Latin for "threshold." Describing how the change of status achieved in ritual is accomplished only after the initiate passes through the threshold represented by this in-between space, Van Gennep also observed that the passage from one social position to another is often identified as a territorial passage. (N. Kim 22)

Nan Kim states that for North-South separated families, televised family reunions like in the summer of 2000 resemble "something akin to a ritual passage from death to life": "the events suggested an overturning and suspension of the natural order, while gesturing toward the magnitude of change that all Koreans would also have to undergo in order to overturn the existing political order of national division as well" (28). Individuals with possible family connections in the North were subject to police persecution or spent decades keeping these family ties secret, but as Nan Kim notes upon the aftermath of the televised June Inter-Korean Summit of 2000:

> To hide the taboo of being related to a missing person or someone known to have gone to the North in wartime, families commonly formalized the death of the absent family

> member by submitting a death report and performing ancestral rites (*chesa*) to memorialize the ostensible death. That is, such family members would report their unaccounted-for kin as dead with the understanding that this could help them avoid discrimination and stigmatization in the context of overarching state anticommunism that prevailed in the years following the Korean War and intensified under the Park Chung Hee era. (N. Kim 28)

Jacob's initiation into the spiritual world happens alongside him uncovering the stories he did not know about his grandmother, and the shared suffering among the living and the dead is generated from the afterlives of the Korean War and its affective structures. As Han states on the conditions both the living and the dead share, "The ghosts stuck around with the hope that they would be able to see their loved ones. Their will kept them around for so long, but also kept them suffering in the afterlife to the point that when or if they are forgotten, they lose their sense of self and who they are in terms of their relations to their families and loved ones, but also to the Korean community more broadly across the peninsula" (Han, qtd. in Lee par. 26). Through Jacob, Tae-woo, and Jeong Halmeoni transforming from a disposition of distance, enmity, and suspicion to one of recognition and engagement, they are able "to participate in a moving public acknowledgment of shared war losses" (N. Kim 23) as they cross boundaries during liminal periods in the physical and spiritual world.

Media virality, border-crossing, and Hawai'ian "locals"

The afterlives of Jacob's border-crossing persist long after the mediatised event, and the effects of media virality for the Chos reveals how the diasporic Korean body is used in the transmission of affect. The novel's preoccupation with addressing affects of enmity towards North Koreans and suspicion regarding those who cross the DMZ or have family ties to the North shows up in the Internet virality of Jacob's border-crossing. In the viral video, Jacob falls flat on his face right on the DMZ line, and a South Korean soldier shoots Jacob in the leg to

prevent him from going further into the North. Jacob's border-crossing makes newsheadlines; he is taken into custody by the ROK-US military who take him to the hospital for his gunshot wound and they interrogate him from the second person perspective in a later chapter called "You". The news calls Jacob's border-crossing an "attempted defection," and now Jacob "was everywhere at once but nowhere near home" (28). There are Internet memes making fun of Jacob as he runs for the border, with the captions: "Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to disarm the North Korean nuclear program. You must covertly enter…'I'm on it.'" (37). Jacob's border-crossing leaves the Chos wondering "what could've possessed Jacob to do something so foolish it could hurt them all" (10), as "There was no report on which side fired, where Jacob was hit. North Korea denied culpability while suggesting this was an act of aggression on the part of the US, and pundits insisted the north fired, much like history argued about who instigated the Korean War. The world held Jacob with suspicion. Sleeper agent. Stunt." (34).

When the video of Jacob's border-crossing goes viral on the Internet, the affective and material stakes of his border-crossing transmits to the rest of the family. Regulars stop coming to Cho's Delicatessen, and there are prank calls and threats "telling Grace and her family to go back to North Korea if they loved Kim Jong-un so much." Grace thinks, "*We couldn't if we wanted to, asshole*" (5). Someone throws a brick into the restaurant and another spray painted the restaurant's cardboard window with "a stick figure riding a missile shaped like a dick" (79). In the chapter titled "Disgrace" Appa pleads on air for Jacob's safe return "to be with his family and get the help he needed." Appa repeats what Grace had confided to him about her anxiety symptoms but attributes them to Jacob (131). Umma wonders, "How could this happen? Everyone hates us." Appa asks, "Is this supposed to be funny? [...] Who would go through such trouble?" to which Grace says, "A soldier or vet? A tourist? Who knows?" (62).

A recurring theme in the novel is that "television's efficacy as a medium for the transmission of intense affect" (N. Kim 6) occurs at the level of the nation and family. Before Jacob's border-crossing incident, Cho's Delicatessen represented the success of the Korean community in Hawai'i after the restaurant was featured on Guy Fieri's television show on the Food Network. Guy Fieri demonstrates the changing perspectives of the Cho family, as they went from being an example for Koreans in the community to being shunned. Guy not paying for his food because he thought exposure on his television show was sufficient reflects how the Chos' sense of belonging in Hawai'i is conditional, as "love for the restaurant was itself translated from love for the family, and the only way both could endure, in name, was through a love for money and a love for work, especially when work was all families had to show for love" (253).

Border-crossing is also mediated through places like Hawai'i, which is represented as a mixing pot of Asian diasporic groups. However, the Cho family has benefited from the US annexation of Hawai'i and this complicates the Chos' success story. As Ariel Djanikian states: "If this book articulates an indictment against the political forces interrupting familial and cultural continuity, then what is the moral position of the Cho family itself, who has benefited from America's annexation of Hawai'i, which took place despite widespread protests from Native Hawaiians?" (Djanikian par. 7). The narrator states that the social location of the Chos in Hawai'i is made precarious because there were "thoughts about their strange son making the public believe they were all strange, the whole family, when Koreans in Hawai'i were always seen as recent immigrants no matter how long they'd been around" (Han 253). But the chapter "Locals" discusses how Asian diasporic groups who immigrated to Hawai'i were rendered precarious before they arrived:

> We came to Hawai'i from other countries and worked under an exploitative plantation system. We came as picture brides, plantation laborers, bachelors, families. Most of us felt like we didn't have a choice in the matter. We came to escape colonial rule back home, when the missionaries encouraged us to leave, so we could find both an honest, dependable wage, and likewise a God, who we crowded around in the churches we built so we could pray for ourselves and our homeland. (239)

The limits of Grace's awareness of her social location as the daughter of Korean restaurateurs in Hawai'i is seen in an argument with her friend David, who is a local in Hawai'i. During dinner at a restaurant, Grace tells David that her dad's wish is to live in a big house with the family, and David replies that it "Doesn't make it right, all these people invading land that isn't theirs and driving up the prices of homes" (235). Grace asks him if he is referring to her own family, and she jokes that he should give her a pass "Once there's independence and all that. I would literally have nowhere to go" (235). David takes offence to this joke and he leaves the restaurant as Grace reflects on how she "couldn't make sense of what place she had in Hawai'i, for what future she was living—for whom, if not herself, the family—what remained when the melting pot reduced to nothing. She often heard Appa refer to Cho's as a local restaurant" (236). Grace throws up from eating too much and their server Mrs. Viernes helps her; Mrs. Viernes is the mother of Peter, a boy from Guåhan who Appa fires from the family restaurant despite him feeling like he was part of the Cho family.

Diners take videos of Grace throwing up at the restaurant which go viral on the Internet. Later on in the novel, Grace volunteers with David and Peter to steward the land at a nature preserve, and Grace makes amends with them. When the group leader asks everyone to share their name, the name of a place they call home, and the name of someone who has passed, Grace says that she is bringing her grandfather and Jacob into the community circle. Grace at first states that she called Kaimukī home, but then she changes it to Korea. The narrator reflects on how at

the family restaurant, “They had to be expedient, cooking to quota as they maintained a perfect balance tipped entirely to their side, her parents’ success weighed by an illusion, and promise, of abundance—that they could feed as many people as they wanted who walked through their doors” (251). Grace is hurt by the betrayal of a loyal customer named Aunty Reyes, and when Grace confronts her on why people are not going to Cho’s anymore, Aunty Reyes says there were rumours the Chos were North Korean spies. She asks Grace, “Are you South Korean?...Were your brother and your parents *born* there is what I’m trying to say” and Grace says, “What if we were?” Grace continues, “Not sure what’s more disappointing…The fact that people were talking this nonsense or that you believed them” (105-106).

In Joseph Han’s review of *DMZ Crossing*, he questions “if there can be such a thing as the Korean body operating beyond affiliation to separate nation states, opposing national discourses, and citizenship”:

> Suk-young Kim describes this as “oppositional forces” constantly at work, as if the partition of Korea produces a dialectic that never arrives as synthesis. When she focuses on the performativity of bodies literally crossing borders as a display of emotional kinship, an actualization of longing, it seems that Kim is also simultaneously gesturing toward metaphysical and psychological crossings as an act of immersing in and confronting the systems producing the divide. (Han par. 1)

Grace’s “guilt-by-association” with Jacob after his border-crossing incident reflects Han’s insight into how enmity is transmitted through the media: “An article briefly mentioned that Jacob’s physical and mental health were unstable—he would need to be admitted for further evaluation. To her parents, being Jacob’s sibling was not so much a bond as it was a handcuff, Grace guilty by association and humiliated anytime she saw a meme making fun of Jacob, a GIF of the moment he ran for the border” (Han 37). When Jacob is finally released from ROK-US custody, the narrator states in the chapter called “Grace”: “The last time Grace saw Umma cry that much

was when she watched the news about families separated by the [redacted] War reuniting at Mount Kumgang" (147). Han's choice to block out certain words in Grace's chapter represents how she uses weed and food to dissociate from the stress of Jacob's incident and the struggles of helping her family run their restaurant in the midst of the community's suspicions towards them.

At the end of the novel, the Chos and the people in the nursing home are experiencing the 2008 false missile alert in Hawai'i. Han compares the demonisation of sharks to that of North Koreans, as he references how US military war rehearsals are an immediate threat to human beings and the environment: "The sharks would continue to be demonized, no thanks to bad movies decades later, mistaken as dangerous as missiles, when every summer countries across the world would test their weapons and fire them over and into the ocean during RIMPAC"[13] (291).

When Grace and Jacob have their first talk after Jacob's return home, she discusses how powerful the evocation of an external threat to one's family and home is: "People with homes are on guard because they have to protect what they have…Anything in the outside world is a threat. Anyone not in their family, or those they bring into the family" (264). While Suk-young Kim argues that "Recognizing each other as members of a kinship created among people who locate themselves outside the nation-state system is the primary force that validates emotion in understanding the foundation of citizenship" (S. Kim 98), Han concludes by imagining Korean (re)unification and the decolonisation of Hawai'i in the material and spiritual world. The narrator imagines that the two Koreas shake hands "right over Baik Tae-woo's body"; Kim Jong-un walking over causes a brief opening for Tae-woo to travel to the other side of the DMZ; the

[13] RIMPAC (the Rim of the Pacific Exercise) is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise, with 26 nations participating under direction of the US military. See Empire Files, *Earth's Greatest Enemy* and *SCOOP: US Lies About RIMPAC War Games Exposed*.

Korean War formally ends; Jeong Halmeoni is reunited with her lost sister; Jacob is married to his husband and they take over the family restaurant; and Grace and Jacob give big food offerings to their ancestors which "will signal the living have not forgotten the dead" (293-294).

There are generational effects of border-crossing experienced by Jacob, Tae-woo, and Jeong Halemoni. The transformation of Tae-woo and Jacob, who at the end of the novel become mediators and a "microphone" for separated families in the spiritual world, carries over into the physical world where Jacob feels the DMZ and the division of Korea's liminality that is produced through the afterlives of their border-crossing. Grace reckons with her social location in Hawai'i, as her sense of belonging was shaken after the social consequences of Jacob's border-crossing and a viral video of her throwing up at a restaurant. Border-crossing is also mediated through places like Hawai'i, embodying both a mixing pot of Asian diasporic communities and a complex narrative of belonging for those living on occupied lands. For the Cho family, Hawai'i represents both cultural diversity and the legacy of US annexation, complicating their sense of belonging as successful restaurateurs within the community.

In his "Acknowledgments" section, Han states the struggle for peace and (re)unification on the Korean peninsula is connected to Hawai'i's freedom from colonial occupation: "Living and learning on this land has taught me this: for there to be peace and reunification, One Korea, there must also be an independent and free Hawai'i" (297). In *Nuclear Family*, affective transformation for the Chos, the Baiks, and the living and the dead who live on occupied lands is facilitated by the crossing of boundaries and forming of kinship ties that liminality as an interpretive heuristic may offer. While I do not aim to make overarching claims in which emotional citizenship or liminality in themselves generate affective and material transformation at the level of the self, family, or nation, Han's novel of alternating perspectives and converging

personal histories open up a space to reencounter the enduring afterlives of the Korean War through reimaging one's sense of belonging amidst fractured kinship relations: "It has never been more urgent than to measure that state of division by the unit of the family. It's not only a question of what 'one Korea' can look like, but how to reconcile with an alternative, familial kinship before we consider an alternative form of governance" (Han par. 2).

Conclusion

The findings of my thesis have significant implications for understanding the complexities of border-crossing and citizenship in inter-Korean relations. By examining the intimate struggles of individuals and families affected by border-crossing, my thesis highlights the deeply personal and often overlooked dimensions of the afterlives of border-crossing and the media's transmission of affect regarding border-crossers. My thesis underscores the importance of recognizing border-crossing as a multifaceted experience that extends beyond the physical boundary of the DMZ. Through discussing the emotional and generational afterlives of border-crossers, it becomes evident that border-crossing has far-reaching implications for individual lives, collective memories, and societal narratives regarding North-South Korea relations. By focusing on the complexities of border-crossing, the three case studies challenge simplistic or sensationalist understandings of inter-Korean relations. I emphasise the need for nuanced approaches to understanding the complicated experiences of those affected by border-crossing, and the broader implications for reconciliation and peace on the Korean peninsula.

Overall, the findings of my thesis underscore the importance of grappling with the complexities of border-crossing in order to foster deeper understanding, reconciliation, and ultimately, a way to lessen the bilateral enmity that structures inter-Korean relations. By acknowledging and engaging with the multifaceted dimensions of border-crossing and emotional citizenship, we can move towards building a mutual understanding of the division of Korea's affective structures and its implications for the present and future.

Emotional bonds and kinship

Across the three case studies, several key themes emerge, each contributing to a deeper understanding of the emotional, cultural, and historical dimensions of border-crossing and its affective stakes. One of the central themes explored in my thesis is the role of emotional bonds and kinship in shaping the experiences of border-crossers and their families. Through the documentary films *Forgotten Warriors*, *To Kill Alice*, and the novel *Nuclear Family*, we see how border-crossing and the emotional dimensions of citizenship reverberates through generations, affecting both the individuals directly involved and their descendants. The emotional resonance of these narratives underscores the enduring impact of Korea's divided history on personal and familial identities.

Cultural and generational border-crossing

Another key theme that emerges is the transmission of cultural and generational memory across borders. From Shin Eunmi's public lectures to Jacob Cho's spiritual and physical transformation in *Nuclear Family*, it is evident that the afterlives of border-crossing are shaped through the media and the instrumentalisation of affect regarding North-South relations and the politics of unification. These narratives serve as a bridge between past and present, facilitating a deeper understanding of the material and cultural forces that continue to shape inter-Korean relations.

Mediation and representation

The role of media and representation in shaping perceptions of border-crossing is also a significant aspect of the findings. Through documentary films and Han's novel, we see how border-crossing is mediated and interpreted by various actors, including filmmakers, writers, and public speakers. These representations not only reflect the complexities of border-crossing, but also have the power to influence public discourse and shape national narratives.

Challenges and opportunities for reconciliation

The findings of this thesis highlight both the challenges and opportunities for reconciliation and mutual understanding in inter-Korean relations. On one hand, the afterlives of border-crossing and the emotional dimensions of citizenship can perpetuate divisions and animosities between North and South Korea. On the other hand, these narratives also offer opportunities for empathy, understanding, and dialogue, fostering connections across borders and envisioning paths towards reconciliation and peaceful unification.

Limitations and future directions

While my thesis provides insights into the complexities of border-crossing and emotional citizenship, it is not without its limitations. The case studies I use are highly selective, as I focus on affects of enmity towards those who express affinity with the North. There is a wide variety of South Korean media on the topic of North-South relations, such as Korean dramas and talk shows that are not included in this thesis. Additionally, further investigation is needed to understand the broader historical-material forces that shape border-crossing and its implications for North Koreans who cross the DMZ for different reasons that do not fit the scope of my thesis. More research is needed on the changing affinities of women partisans during the Korean War, the conditions of repatriation, and the historical significance of border-crossers who were able to travel freely between North and South. In conclusion, the findings of my thesis contribute to a deeper understanding of border-crossing in inter-Korean relations, highlighting its emotional, cultural, and historical dimensions. By exploring the experiences of individuals and families affected by border-crossing, the case studies highlight the complexities of inter-Korean relations and offer insights into the challenges and opportunities for reconciliation in Korea.

Border-crossing extends far beyond physical boundaries—it encompasses generational, emotional, and cultural dimensions that profoundly shape individual lives and national memory. By examining the myriad dimensions of emotional citizenship and the afterlives of highly mediatised border-crossing, we gain deeper insights into the complexities of Korea's division and the enduring legacies of border-crossings on individuals and communities alike. As we continue to navigate the complexities of border-crossing and citizenship's affective structures, acknowledging and grappling with these aesthetic experiences can facilitate mutual understanding, reconciliation, and lessen the bilateral enmity that dominates North-South Korea relations.

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