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The Cold War Comic: Power and Laughter in Taiwan and South Korea, 1948-1979

By

Evelyn Ming Whai Shih

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Chinese Language
and the Designated Emphasis
in
Film Studies
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Andrew F. Jones, Chair
Professor Weihong Bao
Professor Kyeong-Hee Choi
Professor Linda Williams

Summer 2018

Abstract

The Cold War Comic: Power and Laughter in Taiwan and South Korea 1948-1979
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The affective landscape of the global Cold War is commonly associated with fear and paranoia about ubiquitous enemies who had to be purged to preserve life worth living. My dissertation argues instead that the Cold War was one of the most *comic* times in recent history; not in spite of, but because of the apocalyptic stakes of the global stand-off. In East Asia, where authoritarian governments carried out the ideological war through tight media policy and censorship, comic culture became a vital form of mass communication out of necessity. Comic culture's circuitous nature allowed transgressive public affects to gather in plain sight, fostering new rituals of collective understanding that bypassed state control.

This dissertation demonstrates the regional resonance of the Cold War comic aesthetic through a comparative methodology, revealing cultural convergences among two US-allied East Asian countries that were also former Japanese colonies, Taiwan and South Korea. The similar contours of their comic cultures arise from these historical factors, as well as their common participation in global anti-Communism and their rapid industrialization under developmental policies. Nevertheless, the comic cultural field became a particularly important space of vernacularization for Taiwan and South Korea as they encountered the norms of new global cultures under Pax Americana, and it was there that the differences between them were articulated and amplified.

I identify three intertwined comic aesthetics that side-stepped the state's totalizing machine of anti-Communist, developmental ideology, creating a counterpublic in the process of coming into being. *Caricature*, *genre game*, and *nonsense* were the three intermedial aesthetics that forged new forms of communication by cleaving to the margins of expression. If caricature suggests the method of minimalism, of communicating with the least amount of visual information possible, genre games offer the method of maximalism, of engaging heterogenous genres all at once. Nonsense, in turn, suggests the liberating possibility that reckoning with the impossibility of communication in the Cold War era is itself the most honest act of communication. Together, these aesthetics playfully invert the power structures of the era by making the trivial aim of collective laughter a primary and immediate affective objective.

To J, who will always be my hero, and K, who illuminates the world's mysteries.
I would not be here without you.

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Preface

Inter-Asian comparative work in the fields of literature, media, and cultural studies has a more recent history than comparative literature focused on Euro-American cultures within Anglophone scholarly circles. It is even newer than models of world literature that travel along the linguistic networks wrought by colonialism or migration, from the Hispanophone and Francophone all the way the Sinophone. Why has this been the case, considering the geographic closeness of countries in East Asia, and their intertwined histories over millennia? The most basic problem may be one of scholarly logistics: in order to work in a critical mode on more than one Asian culture, from its literary traditions to its media and society, one needs a deep understanding of not just an Asian language and the inscriptive language of English, but also at least one more Asian language. This is a skill set not structurally encouraged by the American academy until relatively recently.

I am privileged to be a part of the current wave of younger scholars working in a transnational, comparative mode on East Asia. However, as I prepared this manuscript, it became increasingly clear that modes of transcription differed greatly between Chinese and Korean studies; and even within each of these, preferred spellings for proper names varied due to generation, idiosyncrasy, and national policy. Transcription policies can indeed be political, but they are also a matter of disciplinary practice and personal choice.

My ultimate goal is to make this manuscript legible to both Chinese and Korean studies scholars, as well as the broader intellectual community. As a result, I have made an effort to provide as much information as possible regarding the names and references included in this dissertation. For Chinese names, I use the preferred English name of that individual instead of standard pinyin (ie, Eileen Chang and Chiang Kai-shek instead of Zhang Ailing and Jiang Jingguo). I use Lô-má-jī (Taiyu romanization) for individuals primarily active in Taiyu culture (such as É-á-châi instead of Aizaicai) and Wade-Giles for Taiwanese individuals in general, to mark their national norm. I also include the Chinese characters for each name and title the first time it appears in the manuscript. For Korean names, I use the standard McCune-Reischauer spelling, unless I am aware of an individual preference (such as Oh Young-sook instead of O Yŏng-suk). I also provide the hangŭl script version of the name for clarification, followed by the Sino-characters for that name in smaller print, the first time a name is used in each chapter. This policy is to provide some purchase for Chinese studies readers, who do not generally know the Korean script; on the other hand, due to the usage of Sino-characters for naming, many Korean scholars will have some handle on Chinese names. Finally, I use the order of names typical in Chinese and Korean language communities, with the surname first, followed by the personal name.

Beyond names, I provide Chinese or hangŭl with Sino-characters for key terms that I am presenting to indicate a degree of untranslatability in the original term, as well as my hopes that the original term will take on some autonomy within the English language, expanding the cultural lexicon. For references in Chinese and Korean, I provide the standard romanization, the

original (in Chinese characters or hangŭl), and a translation in brackets. This will, hopefully, facilitate the search for my citations amongst scholars within Chinese and Korean studies.

An extra note on images: most of the illustrations are in the Appendix, but I leave one image embedded at the top of the introduction because it is closely attached to the epigraph.

Acknowledgements

I thank my dissertation chair and adviser, Andrew F. Jones, for always believing in my work as a scholar and in me as a whole person. I have yet to discover the depths to which his mentorship has shaped my thinking, my writing, and my outlook in the world. This excavation will continue for the rest of my scholarly career, and then some, as I find new paths back to the wonder that I first experienced in his classroom. I am also indebted to Linda Williams for inducting me into the vast network of film and media studies, which has become a big part of my intellectual project; Weihong Bao, for helping to make those shadows on the cave wall both more material and more ethereal; and Kyeong-Hee Choi for shepherding my wildest impulses on the field of Korean studies. I would like to thank Jinsoo An for his great generosity and guidance in Korean film studies; Daniel O'Neill for his meticulous notes and for patiently nurturing my forays into Japanese colonial studies; Alan Tansman, who reliably asks the hardest questions; and Paula Varsano and Robert Ashmore for expanding my understanding of premodern Chinese studies. The remarkable community at UC Berkeley made me who I am as a scholar and a teacher, and I can only say that my mistakes are my own; I will pay the rest forward.

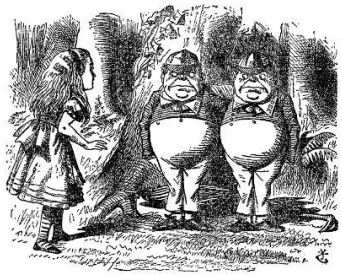
I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, who were present as a support network and as friendly sounding boards through the years. I learned so much over the years from Marjorie Burge, Brendan Morley, David Humphrey, Paul Roquet, Patrick Noonan, Xiao Liu, Laurence Coderre, Menghsin Horng, Brian Hurley, Marianne Tarcov, Shelby Oxenford, Lawrence Zi-qiao Yang, Julia Keblinska, Lisa Hoffman-Kuroda, Jon Pitt, Chelsea Ward, Daryl Maude, Linda Zhang, and others, whether we were technically studying the same thing or not. Additionally, colleagues in Film and Media such as Lisa Jacobson, Renee Pastel, Dolores McElroy, Jennifer Blaylock, Meg Alvarado Saggese, and Hannah Airress, Architecture's Aei-fen Chen, and compatriots in English Katie Fleishman and Jane Hu made my Berkeley experience so much richer with sisterhood and cinema. Thank you to Roy B. Chan and Andrew Leong from Comparative Literature for never being strangers, and for telling me what the other side looked like before I got here.

I would like to thank the scholars in Taiwan and Korea who helped me find a home away from Berkeley during my years of research abroad. In particular, I would like to extend special thanks Hsiao-yen Peng at Academia Sinica, Fan Ming-ju at National Cheng-chi University, Moonim Baek at Yonsei University, and Jeong-hoon Lee at Seoul National University for sponsoring my affiliation with their universities. I would like to thank the staff of the Taiwan Film Institute for their help during my time in Taiwan, and the staff at the Korean Film Archive for a warm welcome. I will be back. And finally, I thank the members of the Myŏngrang seminar group in Seoul, with whom I spent many happy hours, and taught me how to use entertainment magazines as archive.

Lastly, and in perpetuity, I would like to thank my family for making it possible for me to

achieve a long-cherished dream. To my spouse, Jaewoong Jeon, who has read every word and stood behind me at each turn: I am the luckiest woman to have not only a loving and understanding husband, but a brilliant Marxist with whom to walk through life together. To my parents, my grandmother, and my in-laws: my gratitude for your caring and your contribution to our family has no end. A first-time mother in academia has no better allies than this super team of grandparents. And without further ado, Kaia: thank you for being the best part of all of us and for bringing light to our lives; for enduring the time we spent apart so that I could work and for always welcoming me back with such fierce joy; and for reminding me while I wrote about children, child's play, and games, that these were not abstractions, but a real and central part of my everyday existence. My love for you cannot be expressed in words, so I wrote a thesis on comic culture, instead.

Introduction



'I know what you're thinking about,' said Tweedledum, 'but it isn't so, nohow.'

'Contrariwise,' continued Tweedledee, 'if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic.'

'I was thinking,' Alice said very politely, 'which is the best way out of this wood: it's getting so dark. Would you tell me, please?'

--Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1871[1]

The Logic of Twos

Any narrative of the Cold War must begin not with one world, but with two. The Free World led by the United States and the Communist world led by the Soviet Union both claimed to be the one and only. As time passed, it became clear that each could not exist without the other, because their concepts of global hegemony were predicated upon triumphing over the other's vision of globality. Within each of the two, then, there came to be two worlds: an idea of the world, and the idea of the world that shouldn't be.

A series of cultural dualities were born from this division, and became a part of everyday life—particularly in countries that were torn in two along these ideological lines. In East Asia, ideological differences that began in the 1920s and 30s reemerged after the end of total war, creating two big tears: China and Korea were both split in two, each with a pair of opposing state entities by 1949: the Republic of China versus the People's Republic of China on the one hand, and the Republic of Korea versus the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the other. For these cultures, division penetrated deeper and deeper into everyday life, creating a pronounced aesthetic sensibility of the second order emerged.

Reflexive with relation to the statement of primacy, this aesthetic was fundamentally ironic, as it was denied the possibility of overt articulation by the silencing hand of the state. In its most popular manifestations, the aesthetic expressed itself as comic culture. Seemingly trivial and frivolous, comic culture avoided direct confrontation with censorship apparatuses, but gave expression to the affective experience of marginalization and desire for transgression within the ideal world. To the assertion of systemic order, it brought disorder; to sense, nonsense. If this was the age of information, in which the modern individual was immersed in multiple forms of media, the sensibility brought forth obstructions to communication: not just noise, but redundancy. If the public spheres of decolonizing states were in a state of formation, themselves informed by powerful modern ideas of social organization first theorized elsewhere, the sensibility mined the same sources in service of counterpublics. In short, it was an exercise in finding the pleasures of play with negativity, often in its intertextual relation with matters of primary and urgent concern.

This dissertation examines the comic aesthetic, which arises out of the *bipolar* conditions of the Cold War, in Taiwan (the Republic of China) and South Korea (Republic of Korea), two *bilateral* cultures in East Asia for whom this aesthetic was central to the experience of the Cold

[1] Lewis Carroll, *Through The Looking Glass And What Alice Found There* (PDFreeBooks.org, 2010), http://archive.org/details/ThroughTheLookingGlassAndWhatAliceFoundThere.

War. The ROC and the ROK, like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, shared much in common: they were each one half of a nation divided after civil war, and for each the continuation of American power and patronage was an issue of existential importance.

What these two post-colonial Cold War governments shared was a vested interest in amplifying the reach of the Free World. If one of the American imperatives during the Cold War was to cultivate the "democratic personality" globally, and to communicate the desirability of the American lifestyle, the citizens of Taiwan and South Korea were certainly representative recipients of this message.[2] Yet without a process of translation and vernacularization, American values and the forms of American popular culture would have little purchase in these post-colonial cultures, where the majority had formed a relationship with modern mass media within the colonial modernity of the Japanese empire. At the same time that Taiwan and South Korea were amplifying the same ideological dogma and cultural forms such as American music, film genre, and literary style, their specific articulations of these ideas and forms are where they differentiated themselves. If one were Tweedledee, saying "but it isn't so, nohow," the other might be Tweedledum, articulating the same sentiment as: "if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't." In juxtaposing these articulations, this dissertation aims to elucidate the logic of nonsense: it is the gesture of excessive articulation, and not the substance of articulation, that points to the heart of the problem. However they divert and elaborate, Tweedledee and Tweedledum cannot tell Alice the way out of the wood. What they do offer the reader, however, is a comic figure of frustrated communication.

To understand the common ideological system that this culture was designed to disrupt, we need only consider a number of linguistic cognates shared by the popular lexicons of the two countries at the time: *fangong* in Chinese and *pangong* in Korean for "anti-Communism" 反共; *ziyou* and *chayu* for "freedom" 自由; *minzhu* and *minju* for "democracy" 民主；and *xinlizhan* and *simnijŏn* for "psychological warfare" 心理戰. Older concepts such as *jiandie* and *kanchŏp* for spy 間諜 were also in common circulation, and in the post-colonial policies promoting national language, *guoyu* and *kuk'ŏ* 國語 took over from the recently ended Japanese colonial practice of enforcing *kokugō*. In part this linguistic convergence carried on the legacy of language modernization in East Asia, in which a great number of neologisms indicating modern concepts passed from a Japanese translation of European ideas into Chinese and Korean.[3] The ideological concepts of the Cold War period traveled on these well-worn grooves of translational practice to create a new regional language under Pax Americana.

Yet under closer inspection, subtle differences are revealed which demonstrate the divergence in specific social structures and with it, divergences in the comic practices that rose in the negative spaces of power. These differences become clear when examining the problems of

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[2] The concept of "democratic personality" and the American effort to communicate its benefits described in Turner's book, although not specifically pertaining to East Asia. Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties*, Reprint edition (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[3] Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity ; China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999). 17-20. See also Appendix B, "Sino-Japanese-European Loanwords in Modern Chinese," 284-298.

postcolonial language and language policy at each site. For example, focusing only the booming mass media forms where comic culture appeared, the phonetic properties of written Korean enabled the use of transliterations for radio (*radi'o*) and eventually television (*t'elebijŏn*), which was commonly used in colonial era Taiwan and Korea; the cognate of the Japanese word *eiga* for film, *yonghwa* 映畫, also continued in usage. In Taiwan, however, radio became *shouyinji* 收音機, film *dianying* 電影, and television *dianshi* 電視 in accordance with modern standard Mandarin, which was enforced after 1945 despite the fact that most islanders could not speak or read it. The comic aesthetic in Taiwan, subsequently, was strongly expressed in the suppressed majority Hokkienese *taiyu* culture, which brings linguistic and cultural fragmentation to the fore. Meanwhile, comic culture in Korea began to play with idea that there was rather too much continuity in social power structures from the Japanese period. As Mary Douglas once argued in an anthropological study of the joke, "To the pleasure of the joke itself, whatever that may be, is added enjoyment of a hidden wit, the congruence of the joke structure with social structure."[4]

Within world culture, the Cold War comic cultures of Taiwan and South Korea represent an exponential extension of the logic of twos, two to the power of two: nested within the primacy of the United States, the primacy of state controlled discourse splits again with the emergence of a parallel comic realm of expression. This dissertation examines the crossroads where state power, which directed cultural policy and sought to maintain a narrow positionality within the Cold War American security umbrella, met its negative image in mass comic culture, which could be found in the booming post-war media industries of entertainment periodicals, drawn comics, radio, film, and television. Though both Taiwanese and South Korean governments followed an authoritarian, developmental model in attempting to direct and control these media, the nature of the Cold War comic aesthetic, emerging from mass culture, was to circumvent censorship by positing a system of inverted values. To borrow Bakhtin's concept of medieval folk cultures of the comic, the carnivalesque, the comic cultures of Cold War Taiwan and South Korea were a "second life, a second world."[5]

Bipolar and Bilateral

In midcentury East Asia, the "world" of comic culture emerged out of the modern networks of mass media. Though the state in both Taiwan and South Korea found increasingly sophisticated ways in which to centralize, control, and censor these channels of communication, comic culture also evolved over time, developing tactics of hiding transgressive affects in plain sight. This dissertation begins in the mid-1950s, a period when the ostensibly apolitical field of children's culture—and the related label of "cheerfulness"— provided cover for some of the most deep-set anxieties of a heavily militarized age of rapid development. At this time, South Korean mass culture was just recovering from the ravages of the Korean War (1950-1953); Taiwanese mass culture was just re-emerging after the erasure of colonial experience that came with retrocession to Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China in 1945 and the subsequent influx of

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[4] Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1975). 101.

[5] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). 11.

mainland emigres in 1949. What characterized this period of comic culture was a visual comic aesthetic of the body: what I call comic caricature.

I theorize the particular type of intermedial caricatural aesthetic that dominated the comic culture of late 1950s Taiwan and South Korea as "plasmatic iconicity": Iconic in the capacity of its abstract visual constitution to hold various imaginations of the self, and plasmatic in the freedom of form suggested in the pliability of those forms—of their expressive and excessive formal distortions. This type of caricature, unlike caricature with more specific referents, simplifies negative public affects—for example, the rising sense of inequality between the well-fed and the hungry in a developmental society—while allowing them to find comic release in the suggestion of excessive bodily difference. In creating such comic heroes, comic culture celebrated the heterogeneity of corporeal form in an era when the body of the modern citizen was subject to the disciplines of the labor market and the military.

Bipolar and Bilateral

The first chapter finds both drawn comics and film comedy as the biggest launching platforms for characters who also populated live performance spaces in stage comedy and broadcast media such as radio and television. In particular, the chapter introduces two comedian duos who made their biggest impression on popular culture in film, and who evoke the Laurel and Hardy archetype of contrasting body types: Brother Wang and Brother Liu 王哥柳哥from Taiwan, and Skinny and Fatty 홀쭉이와 뚱뚱이from Korea. (Figures 1 and 2)

As comedic pairings, they demonstrate both *bipolar* and *bilateral* duality: they were highly successful as comedic performers both because of the great visual and character contrast, which resulted in comedic incongruity; and because despite their differences they were inseparable, a utopian vision of homosocial bond and solidarity. They were designed to both collide and collude. Though inspired by the great global success of comedy formulas out of American film comedy, they cannily inflected the dominant anxieties of the societies in which they emerged. In the postcolonial East Asian region of the Free World, developmentalism was rapidly deepening differences between the privileged and the marginal, and the militarization of the male body idealized a standard physique that was fit unit for the war machine. The latter was a strong mark of the "hot war" raging on at the time thanks to the ongoing conflicts related to national division in both Taiwan and South Korea. The comedy duos challenged the mold of the modern physique by suggesting an entire spectrum of body types in two extreme examples. At the same time, they created a gesture of solidarity in uniting two opposed types in an unbreakable friendship, in which the affects that they experienced in common could be mirrored and augmented.

The proliferative properties of the comedy duos were clear: the Korean duo began as a radio comedy partnership, performed live stage comedy, and inspired a comic strip after film fame; the Taiwanese pair starred in a whole series of films, after which other actors stepped into the archetypal roles created and carried on the work. Significantly, all of these media were in the process of post-colonial reformation in the 1950s when these duos first reached stardom: material and human resources had to be recouped from colonial institutions, as well as the routes for distribution.

I argue that the importance of comic culture in such a moment, which was also compounded

by rapid urban reconstruction and industrialization funded by US aid, was to activate the innervative and utopian qualities of mass media that Walter Benjamin once found in early film comedy and animation. Though these new media had the potential to rally the masses to a fascist cause, Benjamin finds hope in the idea that the way they move their audiences—to laugh, to emote, to sense a new connection to their bodies through film experience—brings about a new collective consciousness that resists fascist manipulation. As Susan Bucks-Morss notes, "[Benjamin] is demanding of art a task far more difficult—that is, to undo the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to *restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity's self-preservation*, and to do this, not by avoiding the new technologies, but by *passing through them*" (original emphasis).[6]

This was a tall order for mass culture in any era, but it was doubly so for post-colonial cultures that existed on the margins of global culture, for whom even popular forms such as cinema could become powerfully normative technologies. In the 1960s, more conscious cultivation of the film industries by the state began to regulate films in two senses: first, through ideological content censorship; and second, through policies that encouraged an elite category of prestige film, along with its underbelly—the low-budget genre film. These genre films not only occupied a secondary position within Taiwanese and South Korean cinemas; they also inhabited a secondary space within world cinema, where the same genres inspired films with larger budgets and much greater international appeal. "Passing through" the genre rules presented by more powerful cinemas, including the American, Japanese, and Hong Kong film industries, Taiwanese and South Korean cinemas preserved themselves by embracing their secondary status. More than the primary genre films, which were equally if not more available to domestic audiences, these local genre films gloried in an aesthetic of irony, celebrating the artificiality of genre as form.

The second chapter of the dissertation explores the comic aesthetic of "genre game" in 1960s spy comedies of Taiwan and South Korea, which challenged both the anti-Communist directives of film censors and the rules of genre in world cinema. For these films and other comedies of the 1960s, genre was not a perfect performance of generic rules and tropes, but a game in which the biggest comic pay-offs came from the moments of greatest contradiction between one genre and its others. Each film might have a central genre, such as the spy film, but intercut it with incongruous codes from romance, sports, gangster, and of course, comedian comedy films. If comic caricature followed principles of plasmatic iconicity, in which iconic form could be stretched, distorted, and extended to an absurd degree, the genre game embraced the rigidity of iconic genre tropes, only to crack them open through direct collision with one another. Not only did these juxtapositions gesture toward the artificiality of all genre codes by breaking them, but they also destabilized the inherent ideologies of those genres.

I take the example of spy films, which swept through the globe after the arrival of the James Bond franchise, and were largely endorsed by film censors in East Asia thanks to their anti-Communist orientation. Following their disassemblage and absorption into local cinema practices, however, they were subject to elaborate and irreverent comic reassemblage in the spy

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[6] Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (1992): 3–41.

comedy. In this ludic adaptive process, the claustrophobic affect of anti-Communist paranoia is revealed as merely genre, merely form. The weak become powerful, and the feminine rises above the masculine in these films which bear a strong family resemblance to Camp.

I want to make a strong distinction here between the genre game, which I describe here, and genre hybridity, which is a related concept in genre studies. Whereas genre hybridity implies integration and assimilation, a process through which a particular genre as a whole might evolve and shift through time, the genre game does not necessarily *extend* the public's collective understanding of genres. Instead of becoming a bounded genre itself, the film comedy of the 1960s became a space for a game in the Wittgensteinian sense of the language game: something that becomes communicative not through stable definitions, but through the practice of the game itself. The spy comedy was not a spy film, and did not redefine what audiences thought a spy film should be; it juxtaposed the spy genre alongside other incongruous genres in order to communicate something about its form.

In the case of the films I study in this chapter, the central question offered by the spy comedy is refreshingly simple: who, or what, is a spy? As national division in both Chinese and Korean contexts grew out of civil war, the definition of self and other began mostly as a question of ideology—not race, ethnicity, or nationality. Spy paranoia here, more than in other contexts, is about the illegibility of the spy's identity. By casting the comedian as the suspected or aspiring spy, then, the spy comedy up-ends the criteria of identification offered by the spy film and asks the viewer to find irony in the very act of identifying spies. Under the guise of entertainment, this pattern of thought de-stablized the all too real government campaigns for citizen vigilance against spies which dominated public space in the form of banners, official broadcasts, and institutional mandates at the time in both cultures. In other words, the genre game was a mode of communication in which laughter in the film theater acted as both affective release and collective thought transgression: at least for the run time of the film, one could acknowledge ambivalence regarding the absolute nature of the Communist enemy.

Such cultural work could take place in the field of mass culture; but could these moments of collective pleasure constitute social change? Though popular icons of comic culture may have presented "what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized," as Richard Dyer writes with much insight into the affective position of entertainment,[7] they were increasingly inspirational for participants in literary discourse as the Cold War in East Asia reached a new stage in the mid-1960s. It was in this move of comic culture from mass media to more intellectual and literary spaces that solidified its impact in creating counterpublics. In citing figures from the "second world" of comic culture, writers in both Taiwan and South Korea not only articulated the underlying currents of political discontent and disconnect in popular entertainment; they also found an ingenious method of circumventing state censorship. Deflecting their energized social engagement into the "second world" lowered the stakes for scrutiny, while building on the existing cultural experiences of their reading (counter)publics to deepen a sense of collectivity.

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[7] Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," in *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 2002), 19–35.

Countercultures, Counterpublics

My use of the concept of "counterpublics" is engaged with Nancy Fraser's initial conception of the term, which was stated as a "critique of actually existing democracy"—as opposed to an idealized model of free, democratic participation.[8] Writing between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Union, Fraser's critique of Habermas' "public sphere" seems hyper aware of its emergence at the height of the Cold War[9]. She agrees, for the most part, that there was a qualitative difference between the public sphere of discourse that emerged in so-called democratic nations as opposed to nations where "the socialist vision became institutionalized in an authoritarian statist form."[10] However, writing from a feminist perspective, she finds Habermas' concept lacking in its consideration of the inequalities preserved in a unified vision of the public, in which gender and orientation, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity were "bracketed" and left unexamined. This, she argues, "usually worked to the advantage of dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of subordinates."[11] In other words, the idealized concept of the "public sphere"—and behind it the ideology of liberal democratic government as the most desirable, most equitable form of government—was problematic when it became a normalizing and exclusionary force.

This is a very important argument when it comes to discussing Taiwan and South Korea, which as "actually existing democracies" maintained a whole host of gender, economic, and in the case of Taiwan ethnic inequalities. What's more, the two developmentalist governments, which built their legitimacy on massive national infrastructural projects and rapid industrialization policies, had a terrible track record of silencing dissidents through incarceration and execution. They subsidized cultural works that supported their ideology while maintaining active censorship bureaus for periodicals, films, and comics. If they were bastions of "freedom," the spectrum of what could be expressed within that freedom presented a limited range of options. This became increasingly true with high profile arrests and indictments of cultural producers such as writer Chen Yingzhen (1968) and translator of the "Popeye" comic Po Yang 柏楊 (1968) in Taiwan; and director Lee Man-hee 이만희李萬熙 (1965) and writer Nam Chŏnghyŏn 남정현南廷賢 (1965) in South Korea. All were punished for either violating anti-Communist laws or criticizing their government, however indirectly.

These purposefully publicized punitive measures, clustered in the mid-1960s, remind us that the East Asian security system had many internal links during the Cold War, which resulted in a marked cultural synchronicity in these two similarly positioned small nations. 1965 was both the year of South Korean normalization of diplomatic relations with Japan, a move that bolstered East Asian unity under US guidance but set off passionate post-colonial protest at home; and the year that the US stopped direct financial aid to Taiwan, signaling the beginning of a turn towards

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[8] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

[9] Habermas first coined the term in 1962.

[10] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere." 56.

[11] Fraser. 64.

recognizing the People's Republic of China in 1971. It was the year that US deployments to Vietnam began, turning Taiwan into a popular site for military sexual tourism and Korean soldiers into a brutal subsidiary force in Southeast Asia. More than any time other than the Korean War, this was a hot spot in the East Asian Cold War, and any questioning of loyalty to the state or to the state's allegiance to US military force was verboten.

All broadcast media and mass forms of communication, from radio to newspapers and television, were organs of the state. If anything, both the Chiang Kai-shek and Park Chung-hee regimes were becoming more skilled at controlling their propaganda machines, perhaps taking a page from the American model. In addition to the tightening of film policy, discussed above, the near simultaneous arrival of censorship guidelines for cartoons in Taiwan (1967) and South Korea (1968), adding on to the publications and film laws which were continuously modified throughout the 1960s, indicates the heightened attention to the field of entertainment—in which comic culture flourished up until this point—at this stage of cultural policy.[12]

Where were anti-anti-Communism and anti-Americanism, two increasingly powerful sentiments among the public during this volatile time, to find outlet? I argue that unruly affects, denied expression in the more popular, more visual media that they traversed in the 1950s and early 1960s, began to coalesce in nonsense literature from the mid-1960s to the 1970s. It was in the more limited but more consciously discursive medium of literature that the comic aesthetic rose to the fore. The secondary nature of the comic aesthetic, and its tendency to playfully elaborate negativity, enabled it to escape censure at a time of heightened state scrutiny.

In the second half of this dissertation, I structure my argument using the central tenets information theory as a metaphor to distinguish the nonsense in Taiwanese and South Korean literature. This partly has to do with the nature of nonsense, which is to disrupt a system of "sense" such as communication with an alternate system, and partly to do with the contemporary global paradigms of thought. US thinkers of the 1950s, picking up the core theories of Claude Shannon and Norbert Wiener of the 1940s, believed that "communication" was a model for global unity within the Free World.[13] The 1960s saw information theory enter its high period, especially in its applications to semiotics.[14]

Though nonsense in Taiwan and South Korea certainly share many commonalities, and converge upon several points, the field of literature shows particular divergences in practice, thanks to the aforementioned difference in the politics pertaining to language and continuity. Hence, I conceive of a post-colonial nonsense in Taiwan modelled upon *noise*, in which the polylingual textures of the island's soundscape interfere in the major literature written in

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[12] Some have also made the argument that a strengthened cultural policy was a response to the rise of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in the People's Republic of China. This was, of course, more directly applicable to Taiwan, where Chiang Kai-shek's government was in competition with the PRC for the representation of Chinese culture in the world; but the regional rise of Communist mass culture was also a matter of concern for the Park government in South Korea. See, for example, Wanxiang Zheng, "Zhan hou Taiwan dian ying guan li ti xi zhi yan jiu (1950-1970) = A study of systems of control for post-war Taiwan cinema (1950-1970)," dissertation, (National Central University, 2007).

[13] Turner, *The Democratic Surround*. 253-257.

[14] See Winfried Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics* (Indiana University Press, 1995). 143.

Mandarin; and a division-era nonsense in South Korea modelled upon *redundancy*, in which the same messages repeated over and over with mechanical precision no longer make meaning. In information theory, noise distorts a transmission, creating lacunae in meaning, and redundancy may be used to compensate for this lack through the amplification of the message. However, if a transmission is overly redundant, it also communicates very little.

My reading of a group of texts in each of the two literary fields as "nonsense literature" may appear idiosyncratic, as these are works by writers typically conceived of as socially engaged practitioners of the literary art. In Taiwan, I focus on Wang Chen-ho 王禎和, Huang Chunming 黃春明, Chen Yingzhen 陳映真, and Qidengsheng 七等生, all of whom may be understood to belong to the *Xiangtu* 鄉土(nativist) movement of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. I discuss the importance of the new literary journal *Wenxue Jikan* 文學季刊 (1966-1970) and associated publications in forming the identity of this group. In South Korea, I focus on Yi Hoch'ŏl 이호철 李浩哲, Sŏ Kiwŏn 서기원徐基源, Nam Chŏnghyŏn, and Ch'oe Inhun 최인훈崔仁勳, all of whom are generally understood to have had a "satirical" phase in their careers in that same period. Though more diffused in publication platform than the Taiwanese writers, these Korean writers were also impacted by the formation of a new literary consciousness in journals such as *Changjak kwa pip'yŏng* 장작과 비평創造과 批評 (1966-) and *Munhak kwa chisŏng* 문학과 지성 文學과 知性 (1970-). These new waves of literary engagement with social inequality and global systems of power and dependency coincided with the demise of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which was exposed in 1967 to be supporting cultural activities worldwide using funds from the CIA.[15] The CCF and other US agencies such as the USIA were involved in cultivating literary scenes both Taiwan[16] and South Korea,[17] and the rise of new publications in the late 1960s indicated local consciousness of these networks.

Despite the earnestness of these local movements in their literary praxis, what concerns me is the centrality of a certain comic impulse to works of literature created within this context. That is, the texts I have chosen evoke a specifically comic response in the reader based on their presentation of a failure in communication. In Taiwanese literature, linguistic difference becomes a figure for differences in social status, and readers who speak marginalized languages are invited to join in on jokes that play to their specific competencies. References to entertainment figures to construct a web of social references familiar to them. In Korean literature, common media experiences such as mass entertainment and state broadcasts are recreated as infinite loops to reveal the absurdity of a mechanically reproduced, machinic modernity. In both cases, the

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[15] Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2001).

[16] Chang Li Hsuan 張俐璇, *Jiangou yu liubian: "xieshizhuyi" yu Taiwan xiaoshuo shengchan* 建構與流變：*"*寫實主義*"*與台灣小說生產 *[=Structure and flow: "realism" and the production of fiction in Taiwan]* (Xiuwei chuban, 2016). 261-263.

[17] Kwŏn Bodŭrae 권보드래, "*Sasanggye* wa Segye munhwa chayu hŏe ŭi 1950-1960 nyŏndae naengjŏn yideollogi ŭi segyejŏk yŏnsoe wa Hanguk 《사상계 》와 세계문화자유회의 1950-1960년대 냉전 이데올로기의 세계적 연쇠와 한국 [= The Sasanggye and the Congress for Cultural Freedom: The Global Sequence of the Cold War ideology and Korea in the 1950s-1960s]," *The Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 2 (June 2011): 246–88.

citation in the literary arena of precisely the mass cultural icons that I present in the first half of the dissertation is a strong indicator that the affect and experience evoked through comic culture of the last two decades was to inform the reading of the new literature.

In choosing the word "nonsense" to name this literary mode of the comic aesthetic, I am consciously alluding to the body of critical literature on the nonsense tradition in Euro-American literature and culture. Many of such works, such as Elizabeth Sewell's 1952 work *The Field of Nonsense* and Gilles Deleuze's 1969 *Logique du Sens*, privilege Lewis Carroll's oeuvre in its execution of a particular type of nonsense, in which the nonsensical world follows a system of rules more logical than the world of sense. As Sewell writes, "The game of Nonsense may, then, consist in the mind's employing its tendency towards order to engage its contrary tendency towards disorder, keeping the latter perpetually in play and so in check."[18] This vision of two opposed systems persists in Susan Stewart's 1978 formulation of nonsense, which broadens out the analysis to children's folklore, modernist literature, and the artistic movements of Dadaism and surrealism by redefining sense as "the domain of common sense." This definition gives nonsense a powerful new role in troubling hegemony. "Common sense, which throughout everyday life is assumed to be something natural, given, and universal and thereby characteristic of a pervasive world view, becomes, when juxtaposed through nonsense with alternative conceptions of order, an only partial reality, an ideology."[19]

Even if the cultural works referenced in this body of literature spans about a century, and perhaps more thanks to its interest in nursery rhymes and folklore, the critical literature itself is bookended within three decades that we may consider to be the height of the Cold War: the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. This scholarly concern with nonsense emerged at the same historical moment as the Taiwanese and South Korean culture analyzed in this dissertation. It was indeed critical in the global era of information, which seemed so overwhelmingly complete and inescapable, to contemplate how alterity might be figured. For the critics who embraced nonsense, this figuration took on a ludic character and often evoked comic affect through its emphasis on the juxtaposition of the absurdly incongruous.

Nonsense in my account, then, was an important category of discourse that gathered a counterpublic around its seemingly harmless articulation of alterity. To return again to Mary Douglas, comic culture, like the ritual of joking in her anthropological study, "represents a temporary suspension of the social structure, or rather it makes a *little disturbance* in which the particular structuring of society becomes less relevant than another. But the strength of its attack is entirely restricted by the consensus on which it depends for recognition." (emphasis added)[20] This consensus, when it comes to the readership of a work of literature or the audience for a film, is formed in the act of cultural consumption. It is amplified in the critical appreciation of the comic work, and in the various social interactions surrounding the work. While it does not directly organize protest or overt political action, remaining diminutive and amusing in its

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[18] Elizabeth Sewell, *The Field of Nonsense* (Victoria, TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2015).

[19] Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). 49-50.

[20] Douglas, *Implicit Meanings*. 107.

disruption, it cultivates a counterpublic as a community that recognizes and enjoys its comic positionality.

The Comparative and the Collective

This dissertation utilizes the comparison of bilateral cultures in Taiwan and South Korea to demonstrate how *difference* in society could be *differently articulated*, given a similar relationship to global Cold War hegemony. In doing so, I capitalize upon the particular capabilities of comic culture to interject figures of heterogeneity into a new social order, using many of the same channels of communication that were being put the task of creating a unified, normalized Free World. The ramifications of this lineage of heterogeneity not only extended into the democracy movements of the 1980s, but they are also legible in the different understandings of history in contemporary Taiwan and South Korea.

In fact, inasmuch as the Cold War coincided with the era of post-coloniality in East Asia, the shifts in public affect and memory during this time helped to create a divergent memory of the colonial experience itself. One of the most remarked upon differences between contemporary Taiwan and South Korea is the warmer memory towards Japanese colonialism in Taiwan, and the continued historical outrage towards Japan in South Korea. The assemblage of comic texts gathered in this dissertation offer a particular vision of this divergence. For example, knowledge of Japanese was a mark of post-colonial status in Taiwan, which was dominated by a social group, "mainlanders," that had not experienced Japanese colonialism on the island. Nonsense literature, written by and for generations that were marked by Japanese education, used a mix of Japanese alongside Hokkienese *Taiyu* to create multilingual puns within a minor literature. On the other hand, South Korean authors of the same period could count on a post-colonial experience in all of their readership, and their nonsense literature often used anachronism to engage with the fear that the colonial order was being resuscitated under the flag of nationalism by the Park Chung-hee regime.[21]

Nevertheless, a good deal of commonalities remain in both the material conditions of mass media and the ideology of state policy pertaining to these modes of communication. The developmental model of the Taiwan and South Korean governments was applied not only to large-scale infrastructural projects such as highways and industrial projects such as shipyards, but also to the growth and control of the periodical, the radio broadcast, the film industry, and beginning roughly in the mid-1960s, television. Through this development of media, Taiwanese and South Korean publics were increasingly connected to the global systems of communication led and promulgated by the United States. They joined a larger global collective through these circuits, and became subjects of its ideology.

The "little disturbances" that occurred in the field of comic culture in Taiwan and South Korea, then, join other tremors in the web emanating from other parts of the world. As small nations of secondary importance even within East Asia—Japan and the Chinese mainland being major concerns for global security and economics—they were spaces where the logic of twos could flourish and energize public affect. As fleeting and as weak as they were, they were a part

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[21] Park, like many other elites in South Korea, was a beneficiary of social and monetary capital gained during the colonial period; he had been a military officer in the Japanese army.

of a slow work of accumulation that would one day, as Alice asked, point the way out of the wood. Or perhaps, contrariwise, they merely showed her what she and others like her knew all along: that the primary would not exist without the secondary, nor the secondary without the primary. Without the enormous pressures of anti-Communism, developmentalism, and good citizenship in the Free World, comic communication would not have flourished to the degree that it did. The joy of release from expectation and fixed form, the fun of being in on a secret joke, the celebration of nonsense and redundancy—all of these pleasures came out of inhabiting the everyday experience of Cold War East Asia.

The logic of twos in this dissertation begins with a move that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick may have called "paranoid": it exposes the function of comic culture in gathering transgressive public affects. Yet the ultimate objective of this project is to portray comic culture as a "reparative" space in which negative affect may transform into new forms of community and collective understanding. The reparative impulse of Camp, she writes, "is additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self."[22]

Like Camp in Sedgwick's account, the comic culture of Taiwan and South Korea offered resources to marginal communities. Their marginality was not so much determined by gender orientation, race, or ethnicity, but by their lack of representation, first under the hegemony of the authoritarian state, and beyond that under the global hegemony of American ideologies. Whether these were linguistic communities in the case of Taiwan, those with lingering familial ties to the North in the case of South Korea, or simply those who did not comfortably fit the ideological categories promulgated by the state in both countries, comic culture offered an engagement with like-minded collectivities based on shared experiences. It was not a mode of communication structured to facilitate mobilization or political loyalty; nevertheless, it helped to foster counterpublics through the affective movement of laughter. To find a new post-colonial, sovereign national self was not, after all, a matter of state declaration, but a gradual process of accretion: of laughing again, and again and again, until the comic impulse becomes a culture.

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[22] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). 149.

Chapter 1.
Caricature

Introduction: Plasmatic Iconicity

The art of caricature puts a fine point on the perceptive and semiotic edge of the comic aesthetic. Although often it mixes text and image, its simplest form can be nothing more than a line drawing. It is up to the eye, primed as it is in seeking human likeness, to find familiar presence in the ink patterns on newsprint. As Marshall McLuhan noted, "A cartoon is 'low definition'"—and hence, a "cool medium" in his analysis—because it presents a low density of visual information and demands "participation" on the part of the viewer to comprehend the image.[23] For a drawn figure to become comic, that participation is of a specific type; it must evoke not just comprehension, but a comic response. In other words, the form of the drawn figure itself contains elements of both recognition and something affective *in excess of* recognition.

Caricature's "coolness," defined by low density and its flip side, participation, makes it a double-ediged form of mass communication during the "Cold" War: it is propagative, but easily exceeds the bounds of dogmatic ideology. In Taiwan and South Korea, where authoritarian governments fought both a military and a cultural war against their Communist counterparts in mainland China and North Korea, caricature became a part of popular culture soon after national division. It remained contested, however, as to who had the right to send a signal through this channel—and who might be the ideal recipient.

For a short period of time following the Kuomintang retreat to Taiwan in 1949, and during the Korean War from 1950-53, both Taiwanese and South Korean cartoonists were mobilized for the war effort. They published mainly anti-Communist propaganda comics in government-owned platforms such as state organ newspapers and their supplements. In the subsequent flowering of private entertainment industries, however, the state message met with increasing interference as cartooning ballooned into a truly popular art form. The mid-1950s to the mid-1960s became a golden decade for what I will call *comic caricature*, which productively engaged with the public's conception of a national self while assiduously avoiding anything that smacked of politics. Overflowing its original medium of drawn cartoons printed serially in periodicals, the caricatural aesthetic soon crossed over into the then nascent post-colonial film industries, where comic actors embodied the qualities of caricature. Some of the most memorable stars of this comedy boom were subsequently remediated back into drawn caricature as they reached the height of their stardom. Cinema, a medium on the rise in the public consciousness, turned out to be an art form in which the elements of caricature already prominent in stage and radio comedy could merge productively with the visual qualities of the drawn cartoon.

The intermedial phenomenon of comic caricature generated strong affective engagement in this specific historical context by presenting the *unruly body* in three senses: the undisciplined postcolonial body politic, not quite a unified modern citizenry after liberation from Japanese colonization and national division; the emasculated body that is seen as unfit to serve as a

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[23] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964. 22.

mobilized unit of the new nation; and finally, the malnourished body that is a synecdoche for the poverty of the postwar period—and its compensatory opposite, the bulging body of the rich, indulgent overeater.[24] While the Taiwanese and South Korean states both demanded homogenization and performative patriotism, the caricatural aesthetic revealed the human body's resistance to standardization, and the uneven gains of development across society. The national self, if there was such a thing, was multiple.

Comic caricature flourishes through heterogeneity. Instead of erasing the public sense of growing differences in society, it amplifies differences through comic effect. It does so through two opposite but equally necessary visual qualities: what I will call here iconicity and plasmaticity. If iconicity is the quality of integrity, the conservation of an identity through abstraction, plasmaticity is an expressive freedom of form, the whimsical exaggeration of the central iconic idea that makes caricature comic. Where the former encourages repetition and endless reproduction of the bare image-based concept, the latter elaborates, stretches, and generates endless variation. They return, in visual terms, to the duality of the cool medium and its excesses, which demand engagement.

The "iconic," of course, recalls Charles Peirce's formulation of the sign as icon, index and symbol, but what I mean here is more specific to the medium of drawn cartoons, and may actually be counterintuitive when not understood within that context. Scott McCloud, a comic artist who theorized his art in the cartoon volume *Understanding Comics*, opposes the value "iconic" to "photorealistic" to indicate the spectrum of pictorial icons, in the sense that the former vanishes into the extremes of abstractness while the latter values detail in the vein of photography and perspectival realism. He creates a diagram of the human face that, when expanded, moves from an actual photograph at one end to the written word "FACE" at the other.[25]

McCloud's particular contention is that the abstract image of the face, not much more than two dots for eyes, a curved line for the mouth, and a circle to indicate the boundaries of the visage, is in some ways the closest approximation for a reader's *image of the self*. In comics, he claims, the more bare and simplified a drawn character, the more its effect as a stand-in for the

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[24] I had come to the phrase "unruly body" in 2016, as I was struggling to describe the works of comic caricature I had found in the archive from 1950s East Asia. Since then, there has been another powerful usage of the term by Roxane Gay, who edited a series of online personal essays on the body and its transgressions. The project comes as an epilogue to her memoir on her own body and struggle with fatness, *Hunger*. The personal dimension of her writing, and its application to complex body issues of contemporary society, run parallel to the comic unruliness of bodies that I explore. In general, the comic unruly body puts self-contemplation at an emotional distance, and is more roundabout in its consideration of body anxieties. It offers a strategy of thinking in the abstract about the social positions symbolized in the fat or thin body, while eliding the interiority of individuals who inhabit those bodies, and this is where Gay's work makes its intervention. Roxane Gay, "The Body Is Unruly," *Unruly Bodies* (blog), accessed June 22, 2018, https://medium.com/s/unrulybodies/the-body-is-unruly-15fa352904cf.

[25] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994). This diagram bears a striking resemblance to that in W. J. T. Mitchell's *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* of several years earlier, which takes great pains to deal with the difficulty of defining the icon. Less concerned with the cartoon character or caricature (and far more skeptical about claims regarding "realism"), Mitchell moves from a schematic "picture" of a human figure in a brimmed hat to a stick figure "pictogram," the "ideogram" indicating male sex, and finally the "phonetic sign" written as "MAN" in block letters. See W. J. T Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). 21-22.

self becomes amplified.[26] Hence the primary matrix is not between image and text, but between self and environment, the latter sometimes (but not always) including human characters who are not the protagonist. This both corroborates and challenges Peirce's understanding of the icon, which "has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness."[27] On the one hand, the caricatural figure may indeed have no connection to its object; on the other, it does have a connection, and always the same connection. The arrows all point inward, foreclosing the need for an indexical function. In the particular case when the figure in question is a stand-in for the cartoonist him or herself and also acts as a protagonist leading readers through a comic space, the sense of "self" is doubled and suggests identification. As we will see later, this is a very common type of character creation in 1950s comics of Taiwan and South Korea.

When it comes to secondary characters and environmental objects, which are not as easily folded into the self, the more stripped down they are, the more generalizable the indexical function. There is no need to indicate, as in Peirce's example, which house may be on fire, and in which town,[28] if it is a cartoon house that could be *any* house within the reader's experience. Similarly, an empty cartoon frame indicates "anywhere"—at the same time that it offers the abstraction of being an internal "nowhere," a mental space prior to the perception of and immersion in phenomena. This is the first clue as to why the *iconic* caricature as a whole may tend to proliferate: it speaks, in its simplicity, to the universal Interpretant. The more it proliferates, the more the medium of its transmission becomes immaterial, because each instance of the icon is a reference to all other instances. It resembles or bears likeness to itself.

Yet the appeal of the iconic character lies not just within its amenability to reification, but in its mutability despite the confines of form. Sergei Eisenstein, with characteristic idiosyncrasy and verve, calls this "plasmaticness" or the "plasma appeal" in his thoughts on the animations of Disney.[29] Specifically, he points to the ability of caricatural figures to stretch out limbs as if made of elastic, to expand and contract, or even to swell and fall like a flame. For Eisenstein, the plasmatic is "attractive" because it gives the viewer the fantasy of an impossible transformation: "a rejection of once-and-forever allotted form, freedom from ossification, the ability to dynamically assume any form."[30] It performs the idea that a bounded entity may somehow extend its protoplasm *expressively* without losing its integrity—or, its iconicity. This sense of freedom—especially within "a country and social order with such a mercilessly standardized and

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[26] McCloud's interest in "intensity" seems to be a very thinly veiled reference to McLuhan, to whose book *Understanding Media* his own *Understanding Comics* title pays homage. It would appear that McCloud agrees with the assessment of comics as a "cool" medium.

[27] Charles S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (Courier Corporation, 2012). 114.

[28] Peirce. 109.

[29] Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein : On Disney*, ed. Jay Leyda, trans. Alan Y Upchurch (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1986).

[30] Eisenstein. 21.

mechanically measured existence," he adds—is a type of visual excess that challenges the definition of the icon as resemblance or likeness. It is also, I would argue, indispensable if the caricature is to become comic: without a plasmatic bending of form, to the point that the viewer comprehends this distortion, a visual representation retains the usual sense of the icon. It functions as a sign only inasmuch as it suggests resemblance, and nothing more. It remains inert.

Thus the inertia of the comic aesthetic of caricature only moves, only becomes sensible, when it is imbued with *plasmatic iconicity*. This not only pertains to the drawn figure, but also translates to certain types of film comedy, in which funny sounds, gestures, strategies of cutting, and gags at once simplify the action and aspect of a human performer and amplify that figure beyond the confines of the "mercilessly standardized" modern human body. Returning to the origins of the word "slapstick," for example, where circus clown A slaps circus clown B with a trick stick that is designed to make a shockingly loud noise, there is certainly a "disruptive impact," as Donald Crafton writes in his well-known theory of the gag; but there is also an amplification of clown A's strength and clown B's pain. [31] It helps, of course, if clown A performs the strike with greater extension and show of force than needed, and clown B rolls head over heels in response—perhaps even sticking a landing after a series of athletic tumbles. In motion, as well as in paired audio effect, they convey the iconic idea of a violent act with great plasmatic freedom. When transferred to a time-based and audio-visual medium, caricature may involve the amplification of the human in several sense vectors at once without losing the central iconic presence of that body. This study's focus on the remediations between the drawn cartoon and film comedy reveals the emergence of a remarkably similar comic conceptual mechanism across media.

The close intermedial links between drawn cartoons and film were not particular to mid-century East Asia. In fact, as Blair Davis notes in his study of interactions between the two media in an American and British context, the adaptation of movie to comic and comic to movie began with early silent film, when the realization of characters such as Happy Hooligan in live-action form was presented as a cinematic attraction. Likewise, silent and early sound film comedians such as Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and later, Laurel and Hardy, were featured in long-lasting serial comics, which broadened their fan base.[32] Davis foregrounds the "industrial connections and adaptive processes between comics and film/television," and while his study is helpful for thinking through the constitution of nascent entertainment industries in post-colonial Taiwan and South Korea, this chapter will focus on the affective and aesthetic qualities that enabled intermedial proliferation in the mid-century East Asian context.

First, beyond the quality of plasmatic iconicity, it is important to think about the comic qualifier. By limiting its interest to *comic* caricature, this chapter deliberately focuses on caricature which is active within a *comic cultural field*, and does not engage wholly with the general art of caricature, which is not always comical. Comic caricature, as I define it here, occupies a trivial and apolitical field of entertainment: in the 1950s, it was associated in both

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[31] Donald Crafton, "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy," in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, ed. Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1995), 106–19.

[32] Blair Davis, *Movie Comics: Page to Screen/Screen to Page* (Rutgers University Press, 2017), 2-6.

Taiwan and South Korea with children's culture, and the ludic play of form marked it as separate from the realm of serious discourse. These associations were crucial in an era immediately following traumatic incidents of mass violence, such as the February 28 Incident in Taiwan (1947), and the suppression of the Yeosu-Suncheon (1948) and Jeju Uprisings in South Korea (1947-54), in which the state's heavy hand fell upon dissidents in an effort to consolidate power. Anti-Communism, directed towards Cold War foes, had a distinctly militaristic tone in both Taiwan and South Korea throughout the 1950s, and in order to reclaim the medium for entertainment, comic work had to distinguish itself from the political mode of caricature, which foregrounded state ideology. Instead of singular and powerful icons of resistance to the growing authoritarian visions of the state, comic caricature offered iconic ephemera: comic characters that *refer only to themselves* and appear repeatedly in various media, but only as cheerful distraction, too open and too abstract to have specific political referents. The fantastic element of plasmaticism, which further divorced comic caricature from reference to current events, injected a transgressive quality that passed as harmless in its association with child-like play, and the child's fluid relationship to categorical expectations. I argue that the affective quality of cheerfulness and the aesthetic quality of the child-like became primary determinants of the comic category in 1950s caricature.

Second, despite laying claim to an innocuous comic cultural field, comic caricature became hugely popular in print, film, and theatrical media precisely because it was a robust mode of communication. Its ephemerality did not, in fact, weaken its ability to foster engagement with the discontents of the state's military and developmental biopolitics. Again, the function of comic caricature as a popular mode of critique and critical consciousness comes back to plasmatic iconicity. The low visual density of this comic caricature, paired with its powerful suggestion of self-identification and the subtle transgressions of the plasmatic against regimes of physical form, made it an ideal vessel for counter-public formation. The comic works discussed in this chapter have a dual tendency to deviate from ideological norms and to suggest an iconic identification with that deviance. The unruly body—postcolonial, emasculated, and emaciated/obese—is both marginalized by normative regimes and, as Eisenstein suggests, empowered by its formal capacity to stretch their boundaries.

Most caricature from Honoré Daumier's illustrations and American minstrelsy of the 19th century, all the way back to the stock roles of Greek theater, and all the way forward to political cartoons and GIFs on contemporary social media, carries with it some element of plasmatic iconicity. What this chapter puts forth is a comparative study of comic culture in Taiwan and South Korea that might be *primarily characterized* by their plasmatic iconicity, reflecting on their near synchronic emergence as symptomatic of their shared position within Cold War cultural flows. My inquiry, therefore, begins with a medium history of the early-to-mid-1950s boom in drawn caricature, which staked out a "cheerful" and "child-like" cultural field, establishing the basic formal tropes of comic caricature. I will then move on to examine the interplay between print and film, through which the unruly body emerged as iconic across mass culture. As I suggest in the Introduction, the unruliness of the body was perhaps best exemplified in the comedy duo, which made the extremes of deviance from iconic form by pairing two contrasting bodies. Finally, I will show plasmatic iconicity at work in a close comparative reading of two films that feature the most popular comedy duos of the late 1950s. These realized

comic narratives, which emerge out of an existing public engagement with comic caricature, cheerfully challenge regimes of militarization and labor through the unruly bodies of their protagonists, and present the ongoing potential of comic cultural works to generate and sustain critical positionality.

Stay Cheerful, Stay Child-like, Stay Free

The term "comic," when used in English to refer to drawn sequential art also known as the print cartoon, can be easily translated into Taiwanese parlance and Korean thanks to the cognate Sino-character word *manhua*/*manhwa* 漫畫, also known in Japanese as *manga*. The cognate status of the word distinguishes a Taiwanese comic lineage from that of modern China, and even the Republic of China government on Taiwan, which officially referred to the same medium as *lianhuanhua* 連環畫 ("sequential art") into the 1960s. It also stands as a linguistic trace for the fact that caricature in both Taiwan and Korea emerged in modern mass periodicals within what has been referred to as "colonial modernity." That is, they were a medium that appeared during, and hence were structured and conditioned by, the period of Japanese colonization. Many caricaturists working in the 1950s were trained in the 1930 and 40s, with some notable talent receiving training in imperial art schools. Similarly, the panorama of entertainment media, from print to radio, film, and even theater culture, first bloomed during the florescence of empire.

The comic nature of caricature in the 1950s, however, is much more difficult to translate—not the least because of the incommensurability of cultural archives in Taiwan and South Korea. The cheerful and the child-like, which I have so far presented as a unified set of characteristics pertaining to both cultures, are in fact a pair of qualities that I have culled from the two countries individually, and subsequently found to be related concepts. Though cheerfulness is a term that comes more organically out of cultural discourse in Korea, and the tight association of the comic with children's culture is more pronounced in Taiwan, the work of comparison reveals the child-like components of the cheerful, and the cheerful qualities of children's comics. They exert a magnetic pull towards one another, creating a field that reveals a network of relations between post-coloniality, public affects of the Cold War, and the boom in caricature of the mid-1950s.

"Cheerfulness" comes from the term *myŏngrang* 명랑明朗 in Korean, as a desired affective tone for entertainment was first popularized during the colonial period.[33] It was considered useful by authorities as a kind of "grin and bear it" mantra in the face of exploitation and wartime deprivation.[34] If we entertain the idea of "cheerfulness" as a Japanese imperialist version of "happiness," as theorized by Sara Ahmed, it was not only something that the colonial subject had to consent to, but something that demanded the performance of positive feeling in public and private.[35]

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[33] See, for example, So Raesŏp 소래섭, *Pul'on han Kyŏngsŏng ŭn myŏngrang hara* 불온한 경성은 명랑하라 *[=Be cheerful, subversive Kyŏngsŏng (Seoul)]* (P'aju-si, South Korea: Ungjin chisik hausŭ, 2011).

[34] I am not aware of this being articulated with the cognate term in colonial Taiwan, which also faced a great deal of wartime material scarcity and general hardship. The Sino-characters form a word often used to refer to "brightness" in the sense of a personality characteristic in modern Chinese.

[35] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Duke University Press Books, 2010).

In the post-colonial era, however, and especially as the country began to recover from the Korean War, *myŏngrang* became a term with much broader application. It was appended liberally as a prefix to a range of media that did not seem to have any unifying factor, other than the fact that they are meant to evoke laughter: *myŏngrang* film was synonymous with film comedy, *myŏngrang* fiction referred to light social satire, the *myŏngrang* magazine was an entertainment periodical, and *myŏngrang manhwa* was a catch-all term for any drawn cartoon that was not, ironically, a *k'aerik'ŏchŏ* (transliteration of "caricature"). "Caricature" was used to designate the drawing of figures that referred to specific individuals of renown, from writers and artists to politicians, whereas the *myŏngrang manhwa* tended to be more iconic. They featured simply drawn characters invented by cartoonists, inviting open identification.

Myŏngrang cultural producers, including actor-comedians, writers, and cartoonists, were pictured together in entertainment periodicals (such as the appropriately titled *Myŏngrang*, and the equally popular *Arirang* magazine). Pictorial spreads, or *hwabo,* as seen in Figure 1, suggested that they were members of a tight-knit social circle within the wider circle of celebrities. In this particular example, the *myŏngrang* cultural producers are also assigned speech bubbles, as if to suggest they are personally embedded in a cartoon escapade; they have become embodiments of a comic caricatural aesthetic. Though the two writers, Cho Hŭnp'a 조흔파趙欣波and Chŏng Pisŏk 정비석鄭飛石, are not known for engaging in a comic exploration of unruly bodies of non-normative size in their fiction, their physical bodies here has been presented within the photographic frame as plasmatic entities: they double the fat-thin comedy duo formula that was made iconic by Yang Hun 양훈楊勳and Yang Sŏk-chŏn 양석천楊錫天, pictured below. The two Yangs, comedians of stage, radio, and film, had made a name for themselves as Dry Bones and Fatty 홀쭉이와 뚱뚱이, and by the mid-1950s had achieved the status of comic icon. Together, they suggested the range from emaciation to obesity, despite the fact that neither, standing alone, was remarkably extreme in physique. Their plasmatic iconicity depended on their joint presence in frame, and the same trick of framing could be applied to Cho and Chŏng. The most "standard" body in this comic array is the cartoonist Kim Yonghwan 김용환金龍煥, who like his comic avatar K'ochubu is an outside observer of a comic situation.

The framing of all five individuals as belonging to a separate comic register of reality, despite the documentarian tendencies of the photographic medium, was no mistake. *Myŏngrang* was not a positive personality or performative affect that permeated every aspect of everyday life; instead, it was a separate cultural sphere that played a specific function. One could seek out *myŏngrang* for entertainment, for distraction, or for a temporary release from social tension. *Myŏngrang* cartoons were extremely important when it came to the latter, since they offered an additional visual release from the work of reading; they side-stepped an engagement with text using iconic imagery. The more pages dedicated to serial cartoons in an entertainment magazine, the more pronounced its *myŏngrang* quality. Therefore it stood to reason that children's periodicals and dedicated *manhwa* periodicals, which were even more saturated with caricatural content, would be amongst the most *myŏngrang* of all. These *manhwa* periodicals became a marked feature of print culture in the mid-1950s, with 25 comics-only presses saturating the field

by 1955.[36]

Though the most popular *myŏngrang* comic artists such as Kim Yong-hwan, pictured above, would also publish prolifically in children's periodicals, the association of apolitical, cheerful comics with the child reader—or, the child-*like*—was much stronger in Taiwan. There were certainly periodicals that were targeted at children, but the more important determinant of comic culture was the *representation* of child-like qualities: naivete, a fluidity of social categories, playfulness, and suggestibility, especially when it came to taking fantastic statements at face value. Cartoons primarily consumed by adults and film comedy in Taiwan embraced the child-like, forming a sphere of cheerfulness that was present but less articulated than in Korea.

The separation of cultural spheres in Taiwan, however, was structured upon a linguistic and ethnic split in the cultural field after 1949, when the Republic of China government retreated to the island of Taiwan. The arrival of an estimated two million mainland émigrés to an island of about six million instantly generated the dual categories of the post-colonial islander and uprooted mainlander, with various regional and linguistic fractures within each of those groups.[37] The islanders who lived through Japanese colonialism mainly spoke variations of Hokkien, with a sizeable Hakka contingent; and those who followed Chiang Kai-shek's flight from the mainland mostly Mandarin, peppered with regional accents from all over China. The spoken languages also pointed to a difference in literacy: a large percentage post-colonials had undergone at least basic education and could read written Japanese, but were not necessarily comfortable reading and writing in modern Chinese, which cleaves closer to Mandarin than southern topolects.[38] Those who followed Chiang were not necessarily all literate, but those who were had learned modern Chinese. Soon after the Republic of China retook the island at the close of the Pacific War, Mandarin education policies and mandates forbidding all Japanese language publications began to go into action. In an era of newly established linguistic hierarchies, the visual language of caricature became an important mode of communication—not just for children in the process of becoming literate, but also for adults with varying levels of literacy.

Child-like caricature, however, was not just a matter of condescending to adults who were not trained in the new state language of modern Chinese; for islander cartoonists, it was often a matter of survival. They had very little space in which to use their talents, since state-owned newspapers almost exclusively hired mainland émigré artists to edit cartoon content. Newspaper comics pages were dominated by artists who followed the state-sanctioned anti-

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[36] Ch'oe Yŏl 최열, *Han'guk manhwa ŭi yŏksa* 한국만화의 역사 *[= The history of Korean cartoons]* (Soŭl-si: Yŏrhwadang, 1995). 105.

[37] The estimate of two million civilians and soldiers I use here follows Thomas B. Gold, "Retrocession and Authoritairan KMT Rule (1945-1986)," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Taiwan*, ed. Gunter Schubert (Routledge, 2016), 36–50.

[38] For a more detailed overview of these linguistic issues, see Ann Heylen, "The Legacy of Literacy Practices in Colonial Taiwan. Japanese–Taiwanese– Chinese: Language Interaction and Identity Formation," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 26, no. 6 (November 15, 2005): 496–511.

Communist ideology, and perhaps even held a personal stake in its propagation.[39] The autobiographical narrative of Liu hsing-ching劉興欽, a popular islander cartoonist who emerged in the mid-1950s, demonstrates the structural discrimination that this created along ethnic lines.

As a Hakka islander, Liu reports experiencing great difficulty in breaking into the mostly mainlander circle of cartoonists who dominated the comics pages in newspapers such as the *Xinshengbao*, a state organ that regularly printed color comics beginning in the early 1950s.[40] His career picked up unexpectedly when, as a bored young elementary art teacher, his self-published comic—ironically, a pedagogical comic teaching students why they shouldn't read too many comics called "Finding Paradise" (尋仙記)—was picked up by comics publishers in 1954, a resounding success that led to various serializations in all the most popular children's magazines, which experiencing a boom at the time.[41]

School Friends led the charge of children's magazines in 1953, and was soon followed by a cavalcade of children's magazines. Five years later in 1958, there were over 20 dedicated comics magazines, including *Model Youth* 模範少年, which transitioned from a general children's periodical to focus on what was already its most popular feature: child-like caricature. *Model Youth's* main challenger in the market was the Da Hua publishing company, which spearheaded a whole slew of comics magazines with *Manhua King* 漫畫大王; it was later rebranded as the *Childrens' Manhua Weekly* .[42] As evidenced by this slippage between the comics magazine and the children's magazine, the association between child-like culture and *manhua* culture remained strong throughout the 1950s. These same periodicals also functioned as a backdoor for the consumption of Japanese *manga*, often scrubbed of their Japanese origins, translated, and serialized under false names.[43]

Being child-like, in Liu's case and in many others, provided protective insulation within a tense political environment, just as the *myŏngrang* cultural sphere did. In order to tease out precisely how the cheerful and the child-like actually created a certain type of freedom for cultural producers within Cold War censorship regimes, however, I will now turn to a

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[39] Chen Zhongwei 陳仲偉, *Taiwan manhua wen hua shi: Cong wen hua shi de jiaodu kan Taiwan man hua de xing shuai [A cultural history of Taiwan comics: Considering the rise and fall of Taiwan comics from the perspective of cultural history]* (Taibei Shi: Duwei Guang gao, 2014), 48-49.

[40] The *Xinshengbao* was taken over from colonial elites after the 228 incident of 1947, and soon later was to enter into the ownership of the Government Information Office 新聞處. Though the paper mainly acted as a mouthpiece for the state, and Chiang Kaishek was regularly pictured as a strong martial hero in the comic pages, especially on national holidays, it retained more space for various kinds of comic experimentation.

[41] Beginning with *School Friends* 學友and *Model Youth* 模範少年, he also became a published author in *Elementary Student* 小學生, *The Chengsheng Child* 正聲兒童, *New Friends* 新朋友, and more by the end of the decade. Liu Hsing-ching 劉興欽 and Zhang Mengrui 張夢瑞, *Chi dianzi de ren: Liu Xingqin zhuan* 吃點子的人：劉興欽傳 *[=The man who fed himself on ideas: a biography of Liu Xingqin]* (Taibei Shi: Lian jing, 2005). 121-122. See also Chen Changhua 陳長華, *Tongxin • Chuangyi • Liu Xingqin* 童心 • 創意 • 劉興欽 *[=Childish heart, creativity: Liu Hsing-ching]* (Taizhong shi: Taiwan mei shu guan, 2012). 47-51.

[42] Chen, *Taiwan manhua wenhua shi,* 49.

[43] Chen, 50.

consideration of the great shift that occurred between caricature of the early "liberation" period, which was after 1945 and before national division for the two Chinas and two Koreas, and the mid-1950s, when caricature was obliged to take on a more clearly comic character, in order to survive in tandem with state-controlled varieties of the same art form. This shift was due, in large part, to the dominant presence of the state in the cartooning industry during the regional maelstrom of the Korean War—and not just in Korea. While the war effort directly mobilized caricaturists in the peninsula to draw content for propagandistic material such as the newspaper *Cartoon Victory* 만화승리漫畫勝利, posters, and even leaflets dropped by UN planes, Taiwanese newspapers of the early 1950s also used caricature to shape civilian interpretation of regional political events.[44]

In the July 6th, 1950 issue of the *Zhongyang Ribao* 中央日報 comics supplement, for example, a half-sheet spread titled "After the Outbreak of the Korean War" depicts North and South Korea as neighbors in a burning apartment building, with representatives of Free World Nations rushing to the rescue with buckets of water.[45] (Figure 2) A detailed facial rendering alerts readers to the presence Chiang Kai-shek, taking the lead at the water pump, while his body remains abstract. Truman and Stalin receive the same treatment, though they take up relatively less important roles in the rescue mission, indicating the centrality of the Republic of China—and its enemy, represented by a cowering Mao Zedong—to the thesis of the cartoon. This example of state caricature, in contrast with comic caricature, reveals its contradictory desires: to communicate a political argument, for which the recognition of specific political actors is essential, while retaining an iconically neutral form.

A cheerful, child-like aesthetic of comic caricature, on the other hand, is more thoroughly iconic, and much more plasmatic in its rendering of its protagonists. Even the pre-Korean war instances of non-state caricature that I will introduce exhibit a stronger element of plasmatic iconicity. This gives us a hint of the limitations of the state style of caricature, which could not afford to leave certain spaces blank for fear of ambiguity. I will proceed with two sequences that bracket this state style, demonstrating the shift from pre-Korean War to post-Korean War comic caricature in Taiwan and South Korea, respectively.

First, let us consider the caricature of Taiwanese artist Yeh Hongjia 葉宏甲, printed in the *Hsin Hsin Monthly* 新新月刊magazine in 1946 (Figure 3). *Hsin Hsin* was a mixed Japanese and Chinese language publication produced by and for Taiwanese islanders who had experienced colonialism, and indeed Yeh's trademark represents the Hokkien pronunciation of his surname with the English letters "IAP." The caption here reads, "The robbers duly tied up (break in the case)." If we begin with the iconic idea of cops and robbers, signified by the police uniforms and the handcuffed prisoners, we also immediately register the fact that the robbers' bodies are plasmatically concave, with unstable lines outlining weakened limbs and waists pinched to

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[44] On the mobilization of cartoonists for "psychological warfare," or propaganda in the early 1950s, see: Paek Jung Sook 백정숙, "Chŏnjaeng sogŭi manhwa, manhwa sogŭi naengjŏn 전쟁 속의 만화, 만화 속의 냉전 [= Cartoons in War, Cold War in Comics: Korean War Cartoon & Comics and Psychological Warfare]," *Critical Review of History* 역사비평, no. 118 (February 2017): 344–80.

[45] *Zhongyang Ribao Manhua Ban Zhou Kan*. July 6, 1950. According to South Korea, the Korean War officially began on June 25, 1950.

almost nothing. The policemen, in maximal contrast, are rounded and solid, drawn in bold strokes to straddle thick spaces; to bring a weighty closure to the chain that binds the criminals. The irony of the cartoon, of course, is that the cops appear more culpable than the robbers: their plumpness in a time of hunger implies their immense privilege. In effect, they are complicit in robbing the robbers of necessary nourishment, and criminalizing their poverty. The case, or "an," is both broken both in the sense that it is solved, and in the sense that exceptions—our starving robbers—break the rule. In these early days after retrocession, rampant inflation and social inequalities between islanders and a governing power dominated by mainlanders had already created the conflict that would define the next half-century. Comic caricature here is openly critical in its presentation of unruly bodies, visual contrast offered as an iconic rendering of oppositions.

Because of this kind of rhetorical boldness, *Hsin Hsin* and many other nascent experiments in islander print culture folded after the February 28th incident of 1947, a mass uprising that subsequently led to violent government suppression, and about 20,000 deaths. Subsequently, the tide turned against Kuomintang forces on the Chinese mainland, and émigrés flowed in, largely between 1948 and 1950. Amongst those who came were the Liang brothers, Yu-ming 梁又銘and Chung-ming梁中銘, caricaturists who edited the *Zhongyang Ribao* cartoon supplement, and cartoonist Niu Ko 牛哥, who was reportedly a former Kuomintang spy. It was the establishment of such Kuomintang-sanctioned actors on major newspaper mastheads that barred artists such as Yeh from publishing, and in fact, Yeh himself left the industry for nine years. [46]

By the time he returned, a new space for caricature had been opened up in the field of children's publications by younger artists such as Liu Hsing-ching. Carrying on the theme of poverty and malnourishment, the A San Ko阿三哥comic drawn by Liu hsing-ching featured a hero constantly on the brink of poverty and starvation.[47] In a typical narrative, he begins hungry and jobless; in this early example, he literally "has no capital."[48] (Figure 4) Soon, however, he comes up with a hare-brained scheme: here, he has created a makeshift bank out of an ox-drawn vendor cart. (Figure5) Attracted by the festive appearance of A San Ko Bank, and seduced by the idea of earning interest, local children give him all their allowance money. Since A San Ko has no starting capital, however, the bank is basically a Ponzi scheme, and the whole thing collapses when all the children demand their money back at once. Seemingly harmless, this cartoon actually reflects the scarcity of capital in developing Taiwan, which led to the popularity of risky

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[46] John A Lent, *Asian Comics* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 104-106. I also refer to Hong Delin 洪德麟, *Taiwan manhua 40 nian chutan* 台灣漫畫*40*年初探 *[= A brief review of Taiwanese comics]* (Taibei Shi: Shi bao wen hua chu ban qi ye gu fen you xian gong si, 1994).

[47] I will use the standard romanization here for A San Ko, since it is unclear whether the name should be pronounced in Mandarin, Taiyu, or Hakka.

[48] Liu Hsing-ching 劉興欽, *A San Ge man hua dian cang ji* 阿三哥漫畫典藏集*[= A San Ko cartoon collection]*, 6 vols. (Taibei Shi: Shang dian wen hua, 2002).

borrowing from loan clubs and high interest moneylenders. [49] The cartoon strip asks its readers to laugh at A San Ko's irresponsibility, and the children's naiveté, but in actuality, the majority of Taiwanese were just as vulnerable in their struggle to become part of a national developmental scheme.

Though in this episode, A San Ko acted alone, he was in fact almost always a part of a duo. As the pint-sized run on the bank swells into a frenzy and A San Ko is forced to fake his death by hiding behind his own funerary plaque, his partner comes searching for him: Ta Shen P'o大嬸婆, a relative of unknown provenance. The two characters were among Liu's earliest experiments, borne out of a sudden need to create a great number of comic strips at once in 1954 after the advent of his overnight fame. Ta Shen P'o, based on his own Hakka mother, was introduced first in *New Friends*, closely followed by A San Ko, based on himself, in *Model Youth*; both followed the archetype of the country rustic as fish-out-of-water in the big city. Ta Shen P'o emerged as a rotund, outspoken middle-aged woman with an enormous appetite and a thunderous voice, wearing a loud Hakka print shirt. With a strong sense of justice, she wasn't afraid to speak her mind on any topic, but as a rural woman was often out of step with the pace of the times. Hers was a voice of folk wisdom and homespun ethics, difficult to tame under regimes of law, order, and militarism. By contrast, A San Ko was an itinerate drifter, a skinny young man with duck bill-shaped lips and a beanie who was perpetually trying his hand at various odd jobs, a scheming zany spinning incessantly to fill his perpetually empty stomach.[50] The iconic fat-skinny pairing was used here, as it was with the cops and robbers and with the Korean Dry Bones and Fatty, to emphasize a comedy of duality—the unruly body conceptualized in extremes. As different as they were, however, and despite their firm entrenchment in adulthood, these comic duos were marked by their unfailing camaraderie, a child-like cheerfulness that transcended difference.

When Ta Shen P'o finds A San Ko's funerary plaque at the river bank, she immediately begins wailing in grief. "How could you die!" she exclaims. "When you die, you can't eat or read cartoons anymore!" Her emoting is suddenly interrupted by jabs of hunger, which she promptly satisfies by eating from a nearby sack of food offerings to A San Ko. Having eaten, she tries to weep; but finding her stomach insufficiently stuffed, and her strength insufficiently fortified, she partakes again. This time, she is ready to project at full power, and when she opens her mouth, whole pastries and fruit fly out along with a loud "Wah!" (Figure 6) Iconic motion lines indicate the vector and volume of her expectoration. On the other side of the mound, where A San Ko is hiding, the food falls like rocks the sky, pelting him with sustenance. The surprise attack is so relentless that he is driven out, and the two are subsequently reunited.

Ta Shen P'o's all-consuming passion in this sequence is both child-like and plasmatic: like a stretching sack who has never learned adult restraint, she gorges on food, until her gut reaches

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[49] For more on the loan club, see Jones Howard L., "Chinese Mutual Savings and Loan Clubs," *The Journal of Business* 40, no. 3 (1967): 336–38.

[50] In using the word "zany" to address a man who lives a marginal life of precarity in industrializing Taiwan, I am deliberately referencing the concept of "the zany" proposed by Sianne Ngai, in which Lucille Ball is the prime example of "incessant doing" made necessary by late capitalist society. Sianne Ngai, "The Zany Science" in *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 175-232.

the end of its elasticity and snaps all of the food back out of her gullet. For A San Ko, however, food comes not as nourishment, but as airstrike; none of it sticks to his bones. It is their asymmetry that reunites them across the divide of death, driving him back into the land of the living where they will again be hungry, but never alone. Together they are innocent of matters such as finance, city traffic, and sexuality. They are child-like, and they are sometimes anguished, but they always reunite with cheer.

By contrast, Korean comic caricature was less concerned with the innocence of children's culture, or the characterization of adult characters as child-like, though it was no less interested in duality. It was always driven by more grotesque figures of division, and redeemed such figures as *myŏngrang* through the playful treatment of conceptual categories. In the work of Kim Yonghwan before and after national division offers an illustrative example of one such figure: the cut. Bodies, like nations, could be cut in two. When they are sufficiently plasmatic, however, they become child-like and affectively buoyant in their impunity to harm.

I present two cuts from Korean comic caricature, both by the same artist: the aforementioned Kim Yonghwan. The first cut: a prescient one-panel cartoon from early 1947, before formal national division (Figure 7). Here we see two gentlemen dancing with the top and bottom halves of the same woman, dressed in an iconic Korean *hanbok*. The woman herself is a blank space, other than this ethnic marker, but the men are marked by a greater amount of detail as Truman and Stalin, "leading" a divided Korea into opposite corners of the ideological dance floor. At this stage in his career, Kim was less of a comic caricaturist, and far more direct in his attack on current events. However, the surrealism of a woman literally sliced in two does hint at his underlying comic sensibility: the image plays upon the reader's conceptual desire for the wholeness of a human figure to suggest the inviolability of the Korean peninsula. In order to perceive the woman, to understand her clothing as *hanbok* and the ethnic marker of her Koreanness, the reader must conceptually connect the top and bottom halves of her body, reading them *together*. The plasmaticism of the drawing, its elasticity, comes from the sense of one iconic body having been cut into two fully functioning, dancing halves—and the reader's impulse to snap them back together.

After the publication of this cartoon, titled "38th parallel blues," Kim Yonghwan was subsequently commissioned by the South Korean state to draw for publications such as *A Cartoon Victory*. The second cut I offer here, however, comes after the cease-fire at the dawn of a new era of cartoon publishing: the "April Fool's Relay" comic from April 1955, published in the most popular entertainment magazine of the late 50s, *Arirang*. This particular "relay" had six artists who would take turns telling a "nonsense" story. The premise is that a man wakes up one day to find that he has switched both gender roles and sexual characteristics with his wife. (Figure 8) His form becomes iconic: a man in all aspects except for his plasmatically pronounced breasts. His adventures escalate as he becomes a harried Korean housewife and is accidentally pimped to an American GI in a camp town serving an military base. The sex industry surrounding these bases, and the status of the Korean women thus employed, had already become a symbol of American imperialism at the time.

The protagonist, ever resourceful in this moment of peril, does a handstand in order to escape the embrace of the American soldier, who mistakes him for a decapitated woman murdered by a demon in the dark. (Figure 9) Again we have a woman cut in two: but here only

virtually decapitated as a means of avoiding rape. If this began as a silly comic premise, it has now become a cross-gender performance of escape from American domination through Korean ingenuity. This is also a remarkable figuration of anti-American sentiment at a time when American power was present both as military and cultural power; the USIS and the Asia Foundation were highly active during this period in South Korea as attempted to foster good will towards the Free World through literary and cultural production.[51]

But these are not the panels by Kim Yonghwan. His contribution comes at the end of this series, when he draws his trademark character K'ojubu into the collective project. The last panel features only K'ojubu, who reassures readers this was merely an April Fool's lie (*kŏtjin-mal*), and that the story was now at an end. This final frame is what makes a somewhat macabre cartoon a *myŏngrang* comic: it contains social anxiety in the realm of fantasy. (Figure 10) An observer of modernization and all its absurdities, K'ochubu here and in other strips always seems to resolve the conflict around him with nothing more but the resilience of his pleasantly plump body. He is an in-between figure, middle-aged and middle class, at once a stand-in for the cartoonist and the reader. The gender inversion of the protagonist, a plasmatic transformation of form, marks a socio-political transgression that is neutralized by K'ochubu's presence and made safe for consumption.

K'ochubu was not alone in his function as a *myŏngrang* Everyman. Many of the most popular comics featured an Everyman avatar for their cartoonist: characters like K'ojubu, Yi Sang-ho's (1927-) Kalbi-ssi, Shin Dong-hŏn's (1927-) Chu T'ae-baek and even Kim Sŏng-hwan's (1932-) Kopa'u—a more openly critical newspaper comic strip—were simple enough and versatile enough to be dropped in to any given narrative. K'ochubu alone appeared in a English language newspaper right after liberation; in Three Kingdoms period in China as Yu Bi (Liu Bei 劉備); the streets of Seoul, and even a photographic spread in which he was collaged into the scene with the young actress Kang Kyŏng'ae for a mountain hike "date." They navigated real and imagined spaces, ultimately serving an iconic function, and bending the rules for where comic selves belonged.

As long as the work stayed within a cheerful frame, and insulated the reader from traumas in the mode of children's culture, it was free to explore such issues as American occupation, gender crisis, poverty, and the unruly body. This was true of both South Korean and Taiwanese comic caricature, which both came of age in the mid-1950s—even if they were purportedly drawn for children. What began to happen in the late 1950s, as the local film industries began to take off, was an adaptation of these qualities into cinematic practice, opening a new set of possibilities for the unruly body.

For more on such actions, see Kim Mi-ran 김미란, "International PEN Korea Center & International Cultural Exchange in the Cultural Cold War Era 문화 냉전기 한국 펜과 국제문화 교류," *Sanghur Hakbo: The Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, no. 41 (2014): 329–70. See also: Kwŏn Bodŭrae 권보드래, "*Sasanggye* wa Segye munhwa chayu hŏe ŭi 1950-1960 nyŏndae naengjŏn yideollogi ŭi segyejŏk yŏnsoe wa Hanguk 《사상계》와 세계문화자유회의 1950-1960년대 냉전 이데올로기의 세계적 연쇠와 한국 [= The *Sasanggye* and the Congress for Cultural Freedom: The Global Sequence of the Cold War ideology and Korea in the 1950s-1960s]," *The Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 2 (June 2011): 246–88.

[51] *Tonga Ilbo*, January 23, 1958. Kopau observes two ordinary Seoul laborers, bearing buckets, prostrati

Unruly Bodies and the Plasmatic Suggestion of Cinema

In 1959, a film adaptation of the iconic cartoon character Kopa'u hit movie screens in South Korea. (Figure 11) On the one hand, it was capitalizing on the recent notoriety of both the cartoonist and his cartoon avatar as the instigating figure in a high profile criminal lawsuit. Afterwards known as the "Kyŏngmudae Incident," the offense was the publication of a four-frame cartoon strip in January of 1958, which was perceived to be critical of the Syngman Rhee government, and Kim Sŏng-hwan was sent to the criminal court on charges of "falsifying the news."[52] His publisher, the *Tonga Ilbo* newspaper, fought the ruling for a misdemeanor, arguing that as a cartoonist, he was emphatically *not* as a journalist for the newspaper, and hence could not be understood as writing "the news."[53] Remarkably, the swelling of popular support for the star cartoonist would keep Kim in the *Tonga Ilbo* until 1980.

On the other hand, the film sought to reclaim the figure of Kopa'u from the cultural field of "current events comics" 시사만화時事漫畫 and bring it back into the *myŏngrang* fold. This was not a stretch of the imagination, as Kim Sŏnghwan had also been quite successful as a *myŏngrang manhwa* artist up until the controversy. His works included "Topsy-turvy Kid and Longlegs" 꺼꾸리와 장다리, which featured two school-aged pranksters, one short and one tall, for the children's magazine *School Yard* 학원學園; and Kosari-kun (literally, Fern Kid), a hapless white-collar worker who can never get the better of his boss, for *Arirang* magazine. Kim Sŏnghwan was an unusual voice of critique who used the liminal space between the field of entertainment and that of serious discourse to opine on current events.

We may or may not ever have the chance to examine whether or not the film adaptation was successful at achieving a *myŏngrang* tonality, as the film is currently lost. However, this potential for film adaptation to pick up on the critical qualities of drawn caricature, and to use the cheerful, child-like associations of comic icons to enact its own critique using cinematic means was also explored in Taiwanese cinema. The year 1959 also saw the release of *A San Ko Runs for Office*, a film in which A San Ko wins the lottery, only to waste it all running for local office to impress the object of his affection, Lē-eng 麗英. An ingenious send-up of local businessmen who flatter the nouveau riche and the absurdity of the local electoral process, the film returns A San Ko to his usual penniless state by the end of the narrative, with no one but his dog for company.

The live action A San Ko is recognizable as the scheming but naïve character of cartoon fame. In order to suggest the iconicity of the comic strip, the actor Chien Ho-yin 簡和引 performs larger-than-life facial expressions and physical reactions to shock and pain, which recall the visual expressivity of silent film clowning. By contrast, other characters perform at a less heightened register of physical comedy, suggesting a more "realistic" acting style. Ultimately, Chien's cinematic face cannot achieve the iconic simplicity of Liu hsing-ching's

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[52] *Tonga Ilbo*, January 23, 1958. Kopau observes two ordinary Seoul laborers, bearing buckets, prostrating themselves before a uniformed man as he walks by carrying a similar bucket. Puzzled, Kopau asks who the man could be, to demand such respect, at which point he learns that the man is merely carrying human waste from the Kyŏngmudae, or the living quarters of the presidential Blue House. Even Rhee's feces, in other words, commands groveling in the street. The cartoon strip dramatizes the difference in status between government officials and the regular populace.

[53] *Donga Ilbo*, January 31, 1958.

doodle; but his caricatural performance seems designed to keep the film from becoming too dangerously serious and political. After all, Taiwan was supposed to be "Free China," a bastion of democracy against Communism, and a critique of the democratic process could not be delivered with a straight face. Moving in the opposite direction from *Kopa'u*, the film was attempting to take the cheerful, child-like icon of A San Ko and give him rhetorical bite. It counted on the pleasant and trivial associations of the A San Ko character to protect the film auteur as social critic.

It is important to note here that the A San Ko and Ta Shen P'o comic strips were emblematic of an islander experience, and this was perhaps what inspired Lin Tuan-chiu 林摶秋, the owner of the Yu Feng 玉峰 film studio, to produce and direct the live action film. The promotional trailer presents the film as a prestige film, claiming that the film would demonstrate the "constant improvement" of the Taiwanese Hokkien cinema that had sprung up since 1956, or Taiyupian台語片 . Lin, who was trained at Toho Studios in Japan, was passionate about pushing Taiyupian to "catch up" to Japanese cinema, and pursued this project by both establishing a film studio and personally taking up the director's helm.[54] Unspoken in the trailer was the fact that "Taiyupian" was defined in reaction to the dominance of "Guoyupian," the state-subsidized and highly controlled Mandarin film, and both Taiyupian and Guoyupian produced in Taiwan were pushed to the margins by the more polished Hong Kong-produced Mandarin films flooding Taiwanese movie theaters. Like islander comic caricature in children's magazines, Taiyupian became a part of a field of entertainment that was consumed by specific social groups in Taiwan, and as such helped to create a body of in-group cultural knowledge.

Within this cultural landscape, *A San Ko Runs for Office* was both a project of representation for the Hokkien language community and an attempt to use the language of film comedy towards the more weighty, discursive ends of satire. However, Lin considered it a failure on both counts: the completed film was heavily cut by censors, and did not reach his ideal audience.[55] The attempt to wrap social commentary in a cheerful, child-like package did not save the film from leaving an unacceptable amount of footage on the censor's cutting room floor.

Bracketing Lin's thwarted intentions, however, I would like to argue that *A San Ko Runs for Office* failed as a remediation of A San Ko because it *did not fit the criteria of comic caricature.* Certainly it attempted to be iconic; but the film does not appear to understand the plasmatic dimension. This was a perennial problem in live action adaptations of drawn caricature in film. Blair Davis, for example, argues that the struggle to decide between "make up and masks" may have doomed the failed Paramount studios production of a live-action Popeye movie in 1933.[56] Simply performing at a heightened level of exaggeration, or fashioning a physical likeness to cartoon characters, was never enough to approach the plasmatic freedom of the drawn figure.

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[54] Lin Kuei-chang 林奎章, "Xunzhao taiyupian de leixing yu zuozhe : cong chanye dao wenben 尋找台語片的類型與作者:從產業到文本 [= Searching for auteur and genre in Taiwanese dialect films : an analysis of the industry and text]" (2008). 111-112.

[55] Lin, 117. Lin would later turn to "colorless" and "transparent" melodramas based on domestic tragedies and noir thrillers in his directing work.

[56] Davis, *Movie Comics,* 27-29.

After all, the body of the actor on film is not fluid like an ink line on paper.

What was missing from *A San Ko Runs for Office*, and what we might guess was missing from *Kopa'u* and the unnamed Popeye project, was the power of suggestion. In fact, a far more productive formula for suggesting plasmaticity, and of centering the transgressions of unruly bodies, was already well-developed and extremely popular in the same late 1950s moment: the fat-skinny comedy duo. While it was impossible in the 1950s to stretch an average person into fat and thin shapes—a feat perhaps easier now with computer graphics—the comedy duo on screen was a constant figure of plasmatic range: they represented extreme distortions of a normative silhouette in opposite directions. As with the cops and robbers in the earlier cartoon, they dramatize difference, suggesting deviation from the ideal norm of a fit, standard human body. Paired on screen, on stage, and even in caricatural remediations in print media, these comedy partners became iconic not as individuals or avatars, but as duos locked in an irreducible duality.

Could *A San Ko Runs for Office* have been successful, if it had co-starred Ta Shen P'o? It is tempting to speculate while considering the wildly popular status of the Brother Wang and Brother Liu 王哥柳哥films, which burst onto the *taiyupian* scene in 1959 and would continue popping up into the late 1960s. They appeared roughly at the same time as Dry Bones and Fatty in South Korea, who had come into prominence as film stars between 1958 and 1959. I have written elsewhere about the interaction between the Wang and Liu films and the "two fools" film comedies made by Hong Kong studios.[57] What is remarkable about the synchronicity of the fat-skinny duo in South Korea and Taiwan, however, is the extent to which their plasmatic iconicity was used to foreground the straining of their unruly physiques against Cold War regimes of the body.

The power of plasmatic suggestion was particularly important when considering Dry Bones and Fatty. By most standards, neither was excessively skinny or fat. Placed together, however, and arranged strategically within the frames of a film or photograph, Dry Bones begins to take up less space, and Fatty more. This effect is even clearer when the two are remediated as drawn caricatures, as they often were in entertainment magazines. By contrast, the actors behind Brother Wang and Brother Liu show a physical contrast at first glance, not only in girth, but also in height. (Figure 12) Plasmaticity had to be more consciously *suggested* in the case of the Korean pair, and indeed, they had had a lot of practice doing so as long time partners in radio and stage performance, where they reinforced their plasmaticity verbally: their act was based on creatively insulting each other's bodies.

To clarify the verbal nature of their comic caricature, and to demonstrate the ease with which their cinematic image could be remediated to the print medium, I will turn to a *Myŏngrang* magazine article of 1958, which was written on the occasion of their travel to Hong Kong for a transnationally co-produced film comedy, "The Affection of the World" 천지유정天地有情. Presented as a series of vignettes in dialogue form, "Dry Bones and Fatty's Hong Kong Travelogue" opens with Yang Sŏk-chŏn complaining that their flight may crash due to Yang Hun's ponderous weight. To this, Yang Hun responds that he has been working hard on his diet,

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[57] Evelyn Shih, "Two Fools: Comedy as Dialectical Tension in Mid-Century Chinese Cinemas," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, May 30, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2018.1475967.

and is feeling faint from the self-privation. Later, he jabs back at Yang Sŏk-chŏn for being a herbivore and a frail "bony beauty" before the ladies. Despite the barbs flying back anf forth, they are soon greeted by the Hong Kong press as the "Korean Laurel and Hardy," and enjoy their moment together in the spotlight as cultural ambassadors.

The article juxtaposes their dialogue with rather staid photographs—in one image, they take a group picture under a portrait of Chiang Kai-shek—and caricatural illustrations that plasmatically enhance their iconic forms, fat and thin. At the climax of the adventure, they are left to their own devices without local currency, and wander the streets of Hong Kong famished. This inspires both an illustration and a song, whose lyrics are reproduced in the text as "the New Empty Belly March." (Figure 13) As a comic caricature, the illustration communicates many iconic ideas: of Hong Kong through the rickshaw in the background, of song emanating from their mouths through musical notes, and—more importantly, of hunger, through the plasmatically wilting figure of the lanky Dry Bones, and the plasmatically bulging belly of Fatty. If the concave bending of Dry Bones' frame conveys the exhaustion of hunger, the convex distension of Fatty's gut conveys the gluttonous desire. Together, they express the range of affects associated with the iconic idea of hunger, displaced from the context of post-Korean War reconstruction to a foreign and exotic land.

The resonance of the Dry Bones and Fatty routine with the aesthetics of drawn caricature was so strong that in 1959, *Arirang* magazine launched a "Dry Bones and Fatty" comic strip. (Figure 14) This remediation, like the caricature of Chiang Kai-shek in Figure 2, preserves the recognition value of the human face, here linked to the stardom of the two Yangs. However, the photographed faces are frozen in caricatural emotion, rigid like Chien Ho-yin's heightened performance in *A San Ko Runs for Office*; they are faces that gesture towards iconic function. The plasmaticism of the drawn bodies, like the fully rendered illustrations accompanying the "New Empty Belly March," pull the image towards an expressive and excessive freedom of form that is suggested by the idea of the comedy duo itself.

Like plasmatic iconicity and comic caricature in their most general applications, the fat-skinny comedy duo was not restricted to a mid-cenutry East Asian context. In fact, as shown above in the "Hong Kong Travelogue," it was common to describe Dry Bones and Fatty, as well as Brother Wang and Brother Liu, as latter-day versions of the early sound era Hollywood comedians Laurel and Hardy. Yet even considering the possibility that the audiences were well-acquainted with that archetype through imported and stockpiled Hollywood film, why was this configuration from the 1930s the most popular as embodied by local comedians in 1950s East Asia?[58]

The fat-skinny duo, whether suggested through visual or verbal comic means, was a caricatural configuration that crystallized urgent anxieties of the unruly body in the Cold War zeitgeist. First, with relation to ideals of masculinity and military culture after national division, the caricature of the non-normative body bespoke an anxiety surrounding national fitness and modern standardization. At this historical juncture, the use-value of the male body for the nation,

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[58] There have been some suggestions that Hollywood films of the 1930s, which were banned by Japanese colonial authorities during the war against the United States, had a resurgence in late 1940s South Korea as objects of nostalgic interest. Hwajin Lee, "Liberator or Intimate Enemy: On South Korean Cultural Circles' Ambivalence toward Hollywood," *The Review of Korean Studies* 18, no. 1 (June 2015): 41–76.

whether it be for labor or national security, was tied to its degree of conformity to set measurements. Secondly, the disparity between the hungry and the over-fed had a strong hold upon the public imagination in an era of uneven development and growing disparity between the rich and the poor. Differences in attitudes towards food return again and again as a structuring device for the comedy duo films: they create divisions and conflicts that must be resolved so that the two comedians can come together again and again.[59]

Ultimately, the Brother Wang and Liu series and the Dry Bones and Fatty series present an attractive and almost utopian vision of unity through close male friendship. It is tempting to read into this idealized homosociality a metaphorical desire for national unification, of North and South Korea in the peninsula, and of Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. However, what a comparison of these films show is actually a concern for healing class differences in the case of the Korean pair, and inter-ethnic differences in the case of Taiwan. In other words, the pairing of these unruly bodies not only enhanced the plasmaticity of their visual aspect, but it also offered models of social heterogeneity. The two bodies on screen became dialectical, and in doing so fashioned their visuality into discursive motion.

Like to Like

In the late 1950s, as comic caricature reached its peak in both Taiwanese and South Korean popular culture, the film comedy duo emerged as a winning formula. Dry Bones and Fatty were billed together once in 1956's *Twin Hyperbolae of Youth* 청춘쌍곡선, though only Fatty played a lead role. Beginning in 1958, however, they appeared in a series of films as top-billed co-stars.[60] The successful collaboration in *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Travel Taiwan* 王哥柳哥遊台灣 between Li Kuan-chang 李冠章 and É-á-châi 矮仔財(Chung Fu-t'sai 鐘福財), who played the fat Brother Wang and thin Brother Liu, respectively, yielded a series of highly popular films that spanned a decade; the series was handled by various directors, and eventually starred different actors, as well.[61]

In the comparative close reading to follow, I have chosen a more non-canonical film to represent the series: 1959's *Two Fools Barge into the Song and Dance Troupe* 兩傻大鬧歌舞團,

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[59] Here, I take up Clayton's suggestion that the homosocial duo of Laurel and Hardy can be productively read as a "comedy of remarriage," a term coined by Stanley Cavell to describe a particular subgenre of romantic comedies. Despite their differences, the two members of the couple never cease to come back together. Alex Clayton, *The Body in Hollywood Slapstick* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2007).

[60] These include the aforementioned *Affection of the World* in Hong Kong; as two country bumpkins arriving penniless in the city, only to accidentally help capture a spy ring in *The Unknown Future* 사람 팔자 알 수 없다 (1958); as army recruits in *Dry Bones and Fatty Go to Nonsan Training Base* 홀쭉이와 뚱뚱이 논산 훈련소에 가다 (1959); and even as the classic brothers Hongbu and Nolbu in a film of the same name 홍부놀부 (1959).

[61] From *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Have a Happy New Year* 王哥柳哥好過年 (1961) and *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Pass Five Difficult Traps* 王哥柳哥過五關(1962) all the way to 1967's *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* 王哥柳哥007 and the 1969 *Liar A-Chi*, also titled *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Travel the Underworld Court* 王哥柳哥遊地府. The Central Motion Picture Company's 中影 *Sweet Home* 宜家宜室 (1961) borrowed Brother Wang and Brother Liu for the purposes of a state-sanctioned cinematic narrative.

which featured É-á-châi as Brother Liu and Shao Kuan-erh 邵關二 as Brother Wang. Though it did not feature the iconic pairing with the more plasmatically suggestive curves of Li Kuan-chang, it is more naturally in conversation with *Dry Bones and Fatty go to Nonsan Training Base*, the only restored Dry Bones and Fatty film as of this writing. The Taiwanese film effectively ends where the Korean film begins: with the recruitment of the title characters into the army. Ne'er-do-well country bumpkins at the beginning of the film, Wang and Liu migrate to the city and end up stranded there, penniless. They take a series of manual labor jobs to earn a living, from horse grooming in a stable; to cooking and serving in a noodle shop; and finally, digging a trench at the side of the road. Again and again, they prove themselves unfit to the task, ending each episode in failure. The performance troupe is the last and most promising of their occupations, but this is interrupted by the criminal activity of the evil troupe leader. In the end, Brother Wang's father conveniently shows up from the countryside to tell them that their conscription letters have arrived in the mail. The two friends vow, to the delight of all present, to fight for their country with great pride and honor—instantly reformed and integrated into society in one final stroke.

This, as it turns out, is a mirror image of the opening scene of *Nonsan*, in which the entire village shows up to send Dry Bones and Fatty off to the training base. Patriotic slogans are exchanged and the two heroes are celebrated with great fanfare by their neighbors, only to find when reporting for duty that their weights are so far off the opposite ends of the scale that the scale spins out of control. Both have subsequently failed to qualify as soldiers. The scene offers an overt staging of the male anxiety of possessing a non-standard body and hence not measuring up to a newly militarized manhood. Ultimately, they are accepted, but as lowly class C soldiers.

The films thus dramatize the duos' plasmaticism—two ends of the body spectrum, suggesting a range—but at the same time, it turns on the representation of their failure. In the case of Brother Wang and Brother Liu, their "foolishness," which seems to begin with their bodies, renders them *useless as men* until they become purposefully foolish as entertainers—or are enlisted into the army. Mobilization, in both works, becomes the final measure of worth for a man's body: it is put to use as a "mercilessly standardized" unit of the nation. Both of these films seem to toe the line of anti-Communist culture by thematizing the military experience, but in fact skewer military culture for its inhuman rational ideal of the soldier's body.

The nourishment of these bodies, or lack thereof, is another common theme of the two films, but in this case the Taiwanese and Korean films portray the friends' relationship to food, to each other, and to the gut quite differently. Brother Wang and Brother Liu always feast together in *Two Fools*, as in this scene when they first arrive in the city, and ravenously scavenge from the table of a rich couple on a date. This aspect of their relationship was even more important in the series of films featuring É-á- châi and Li Kuan-chang, in which the great spectacle of these feasting scenes derives more clearly from the improbably vast amounts of food consumed, the mountainous Brother Wang as a matter of course and the slight Brother Liu as a matter of some astonishment. Brother Wang may be more vulnerable to hunger, but the pronounced outward thrust of his gut is a visual metaphor for both characters' constant desire for the feast. His belly plasmatically suggests that Brother Liu's less remarkable thinness is a sign of malnutrition; if Wang's physique describes the extent of their hunger, Liu's emaciation is its factual instantiation. In *Two Fools* and elsewhere, their shared desire is a solidarity in poverty and provinciality, and

works towards the idealization of their friendship. This is remarkable considering the fact that there was always an underlying allegory of ethnic difference between the two: Brother Liu was played by an islander, while Brother Wang was most iconically played by mainlander Li.

Dry Bones and Fatty, on the other hand, take a more circuitous path to solidarity. Though they are introduced as friends, their story is staged through parallel story lines—they are given different assignments within the army, with Fatty assigned a plush office job and Dry Bones stuck with janitorial tasks. They also exhibit opposite attitudes towards food. Fatty becomes weak in the absence of sustenance, and even eats when he is angry, often to the point of indigestion. Dry Bones, by contrast, merely abstains while teases his friend for overindulging, or for obesity-related indignities, such as the gag device of a barracks bed collapsing under the fat man's weight. Unlike Brother Wang, Fatty is consistently *punished* for being more heavyset than his partner, reinforcing their difference. There is, however, one moment in which they are united. Dry Bones buckles near the end of *Nonsan* when Fatty's mother visits the army training base with food from home. Unable to hold out any longer, after watching Fatty tuck in with great gusto, Dry Bones snaps and begins ravaging the picnic like a child with no regard for etiquette, ripping at packages, spilling drinks, and stuffing food in his mouth faster than he can hope to chew. The comic spectacle reinforces the idea of Dry Bone's asceticism through the excess of its release. But why did he deny himself?

The dynamic of difference between Dry Bones and Fatty is more clearly demarcated as a *class* distinction, in contrast with Brother Wang and Brother Liu's shared lower class status. The subtext of Fatty's ample girth is that he is a soft, upper middle class boy with low tolerance for hunger, whereas Dry Bones in *Nonsan* is literally an orphan of the Korean War, a shrewd and scrappy kid ready to fight for his survival. Fatty's seemingly charmed life sets him up to be more magnanimous and mannered, but also more cowardly and dependent.[62] By contrast, Dry Bones' sharp mouth finds further expression in his bony limbs, and he is always ready to flail them in a fight. These complementary qualities allow them to triumph despite their incompetence: they stand up to bullies, save the army performance night with their banter, and earn badges of honor. What brings them together is adoptive family; it is eventually revealed that Dry Bones had grown up in Fatty's household as his brother.

Two Fools and *Nonsan* lean heavily upon the iconic fat and skinny comedy duo and their plasmatic appeal as a visualization of harmony in difference in order to make light of some rather weighty concerns. Pointing out the limitations of the standard uniform belies the myth of patriotism: patriotism is not enough, unless one happens to possess the ideal modern body. Visual metaphors of hunger and social distinction belies the myth of developmentalism, in which the gains of the nation are evenly distributed to all. And finally, the resolution of difference in familial, class, and interethnic solidarity is offered as a counterpoint to the nation as the only and inevitable category of identity.

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62 These associations with Yang Hun's (Fatty) persona are even clearer in a film such as *Twin Hyperbolae of Youth,* in which he plays the wealthy man in a "prince and the pauper" narrative and switches places with a poor former school mate. Even in *Nonsan*, however, it is implied that Fatty comes from a more ample household finances.

Conclusion

The cultural arguments articulated by these two film comedies, which derived their primary comic effect from unruly bodies on screen, were emblematic of the critical thrust of comic caricature in the mid and late 1950s. Cinema, of course, had the burden of suggesting plasmatic iconicity in the filmed body, whereas print cartoons in the cheerful, child-like mode could simply embrace a certain style and affective register. However, their co-presence in the Korean entertainment magazine, which featured spreads of film comedians alongside serial cartoons, as well as the remediations between the film and print media, indicate that they were engaging at the very least in a similar comic cultural field. More specifically, the tendency of comic caricature to bequeath a sense of freedom under oppressive regimes of form, as Eisenstein suggested, made it the ideal aesthetic with which to communicate a kinesthetic desire for liberation.

By the mid to late 1960s, however, government policymakers had caught on to the newly propagative potential of comic caricature in mass media. Cartoon censorship laws were established in for both Taiwan and South Korea by the mid-1960s, claiming to be laws for preventing the pollution of young minds. In South Korea, this was made more explicit by the formation of a "Children's Comics Ethics Committee of Korea" with pre-print censorship powers in 1968.[63] In Taiwan, the urban legend goes that Chiang Kai-shek was moved to create a "Official Guidelines for the Editing and Publication of Sequential Art" after running into a group of children with their heads buried in "evil books" 邪書 in an alleyway.[64] The execution of these guidelines was given over to the Ministry of Education in 1966 before being seated in the National Compilation and Translation Center the following year. Censorship was comprehensive and effective: by 1970, all the major periodicals featuring cartoons had gone under.[65] If what was at stake was really an adult and incipiently political readership, the language of the law cloaked itself in a rhetoric of juvenile pedagogy.

Around the same time, film policies controlling production and distribution began to limit the growth of the private film industry. Comedy continued to exist, but funneled its energy into genre and took a more clearly vulgar tone. The generic openness and plasmatic absorbency of cheerfulness culture—and the protective bubble of child-like culture—were sequestered in smaller, more limited spaces of cultural production.

Comic caricature was an important recourse at a historical juncture when both societies needed "low definition," participatory media. It is true that these caricatural works served as a bright reflection of darker realities; they also provided the most recognizable icons of a period when new media industries were coming into their own in the wake of colonialism and war. What made them stand out to both consumers and those who sought to control their proliferation was the fact that they could, through their plasmatic iconicity, liberate the postcolonial body from regimes of form, and through that liberation organize public affect around them with a visual

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[63] Lent, *Asian Comics*. 94.

[64] Hong, *Taiwan manhua 40 nian chutan* 台灣漫畫*40*年初探 *[= A brief review of Taiwanese comics]*.

[65] Chen, *Taiwan manhua wenhua shi*, 60-64.

immediacy that transcended social differences. They spoke to generalities while proposing an ideational concept of self in the mass: they became vehicles of identity formation, not just for their creators, but also for their consumers. Thus to study caricature is also to begin to see the *self-imagining* of two young national cultures in Taiwan and South Korea.

Chapter 2.
The Genre Game

Introduction: Game Theory

The usefulness of genre comes primarily from its categorical function, a vital social and cognitive mechanism when it comes to the constitution of the self. When a work of art deliberately disrupts the codes and tropes of genre, it demands of the viewer a heterogenous, split positionality. Even a rudimentary engagement with the work now requires entering contracts of understanding with several genres at once—loosely with all, tightly with none. If the primary tone of the work is comic, there is a further tendency towards direct confrontation between genres that point to their irreconcilable differences, impasses that prevent the construction of an integrated whole. A comic genre game encourages its players to laugh at the very enterprise of genre itself, while simultaneously presenting iconic, discrete iterations of each genre. Like billiards, the game does not move forward without precise—but intermittently unpredictable—collisions.

The comic genre game took on a particular resonance during the height of the Cold War and national division, when people, too, were subject to categorization. The good citizen and the criminal; the cosmopolitan and the country rustic; the man and the woman; the soldier for the Free World alliance and the Communist; us and them. Though these categories pre-existed and outlasted this period, the stakes were noticeably heightened at the time due to powerful public campaigns of promoting anti-Communism and developmentalist ideals. There were only two categories: with us, and against us. Yet through an aesthetic of incongruity, of mismatching cultural categories in the name of fun, film comedies in Taiwan and South Korea generated irony towards social roles and expectations that reverberated beyond the movie theater. If the Cold War presented a closed two-part system from which no one and nothing may escape, these cinematic comic genre games offered a limited cultural field, in which the crashing of opposite forces led not to nuclear apocalypse, but a temporary release from the pressure to categorize and *be* categorized. The comedy boom from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s in both countries suggests an urgent desire for comic release as political tensions became more and ingrained in everyday life.

My account of genre heterogeneity using a model of collision as opposed to connectivity runs counter to a prevailing analogy in genre studies: that of the family, and family resemblance. Like the metaphor of the "game" that I hope to develop here, the "family resemblance" analogy in genre studies comes from Ludwig Wittgenstein's text *Philosophical Investigations*, which is first and foremost an account of how language works, and why those workings are the most urgent objects of humanistic inquiry.[66] The way it has come into use in both film and literary genre studies, however, has grown to stress its biological connotations: if texts might be conceived of as members of a family, it is possible to trace "ancestry" and to conceive of a

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[66] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4 edition (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

"parent-child" relationship between specific members.[67] In the 1990s, this vogue for biological metaphor was extended to more mixed, marginal, and heterogenous texts through the concept of "hybridity." As film scholar Janet Staiger noted, basing her argument mainly on readings of Mikhail Bakhtin and Homi K. Bhabha, "hybridity" was a term out of botany and zoology that was made useful as a concept of *exchange* between different languages (Bakhtin) and *mutation* that challenged colonial systems of power from within (Bhabha).[68] Staiger distinguishes between these instances of cross-cultural meeting and "inbreeding," which is her theory of genre heterogeneity within the limited monocultural scope of the "Fordian Hollywood film."[69]

Certainly, the biological metaphor of hybridity offers a model of heterogeneity within a single work of art, within a defined body of work, or as a general phenomenon within a bounded culture. However, the more detailed and extensive the analogy, the more the uncomfortably social Darwinist overtones of this approach come to the fore—as in anthropologist Brian Stross's exploration of *heterosis*, or the "hybrid vigor" sought after by plant and animal breeders. A resulting hybrid has more "vigor" when the respective parents are "purebreeds" of different types —that is, they exhibit strong characteristics of their respective homogenous populations.[70] Very quickly, the line between the descriptive and prescriptive mode of analogy blurs: are we looking at a model for describing how our cultural expectations might be challenged and undergo transformation, or a model for controlling and optimizing heterogeneity? More disturbingly, who are the breeders, and who is bred? When matters of cultural representation are at stake, and we implicitly agree that certain traits are more or less desirable, it is difficult to extricate the analogy from the structures of racism, colonialism, and power.[71]

The main problem that I find with the biological analogy, however, is not the elision of the hierarchies and power dynamics that shape cultural hybridization, but the idea of the individual hybrid organism. Instead of a game, a social space which may have many players and is meant to be repeated in various formations, an organism is a bounded whole. The fact that it exhibits traits inherited from distinct "parent" organisms does not mean take away from the sense of blending

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[67] David Fishelov goes as far as to stress family psychology in the parent-child genre analogy, focusing in particular on the dynamics of lineage, and rebellion. In this model, "new writer" at an "adolescent" stage of development must struggle to "establish an independent place in the 'generic family.'" David Fishelov, *Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theory* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). 72.

[68] Janet Staiger, "Hybrid or Inbred: The Purity Hypothesis and Hollywood Genre History," in *Film Genre Reader IV*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (University of Texas Press, 2012), 203–17.

[69] This is also an arguable point, considering all of the various origins and cultural contexts of Hollywood's filmmakers over time.

[70] Brian Stross, "The Hybrid Metaphor: From Biology to Culture," *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 445 (1999): 254–67.

[71] The imbrication of racist ideologies and the concept of hybridity is more fully explored in Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 1995). 1-26.

in a singular life form. The biological metaphor, used upon works of art, finds it difficult to escape an Aristotlean discourse of beauty and the organic whole.[72]

Instead of focusing on the ability of hybrid works to suggest unity and order where before there was only conflict, the current study of heterogeneity in genre begins from the position of the comic, begins with the collision of abstract ideas. This approach is aligned with the entirely artificial yet profoundly communicative model of Eisensteinian montage. As Eisenstein himself articulates: "montage is an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots—shots even opposite to one another."[73] For Eisenstein, the building blocks of cinema in a cinematic sequence have a profoundly dialectical relationship, and though it would be impossible for film to give any illusion of naturalistic motion if each individual shot collided with the next, he proposed a distinct cinematic mode that foregrounded ideational communication: the "intellectual montage." Unlike Eisenstein, the film comedies studied here were not openly engaging with revolutionary or leftist concepts; nevertheless, they embraced an aesthetic of collision to open up new spaces of conceptual and categorical ambiguity within a tightly monitored Cold War cultural field.

If shots are the basic units of analysis for Eisenstein, this chapter is an experiment in thinking of genre elements—narrative tropes, archetypal characters, musical and visual motifs—as metonymic units representing a genre and its ideologies. Playing the James Bond musical motif in a Taiwanese or Korean film in the 1960s, for example, could evoke such tropes as the Bond gadget; the powerful, masculine action hero; and even to some degree the entrenched espionage battle with the Communist powers, whose local representatives were the People's Republic of China and North Korea. The central analysis of this chapter will focus on the primary collision of such spy film genre elements with the elements of film comedy, as well as its lesser confrontations with romance, sports, and travel film genres. Using the spy-comedy as a privileged example of a comic genre game, I will suggest the ways in which the tense categories of technological advancement, masculinity, and anti-Communist patriotism could be loosened by the collisions between genres, and subsequently enter a zone of radical undecidability.

In order to do so, however, it is necessary to consider what it means to fully embrace an analogy of genre to language instead of biology and genetics. What happens when we supplant *language* with *genre* in Wittgenstein's formulation of the language game? Like language, genre is a type of cultural competency that may be learned, and it is important to learn because it serves as a popular mode of communication. A genre game, like a language game, trains us in how to understand genre; but it also comes into being as it trains us. Genre games *constitute* genre, because genre, like language, does not exist outside of use in the Wittgensteinian framework of

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[72] To quote a translation of the Greek text, in a section on Tragedy: "…A beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order." David Goldblatt, Lee B. Brown, and Stephanie Patridge, *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts* (Routledge, 2017). 329.

[73] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda, First edition (New York: Harcourt, 1969). 49.

ordinary language philosophy.[74] If "the speaking of language is a part of an activity, or a form of life," playing genre games—as cultural producers or consumers—is also a form of life linked to membership in a cultural community.[75]

Like caricature, genre is "cool" media property: it may appear to be low density, but actually relies upon the participatory perception of its beholder to provide context and connection.[76] As Alastair Fowler puts it succinctly, "The system of generic expectations amounts to a code, by the use of which (or by departure from which) composition becomes more economical." [77] Elsewhere, he elaborates that knowledge of genre codes must be learned, and offers the example of a child motivated to sit through the telling of story after recognizing it as a game that brings welcome engagement with an adult figure. After countless repetitions of the game, the child begins to gain competency in the genre of narrative.[78] This concept of training in genre is perhaps more commonly discussed by communications scholars as a matter of "media literacy," but the core of the issue remains consistent: the game of learning genre or learning media categories is fundamental to become a functioning adult self—and may constitute a strong force in shaping that self.[79]

When the matter of genre competency is considered in the context of post-colonial cinemas in Taiwan and South Korea, it becomes more entangled in the hierarchical structures of cultural flow and circulation. Archival research reveals that the "belated" film industries of Taiwan and South Korea, which were in the process of re-aggregating both human and material resources after liberation in 1945 (and again after the Korean War in 1953), saw themselves as "learning" the codes of global genre so that they could speak the international language. Hollywood, of course, loomed large, but the regional powerhouses of Japanese and Hong Kong cinema also produced iterations of genre film that were popular amongst regional audiences—even if, in the

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[74] I rely here upon the elucidation of Wittgenstein's philosophy and the engaged attempt to defend ordinary language philosophy by Toril Moi in her recent work. In brief, this approach to philosophy claims that the most ordinary uses of language constitute a constantly changing, constantly renewed living language. Instead of focusing on a single relationship between signifier and signified, this philosophy considers what is being accomplished in the practical use of language elements within grammar and within social forms of life. Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell*, 1 edition (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[75] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. 15.

[76] As in Chapter 1, I refer to Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964. 22.

[77] Alastair Fowler, "Genre," in *International Encyclopedia of Communications*, ed. Erik Barnouw, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 215–17. I am indebted to Daniel Chandler's text for unearthing this formulation, in which Fowler formulates genre *as* communication. See Daniel Chandler, "An Introduction to Genre Theory," 2000, http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf.

[78] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). 44.

[79] See, for example, Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share, "Toward Critical Media Literacy: Core Concepts, Debates, Organizations, and Policy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 26, no. 3 (September 1, 2005): 369–86.

case of South Korea, the official ban on Japanese film led to more illicit forms of circulation.[80]

Under these circumstances, making any genre film takes on the tone of a genre game out of necessity: it is less about precise boundaries and authoritative definitions of genre, and more of a practical process through which a vernacularized form of cinema comes into being. Clashes between motifs and narrative tropes of internationally current genres with more localized, long-standing genres within the space of a single film was a result of this learning process. Here the concept of genre game becomes a key point in looking at Taiwanese and South Korean genre films for what they were. Films defined by such jarring incongruities were not "bad" hybrids because they lacked integration; they were instances of a genre game, in which the building blocks of cinematic language were clarified through use. At the same time, the fact that they do not adhere strictly to existing categories of global cinema can be reconceived not as a *failure to assimilate*, but as a different register of communication altogether. For both filmmaker and filmgoer, the film that plays a genre game is an exercise in exploring what genre—and cinema itself—could be.

Of course, just as there are many language games, genre games abound; not all of them are comic in orientation. The particular genre game that I focus on here, and that I argue becomes the quintessential genre game by the mid-1960s in both Taiwan and South Korea, is the comic genre game, where the collisions between genre motifs and tropes constituted one of the primary attractions of the film. In this privileged case of the genre game, not only is assimilation to global norms not the objective, but the failure to assimilate—and relatedly, to integrate—becomes a veritable spectacle. Unlike a parody, which is a more focused comedic study of an object, the comic genre game is more itinerant, and may offer many different objects within the span of one film. The only constants in such a film, then, becomes the perpetual mode of serial disruption.[81]

Through a constant principle of rupture, the comic genre game itself emerges as a film comedy genre during this time: comedies whose primary aim was to disrupt the entire enterprise of genre film. The synchronic emergence of this type of film comedy in Taiwan and South Korea, as I have already suggested, comes out of a regional turn towards higher security tensions, tightening film laws, and a frustratingly marginal position within global cinema. It also comes out of the rising popularity of the low-budget genre film, the underbelly of government-subsidized prestige film that had more funding and more ambition to succeed in international film festival circuits. Their sheer volume compared to the paltry number of prestige films and the speed of production returns to Fowler's concept of the genre as "economical" in different sense:

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[80] For more on this phenomenon, see Chonghwa Chung, "The Topography of 1960s Korean Youth Film: Between Plagiarism and Adaptation," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 8, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 11–24.

[81] Here I am deliberately evoking dialogue with works on early Hollywood comedies, such as Donald Crafton's well-known conceptualization of "pie and chase." The "pie" in mid-1920s silent comedies (also figured as "gag" or "spectacle") is a non-narrative element that provides a disruptive release from the narrative, or "chase." I am also evoking dialogue with the works concerning sound-era instances of the cinema of attraction, such as the musical. For Rick Altman and others, the musical number was a problem to be solved, because it marked a different mode of sound and spectacle from the "narrative" or "realistic" body of the film. By contrast, the comic genre game that I present here is not just punctuated by disruptive elements—it is a more balanced interplay between comic and non-comic genre elements, which interrupt each other. See Crafton, "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy." See also Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

the idea being that formulaic film production saves time and money while giving audiences known attractions. However, what became clearer and clearer over time was that the actual boundaries of genre in these films were ill-defined. Growth in the film industries, following the developmental state's directives for "industrialization," had outpaced the capabilities of both producers and audiences to process genre, necessitating an ongoing genre game—despite the fact that many films were promoted as belonging to a single, bounded genre. The comic genre game, by contrast, distinguishes itself by never genuinely pursuing a singularity of genre, but embracing, from the outset, a measured chaos.

The comic genre game was not without its own set of rules and tendencies. First, due to increasingly stringent censorship both before and after film production, film comedies often contained their most disruptive and thrillingly transgressive content within *a conservative narrative frame*. As long as the film opens with a picture of normalcy and returns the comedic protagonist to an acceptable horizon of social norms by the end, it generally passes muster, no matter how much those norms are stretched in the interim. In one sense, this makes these comedies a type of "New Comedy" in Northrop Frye's classification system: they often end with the "reform" of the protagonist through marriage and integration into a social role; in the 1960s, the latter mostly means integration into the work force.[82] However, I would argue that even in Frye's context of classical Greek theater, the reason for audiences to return again and again to comedic experience was not necessarily the satisfaction of integration. Instead, it was the spectacular degree of transgression offered in the middle of the narrative. If the framing genre is ideologically palatable to the censor—say, a spy film that drums up both patriotism and paranoia about the omnipresence of Communist subversives—the point of the comic genre game is to interrupt its codes of communication. In turn, what the film comedy communicates is the radical possibility that these ideological narrative tropes were never complete to begin with.

Second, what this basic repeating structure of conservative frame and disruptive middle suggests is an *ironic orientation.* To give our ongoing comparison with classical Greek comedy a Romantic twist, we might consider Freidrich Schlegel's notorious definition of irony as "permanent parabasis." Though parabasis was the originally the mechanism of an aside in Greek theater, when the chorus interrupts the course of action to make a comment to the audience, it has taken on the more abstract meaning of an interruption to rhetoric, or to narrative mechanisms. Paul De Man, for example, has elaborated that irony should be understood as "the permanent parabasis of the allegory of tropes." More importantly for the current study, "…any theory of irony is the undoing, the necessary undoing, of any theory of narrative, and it is ironic, as we say, that irony always comes up in relation to theories of narrative, when irony is precisely what makes it impossible ever to achieve a theory of narrative that would be consistent."[83]

If the genre game in general compulsively interrupts the narrative tropes of genres, or even the character tropes and other cinematic semantics, the comic genre game does so deliberately, glorying like Aristophanes in the reflexive and disruptive parabatic move. The objective of the

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[82] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton University Press, 2015). 163-171.

[83] Paul De Man, "The Concept of Irony," in *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 163–84. 179.

game was never consistency, but an ongoing relationship between knowing performer and knowing public: it is a moment in which to acknowledge that all involved understand the artifice of theater. I would argue that this mode of irony as communication, irony as formative of knowledge community, is the key ingredient that make many of the so-called "genre films" of this period understandable as Camp.

What I mean here is not Camp as shaped by queer sensibility and experience, as the early theorists of the aesthetic defined it.[84] Certainly, there is a queering of normative culture that occurs, but what I hope to find in the Taiwanese and South Korean films of the 1960s is a kind of "mainstream Camp": a performative excess of genre tropes, including gender, that was designed to offer up the pleasures of incongruity. The desire for such a covert, coded pleasure was not solely the product of overwhelming normative pressures on the axis of sexual orientation, but developed in response to a variety of pressures endemic to life under Cold War authoritarian regimes. Mainstream Camp of 1960s Taiwan and South Korea specifically engaged participants who were interested in confounding expectations of genre, which were apiece with American cultural hegemony; gender performativity confined by male-centric discourses of labor, despite the growing numbers of working women; and ideological status, which was limited to Communist and anti-Communist options. If we read genre game comedies from the Camp perspective, even the framing narrative, which was usually in line with the ideological aims of the state, could become subversive when performed in excess alongside other genre tropes.

Finally, in addition to conservative narrative frames and an ironic Camp sensibility, the comic genre game films of the 1960s tended to take on the form of a *comedian comedy.* That is to say, the parabatic thrust of the film was usually embodied by a comedic actor, a modern day *buffo* whose physical comedy carried the disruptive action, and whose public persona provided star power to the film project. Most of these comedic actors, primarily male, made their name both as stage acts and as actors in film and television. Because their particular modes of stage performance tended towards variety—shorter segments or acts instead of sustained dramatic presentation—the tempo of comedic spectacle tended towards the episodic. Importantly for the genre game, this type of short comic performance could slide easily into an alternating pattern with scenes dominated by other genres.[85] Additionally, the specific subgenres of stage spectacle that were current among these performers informed the kind of comic mechanisms they commonly employed on screen.

Out of the comparison of Taiwanese and South Korean texts, three major comic mechanisms of the comedian comedy come to the fore. First, an oscillation between the child-like and the vulgar, the pre-sexual and the sexual, was one of the most popular incongruities presented by the comedian comedy. The child-like comedian is innocent of how the world works,

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[84] For example: Jack Babuscio, "The Cinema of Camp (Aka Camp and the Gay Sensibility)," in *Camp : Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject : A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

[85] Henry Jenkins first suggested this quality in early sound comedian comedies, in an era when many of the major comedic performers in Hollywood films came from vaudeville. He calls it "anarchistic comedy" in celebration of the rebellious spirit of Marx Brothers' films. However, I find that the films of the 1960s that I study do not quite rise to the point of "anarchy"; they cleave too closely to genre to inject backflips as an acrobatic non sequitur or to forgo the closure of a narrative frame. Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

including the rules of genre, and wreaks havoc out of naïveté; the vulgar comedian knows too much about the world, and everything becomes innuendo. In both cases, they construct a duality in each scene between knowing and not knowing, a dramatic irony for the audience's pleasure. When the child-like and the vulgar are embodied in one performer, however, an interesting effect occurs: the child-like is no longer considered genuinely innocent, and the vulgar is no longer threateningly sexual. They are both modes of Camp performance for the comedian, and neither is the true essence of his character.

Second, the vogue for male performers cross-dressing as female was popular in both Taiwanese and South Korean cultures, although it was a slightly stronger presence in the latter. If anxieties regarding the value of the male body for military and work force purposes emerged in the 1950s and found comic expression in plasmatic iconicity, as I argue in Chapter 1, they persisted in the 1960s as a problem of genre. That is, archetypal gender roles to be challenged were not just archetypal of society in general, but were anchored in the iconic performances of gender roles in genre film. To suggest gender reversal in caricature, an artist may draw curved lines to suggest a bust on a male figure; to do so in a spy film, for example, a male actor not only dons the clothing of a woman, but also performs the gendered seduction and sexual power associated with the cinematic representation of Mata Hari. Cross-dressing projects a stronger sense of Camp than cartooning because it is more *embodied*, and the visual irony, the clash of type between performer and role, never recedes from visibility. In this insistence on the legibility of category, this need for hard edges to create collision, the genre game is much less plasmatic than caricature—but no less interested in creating fluidity. Like the child-like and the vulgar, the masculine and the feminine are made to overlap in a single performance, so that while their incongruity produces laughter and clarifies the distinction between them, their congruences also begin to emerge.

This effect is an important element in the third comic mechanism, that of the misidentified miscreant; or, the mistaken identity. Though this is a common comedic formula in global cinema, it is particularly important in the context of Cold War East Asia because national division had created a profound crisis of identity. The fact that the Communist Other for both Taiwan and South Korea were conceived of as countrymen—and hence racially and ethnically indistinguishable from good citizens—became the foundation for widespread paranoia cultivated by the state in both Taiwan and South Korea, an irrational fear that Communist agents were hiding behind every corner. If anyone could be a spy, of course, anyone could also *mistaken* for a spy. The irony of comic misbehavior being interpreted as criminal or spy action generates comedy, but it suggests at the same time a fundamental lack of distinction between a well-meaning bumbler and an enemy of the state. Over time, with repetition, this pattern of mistaken identity creates a popular entry into radical territory: the line between Self and ideological Other wears away, leaving only an undefined landscape of doubt.

As embodied by the comedian, who inhabits a variety of genres, the comic genre game troubles boundaries: it is genre trouble, it is gender trouble, and it is gently troubling to the notion of national division. Instead of necessarily deconstructing boundaries, however, it relies upon the shock of collision between two opposed sets of expectations to create a gap in between. It both relies upon and belies duality, striking an ironic pose. In doing so, the comic genre game reveals itself to be not only a symptom of the nascent film industries and their battle with state

film laws, but also a parabatic mode of communication. It gave cultural form to an unarticulated crisis in cultural, gender, and national ideological identity. If the genre game was a form of life, it trained its participants through a cinematic experience to conceptually rearrange the most dominant social categories of the day.

This chapter will proceed with a media history of genrificiation in the Taiwanese and South Korean film industries, which culminated in both a general practice of the genre game in cinema and the emergence of a more clearly comic genre game. A demonstration of the three major tropes of the comic genre game follows, offering examples from both cinemas of the interrupted conservative frame, mainstream Camp, and the use of comedian comedy. Finally, as aforementioned I will conduct a comparative close analysis of two spy comedies from Taiwan and South Korea, privileged cases of the comic genre game that suggests its radical potential.

As in Chapter 1, the archive provides two texts that are in conversation with one another: *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* 王哥柳哥007 (1967, dir. Wu Fei-chien) and *You Didn't Know Salsari, Did You? 007 Explosive Laugh Version* 살사리 몰랐지? 007폭소판 (1966, dir. Kim Hwarang). Both indicate the James Bond series as a reference point for the spy action genre in their titles, but that is only where their similarities begin. My analysis will indicate how genre collides via two types of focal points in both these films: the object, represented by the Bond gadget; and the subject, as embodied by the star comedian. For both object and subject, misidentification is the mechanism which produces an instability of identity, and reveals that such identity is fundamentally fluid in nature: it can be read as a part of two or more genres at once, and its tendency to flip back and forth between those networks of meaning creates a pleasurable comic incongruity. Using these two examples, I argue that the film comedy is like a double agent hiding in plain sight; but unlike an agent, it can truly go both ways without too much consequence. The laughing viewer joins a vast counterpublic collective that, despite the hegemony of exclusionary state ideologies, find the agent's performance compelling in its daring trespass.

Genre Games and the Industry of Film

What is a "genre film"? The simplest answer within an English-language context may be that it is a cinematic work whose primary characteristic is its engagement with the elements of genre, including narrative tropes, archetypal characters, motifs, and formal elements such as lighting and tempo. Though it is difficult to find a film with no genre, a genre film foregrounds genre, to the point that it may be incomprehensible to a viewer with no knowledge of its codes—or, at the very least, it would be easy to miss the point. Hence it would be nearly impossible for a genre film to be the object of cinephilia without the pre-condition of genre-philia, a love that is both generic and specific at the same time.

To translate the concept of genre film to the contexts of Taiwanese and South Korean cinema of the 1960s, however, necessitates an additional translation of material realities. That is, the "genre film" occupies a position within a stratified film industry that is associated with rapid low-cost (mass) production. It is "cheap" in terms of symbolic and cultural capital because it is cheaply made, and it must maximize affective returns in order to maximize financial ones. In both Taiwan and South Korea, the genre film as a popular yet denigrated category of film

emerged in the decade of the 1960s due to the rapid industrialization and subsequent segmentation of the film business.

In South Korea, the "B films" (B급 영화) emerged as a consequence of new film laws in the Park Chung-hee era, which began after the coup of May 1961. The motion picture law of 1962 raised the requirements for registering as a film production company, so that the number of companies dropped precipitously from 71 to 16 within the first year.[86] However, since the few companies that had enough scale to meet initial government requirements did not actually have all the resources to churn out the mandated quota of domestic films, the vast majority of film projects were actually subcontracted out to a shadow industry of low-budget filmmakers. According to some estimates, over 80 percent of the films produced were made under the "borrowed name production" (대명 제작代名製作) system in the late 1960s and early 1970s, even as the amended film law attempted to control the situation through acknowledgment.[87]

The new film law inadvertently encouraged fast, cheap filmmaking in large volume, and prestige filmmaking in the single digits for each production company. As Steven Chung notes, using the example of the unusually successful production company Shin Films, low-budget genre films and director/owner Shin Sang-Ok's own prestige films were the two strongest draws at the box office especially when it came to regional theaters. The regional theater distribution system, in turn, constituted the only reliable source of funding for film production, which may explain the strength of this two-part model.[88] Moreover, an active strategy of excessive genre film production was also a strategy for gaming the film law for importing foreign film: as Shim and Yecies note, Shin's company made about twice the number of films as others, and as a result it obtained the rights to distribute more Hollywood and Hong Kong fare.[89] The domestic genre film game was, from the beginning, embedded in a transnational film economy.

In Taiwan, as I discuss in Chapter 1, the stratification of the cinematic field fell along linguistic lines, with a handful of domestically produced Mandarin film on top and a vast majority of popular *Taiyupian* occupying a lower cultural position. Emily Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell Davis call this a "parallel cinema" system, a term that describing "the authorities neo-colonial policy toward local Taiwanese culture but, at the same time, leaves a market gap that allows alternatives to flourish."[90] Unlike the South Korean film law, which attempted to boost

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[86] Yŏng-il 이영일 Yi, *Hanguk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* 한국영화전사 *[= The history of Korean cinema* (Seoul, Korea: Yonghwa Chinhung Kongsa, 1969). 253.

[87] Pak Chi-yŏn, "1960, 70 nyŏndae han'guk yŏnghwa chŏngch'aek kwa san'ŏp 1960, 1970년대 한국영화 정책과 산업 [1960s and 70s Korean film policy and industrialization," in *Han'guk yŏnghwasa kongbu 1960-1979* (Korean Film Archive, 2004). 166.

[88] Steven Chung, *Split Screen Korea: Shin Sang-Ok and Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2014).

[89] Ae-Gyung Shim and Brian Yecies, "Asian Interchange: Korean-Hong Kong Co-Productions of the 1960s," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 4, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 15–28.

[90] Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis, *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (Columbia University Press, 2005). 12.

and centralize domestic film production by controlling registration rights for film companies, Taiwanese cultural policies attempted to encourage the production of ideologically correct Mandarin-language films through subsidies and awards.[91] The lack of overt control over Taiyupian film production actually resulted in a more decentralized film industry than in Korea. There were twice as many film companies in Taiwan at the end of the 1960s than the beginning, but many produced only one film before folding, producing an instability inimical to industry growth.[92] Su Chih-heng further argues that control of film stock, which forced Taiyupian makers to buy off the black market and barred their access to color film, created a two-tiered system which relegated Taiyupian to a lower technological status.[93] This led to the stronger association of Taiyupian with low quality film production, and its eventual extinction as access to black and white film stock dried up.

The complicating factor in the "parallel system," however, was the Hong Kong film industry, which occupied a middle register between state-owned film production and the Taiyupian. That is, it was a highly successful film industry built on transnational distribution to diasporic communities, and it specialized in genre film of high production value. It was both commercially-driven and on the forefront of film technology, bolstered by the influx of film personnel escaping from the Chinese film industry in Shanghai after the establishment of the People's Republic. In practice, the ROC government's policy of supporting "national cinema" (*guopian*國片) actually benefited dominant Hong Kong companies such as Cathay and Shaw Brothers more than domestic production in Taiwan; and for their part, these companies had a strong motivation to stay in Chiang Kaishek's good graces.[94] Within Taiwan, the state-owned Central Motion Picture Corporation 中央電影公司 (hereafter CMPC), originally named to Agricultural Education Production Film Company 農業教育電影公司when established in 1946, had extremely privileged access to filmmaking resources such as cameras, studio space, and film

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[91] Lu Feiyi notes that a new program for film production loans introduced in 1962 permitted only Mandarin film projects to apply for assistance. Lu Feiyi 盧非易, *Taiwan dianying: zhengzhi . jingji . meixue, 1949-1994* 台灣電影：政治. 經濟. 美學 *[Taiwanese cinema: politics, economics, aesthetics]* (Taibei Shi: Yuan Liu, 1998). 110. For more details on the earlier negative policies discouraging Taiyupian, which were a matter of concern to authorities due to their sudden popularity in the mid-1950s, see: Zheng, "Zhanhou Taiwan dianying guanli tixi zhi yanjiu (1950-1970) 戰後台灣電影管理體系之研究 (1950-1970) [= A study of systems of control for post-war Taiwan cinema (1950-1970)]." 112-131.

[92] Lu, *Tai wan dian ying*. 179.

[93] Su Chih-heng 蘇志亨, "Chongfang Taiyupian de xingshuai qiluo: heibai dipian jinkou yu caise jishu zhuanxing 重訪台語片的興衰起落：黑白底片進口與彩色技術轉型 [=Revisiting the rise and decline of Taiyupian: the importation of black and white film and the shift to color film technology]," in *Baibianqianhuan busiyi: Taiyupian de hunxue yu zhuanhua*, ed. Chun-chi Wang 王君琦 (Taibei Shi: Lianjing, 2017), 59–78.

[94] Reportedly, the willingness of the Hong Kong film industry to perform for ROC festivals and ROC troops endeared them to Chiang. Government policies encouraged Hong Kong film producers to shoot in Taiwan beginning in the mid-1950s. Lu, *Tai wan dian ying*. 77.

processing equipment, but produced only a handful of films in the 1950s.[95] Other Mandarin film production companies, stranded without much of an audience in Taiwan, languished until Mandarin education began to show results and CMPC came under new leadership in the mid-1960s.[96]

When private sector Mandarin films did begin to take off in the latter half of the decade, it was mostly built on the gains of distributing of Hong Kong film, and the successful negotiation to bring high profile Hong Kong film producers and directors such as King Hu and Li Hanxiang to work in Taiwan.[97] The Hong Kong film industry had a pronounced strength in producing studio-made genre films with high production value, which brought prestige to certain genres such as wuxia and spy thriller. The success of Hong Kong genre film spawned trends not only in Taiwan, where the government embraced them as a part of domestic cinema, but also in South Korea, where the industry had been investing in co-productions with Hong Kong companies with renewed energy beginning in 1962.[98]

In other words, the Hong Kong film industry stood as an aspirational model for both South Korean cinema and commercial Taiwanese cinema—the latter consisting mostly Taiyupian into the mid-1960s. The emergence of the Korean genre film and the Taiyupian genre film is inextricable from this aspiration, and yet, I argue, they were distinct from Hong Kong cinema in their approach to genre games precisely because of their aspirational position. The genre film in Taiwan and South Korea was a film language that developed as a function of the struggle against tight budget restraints and competition with more polished film imports. At the same time, it was a film language that developed in the process of both filmmakers and filmgoers learning about how genres could become a system of communication; and the fact that low budget genre films were not, for the most part, bankable film exports themselves meant that the films were made for domestic—and often provincial—audiences.[99]

Between 1963 and 1965, genre film in both Taiwan and South Korea began to play the

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[95] The Agricultural Education Film Company and CMPC were responsible for the total output of 13 domestic Mandarin films between 1950 and 1954. The total number of Mandarin films screened during this time was 662, and the difference was made up by Hong Kong imports. Lu. 63-65.

[96] A huge studio fire in 1959 requiring reconstruction became the impetus for a reassessment of CMPC, and the new leadership launched the "Healthy Realism" objective in 1963. This, in turn, stimulated the private sector of Mandarin filmmaking on the island as film personnel began to find more work beyond the Taiyupian industry. Lu. 103.

[97] Here I am mostly referencing the story of the Lian Bang Film Company 聯邦電影, which was perhaps the most influential in bringing high-profile Hong Kong films and filmmakers into Taiwan. Lu. 174-177.

[98] Shim and Yecies, "Asian Interchange." See also: Sangjoon Lee, "Destination Hong Kong: The Geopolitics of South Korean Espionage Films in the 1960s," *Journal of Korean Studies* 22, no. 2 (December 28, 2017): 343–64.

[99] Korean co-productions with Hong Kong, such as Shin Film's collaborations with the Shaw brothers, were of course designed for export—but they were typically "prestige" films with more budget, even if they foregrounded genre tropes. Wuxia, historical epics, and spy films were all favored genres for this higher stratum of filmmaking since they traded on expensive spectacles and exotic locales. Shim and Yecies, "Asian Interchange." 20-22.

genre game in earnest.[100] That is, critics note a greater amount of generic heterogeneity within single films, and genre elements mixed in a way that not only disrupted immersion in the cinematic experience, but also enhanced a sensibility of pastiche and irony. The sense of incongruity was not, as Janet Staiger suggested, a case of "inbreeding," as it was with mixing amongst Hollywood genres, but born out of more shocking collisions between "older" genres, which were already well known by local film audiences, and "new" genres, which were the hottest trends in contemporary global cinema. For example, local genres in Taiwan included the *koa-a-hi* (or *gezaixi*) opera films; and in Korea, the *sinp'a* melodrama had roots in both a radio and stage tradition in *ak-kŭk* (a type of variety show. Both of these genres came out of stage performance practices that became formalized in theater spaces during the colonial period, and both were still very much present as cinematic genres in the early 1960s. International genres appearing for the first time in the 1960s, on the other hand, included genres that were established in Hollywood, such as the Western, the science fiction film, and the Bond-style spy action film; and those that developed as regional archetypes in Hong Kong and Japan, such as the martial arts, historical epic, and youth film.[101] The genre game, in the starkest of terms, was a game of finding meaning and place for the thrilling "new" genres through their interactions with "older" genres, which were more familiar and hence more fully formed as genre in the public imagination.

Film comedy presents, as usual, an interesting categorical conundrum: was it old or new? On the one hand, the fact that most of the comedic actors also had an active life as live performers connected their onscreen presence to older and more vernacular stage practices. Moreover, they were familiar to the public from the moment they appeared on screen, because they had already cultivated personae as figures of entertainment outside of film. On the other hand, comedy almost compulsively engaged with so-called new genres, so that comedians often played a kind of genre drag: the comedian could play the lead in a musical, a horror film, a sci-fi, a Western, a period piece, or even, as I will discuss in depth later, the spy film.

Comedy was the one genre that was so open as to perhaps be no genre at all. At the same time, comedies were considered the most "vulgar" and "low" of the popular films of the era, and

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[100] Although it is beyond the purview of this chapter to make an argument for this precise periodization, I am inspired to suggest this rough synchronicity between the Taiyupian and South Korean genre game by a handful of studies. Lin Kuizhang provides this useful period marker in his argument about the "hybridity" 混種, remarking that Taiyupian became more difficult to describe using to Thomas Schatz' genre categories beginning roughly in 1965. Lin, "Xunzhao taiyupian de leixing yu zuozhe." 27. With reference to Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981). Liao Jinfeng also mentions that Taiyupian began adapting Hollywood genres furiously beginning in the mid-1960s. See Liao Jinfeng 廖金鳳, *Xiaoshi de yingxiang : Taiyupian de dianying zaixian yu wenhua rentong* 消失的影像：台語片的電影再現與文化認同 *[= Vanished images: Cinematic representation and cultural identity in Taiyupian]* (Taibei Shi: Yuanliu chuban, 2001). 172-174. In the Korean case, there is less discussion of a burst in genrification. However, Jinsoo An alludes to the emergence of new genres such as the Manchurian Western, which mixed elements of the American and Italian Western, the martial arts film, the melodrama, and the action film under the catch-all label of "anticommunist film" between 1962 and 1965. See Jinsoo An, "War as Business in South Korea's Manchurian Action Films," *Positions* 23, no. 4 (November 1, 2015): 785–806.

[101] This division that I propose echoes what Kim Mee-hyun called "old and new" genres of the 1960s. Mee-hyun Kim, "The Korean Film Renaissance and Genre Film 1963-1971," in *Korean Cinema: From Origins to Renaissance* (Seoul, Korea: Korean Film Council, 2006), 170–76.

critics decried the veritable devolution of the public's film taste in the late-1960s when both Taiwan and South Korea experienced a comedy boom. In Taiwan, the number of comedies produced rose from just one film in 1960 to 48 in 1968, the peak year. It was not until 1973 that it dropped precipitously back down to one film.[102] In Korea, comedy films accounted for a relatively large proportion of films produced throughout the decade, but showed a marked spike in attendance after 1965 with the peak being in 1968 and 1969.[103] In both cases, the comedy boom has been interpreted as a symptom of decline, of a last hurrah in an over-productive film industry that was trying desperately to slow its losses to the growing culture of television.[104]

To be contrarian: the boom in comedy production of the late 1960s was not a decline of film culture, but a *maturation* of the genre game into a comic genre game, a process of vernacularization that had become not only self-reflexive, but adept at coded communication.[105] If, as Park Sun-young suggests, film censors in Korea were remarkably lenient in allowing comedies with obscene content to slip under their radar in this period, labeling them "healthy" (건전健全) due to their comedic quality, they also allowed a good deal of politically transgressive thought to slip in along with the sex jokes.[106] And, if the Taiyupian could be interpreted as a "depoliticized fantasia" in the late 1960s, as Liao Jin-feng has argued, the sparks between its colliding genres were surprisingly political.[107]

To demonstrate the intersection of comedy with other genres, old and new, I will offer two examples that bookend this period: *The Marine Who Does Not Return* (dir. Lee Man-hui 이만희 李萬熙, 1963) from South Korea, and *Dangerous Youth* (dir. Hsin Chi 辛奇, 1969) from Taiwan. Both films foreground their primary genre, the war film and the youth film, respectively, but allow cinematic codes for violence to overlap and collide with those of comedy. Both directors have been lauded in recent scholarship for bridging the gap between genre film and so-called auteur film—of being at once perfectly generic and idiosyncratic in their style and tendency to

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[102] Lu, *Tai wan dian ying*. Appendix, chart 12. The data was both reported to the government and evident from ads used for research by Lu and his team.

[103] Yi, *Hanguk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* 한국영화전사 *[= The history of Korean cinema*. 301-303.

[104] The argument of television has been more clearly articulated in Taiwan film studies, due to the fact that many Taiyupian actors went into television after jobs in topolect cinema dried up. For a representative view of this type in Taiyupian criticism, see Huang Ren 黃仁, *Beiqing Taiyupian* 悲情台語片 (Taibei Shi: Wan xiang tu shu gu fen you xian gong si, 1994). 33-45. The discourse of decline is well represented for Korean cinema in Yi's film history, cited above.

[105] I offer a version of this argument in my earlier paper. Evelyn Shih, "Getting the Last Laugh: Opera Legacy, Comedy and Camp as Attraction in the Late Years of Taiyupian" 7, no. 3 (October 21, 2013): 241–62.

[106] Park Sun-young 박선영, *K'omidiŏn chŏnsŏng sidae* 코미디언 전성시대 *[= The golden era of comedians]* (Seoul, Korea: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2018). 494-531.

[107] Liao, *Xiao shi de ying xiang*. 163.

destabilize received notions of social normativity.[108] In other words, they challenged the clear separation of a two-tiered system, where genre films fell into the lower register of cultural and symbolic value, through works that played the genre game for particular aesthetic gains. For the purposes of this study, I will focus specifically on one sequence from each of these films where a cinematic technique oscillates between comedy and violence, in both cases poking fun at the primary genre's artifice and excessive reliance upon violence as spectacle.

As other scholars have noted, *The Marine Who Does Not Return* is both one of the most popular war films of the early 1960s and one of the most peculiar, due to the fact that its ensemble cast includes one of the most well-known comedians of the era, Ku Pongsŏ 구봉서具鳳書. The infiltration of a comedy professional into one of the most serious and ideologically monitored genres is remarkable, although most critics have explained Ku's presence as comic relief.[109] However, I would argue that the collision between genres that Ku engenders is actually more shock than relief.

Ku enters the front-line marine troop late, a new recruit from the anterior. Soon after his arrival, the troop has received some funds for a makgŏlli rice-wine party, and he immediately marks himself as a class clown when he impersonates the troop leader, who is giving a speech, by repeating his tics. He follows up this impertinence by jumping up in the middle of the party and injecting historical reflexivity. "This is the year 1900 and…does anyone know?" he asks. Asserting that it is 1950, the year when "enemies invaded our land," he triggers traumatic memories in certain members of the troop, who have lost family members in the Korean War. These soldiers who cannot forget their personal grief are avatars of the war film genre, which in the 1960s South Korean context nearly always returns to the site of the Korean War and asserts the immorality of Communist aggressor. However, Ku's character brushes their protests aside and continues: "Ten years from now, this foreign dance will be incredibly popular, and I'll introduce it." He proceeds to lead the rest of the soldiers in an awkward approximation of the twist, set to American-style dance hall music that was contemporary for the movie-going audience in 1963. The soldiers, suddenly cast in the chronotope of 1960s leisure culture, do not know how to perform this genre of merriment.

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[108] Cho Yŏng-jŏng, for example, describes Yi Man-hŭi's style as "genre/auteur," pointing directly at this tension; Yi was known as a popular director during his lifetime, but critics who sought to canonize his oeuvre deliberately ignored this fact in favor of describing his work as "realism." Cho Yŏng-jŏng 조영정, "Yi Manhŭi ŭi chakkajŏk wich'i e taehan chekoch'al 이만희의 작가적 위치에 대한 재고찰 [= Refiguring auteur position of Lee Man-hee]" (Chung-Ang University, 2008). Lin Kuizhang, whose dissertation title indicates a dual search for genres and auteurs, calls Hsin Chi a "latent auteur" working in a popular mode. This is perhaps a protective stance against the received notion that Taiyupian as a purely popular cinema produced no auteurs. Lin, "Xunzhao taiyupian de leixing yu zuozhe." 134.

[109] I am preceded in my exegesis of *Marine* as a war film with comedic elements by David Scott Diffrient, who does use the term "comic relief." I focus here, however, on the specific filmic technique used in two scenes to make the argument for generic heterogeneity in the genre game model. David Scott Diffrient, "'Military Enlightenment' for the Masses: Genre and Cultural Intermixing in South Korea's Golden Age War Films," *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 1 (2005): 22–49. See also Park Ji Hong 박지홍, "〈Toraoji annŭn haebyŏng〉 sŭt'orit'elling ŭi ijungjŏk kujo e taehan yŏn'gu〈돌아오지 않는 해병〉스토리텔링의 이중적 구조에 대한 연구 [=A Study on the Dual Structure of Storytelling in〈The Marines Who Never Returned〉- The Choice between the Genre and the Auteur]," *Yonghwa yŏn'gu* 영화연구, no. 58 (December 2013): 207–30.

Nevertheless, the camera cuts from a full shot, where they appear as a cluster of jerky marionettes (Figure 1), to a medium tracking shot, which shows one or two of the soldiers at a time (Figure 2). Following Ku's lead, each soldier in turn dons his army helmet and performs a half-second dance solo as the camera slides past. The film shifts, in other words, into a genuine musical number, in which the sound-image hierarchy is reversed: instead of a soundtrack matching the action on screen, the soldiers follow the discipline of a tempo provided by non-diegetic music.[110] This is an inversion of a typical war film shot in which the film image shows a soldier shooting a gun, and the sound of a ricocheting bullet is peripheral to cinematic perception.

Though the tracking shot is short, it evokes a similar shot presented not fifteen minutes earlier: a point-of-view tracking shot as Kyŏngik, one of the soldiers, walks through a warehouse full of piled up corpses and finds his younger sister's lifeless body (Figure 3). Paired with somber orchestral music that scores Kyŏngik's procession through the long hall with sustained, full chords, the horrific imagery is presented as shock to both the character and the film viewer. In these mirrored shots, the movement of the camera is used to indicate multitudes: if the warehouse scene shot implies that the row of dead bodies stretches on indefinitely, laying bare the human cost of war, the dancing scene shot implies that the line of dancing soldiers could go on and on—if they were not destined to perish in the trenches. And in fact, the music does end. Only one soldier out of the whole troop has made it safely back to camp at the close of the film. Have they lined up to live, or to die?

The collision of these two shots in the same movie, of film language bent to two opposing purposes, dramatizes the offensiveness of bringing comedy into a film that represents national and personal war trauma with such deliberate and painful excess. Like the soldiers who walked out on the makgŏlli party, the viewer might find it unacceptable to think of comedy and the enjoyment of comedy as commensurate with the pathos and grisly violence of a war film. Yet from the moment he steps on screen until the moment he dies trying to hold the front line, Ku Pongsŏ's character Pongsu embodies the argument that both the war film and the comedy are entertainment genres. It is not that Ku provides comic relief, but that the entire film, which cycles through elements of the Western, the family melodrama, and the coming of age story, builds up to catharsis through a series of productive, if shocking, collisions.

Li Man-hŭi is not just a genre auteur, as other critics have pointed out, but an ambitious player of the genre game. In the twist musical number and several other scenes throughout the film, he uses Ku Pongsŏ as *buffo* to interrupt the completeness of the war film's genre elements, so that its pathos, grief, and evocation of patriotism are continuously revealed to be cinematic manipulations. The war film as genre game becomes more fully a knowing cinematic representation of war; that is, it becomes the consummate war film through the game.

Dangerous Youth by Taiyupian director Hsin Chi does a similar trick on a very different primary genre: the youth film. Unlike the war film, which was strongly encouraged as one type of anti-Communist film by the state, the youth film emerged out of commercial popularity. Like the spy film, which according to Chun-chi Wang drew on many different "lineages," the youth

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[110] To quote Rick Altman, in the musical number, "the movement which we see on screen is now accompaniment to the musical track." Altman, *The American Film Musical*. 69.

film was an genre game that combined elements from the American mid-1950s films of rebellion, Japanese *taiyozoku* ("Sun Tribe") films, and Taiwanese melodramas of generational conflict.[111] The 1960s were a period in both Taiwanese and South Korean when the word "youth" (the cognate *qingchun*/ *ch'ŏngch'un*青春) became a chameleonic word in popular culture. When used in a film title, as it was with *Dangerous Youth* 危險的青春, it indicated various aesthetics of rebellion against older generations, hedonistic pleasure, female liberation, and violence both thrilling and fatalistic. The youth film as a genre game unto itself oscillates between a sense of futurity, in which the rebellion of youth breaks with social norms and moves them forward; and destruction, in which the self-destructive behavior of youth leads nowhere, indicating an end point for a society that gives them no options for escape or youth. Unlike the war film, the youth film is less concerned about historical violence that has been experienced and survived, and more engaged with exposing the structures of contemporary social violence. At the same time, it is "apolitical" in its apparent lack of concern for the ideological battle against Communism.

Hsin Chi's comedic play with genre motifs in *Dangerous Youth* both undermines the affective register of violence and brings the contours of the Taiyupian youth film into clearer focus. As with *Marine*, I will limit my analysis here to a repeated formal element, although here it is also a cinematic motif: the long shot take of the male protagonist, Kuiyuan, riding his motorcycle in a circle in an empty lot. This shot appears twice in the film, and is deconstructed in a third presentation in which three other bikers circle the same lot.

As Shiao-ying Shen notes, Kuiyuan's identification with the motorcycle draws from the genre archetype of the tough biker Marlon Brando, who plays the leader of a motorcycle gang in *The Wild One* (1954).[112] Shen adeptly identifies the different nature of the bike in *Dangerous Youth*: it is a multivalent motif, serving at once as an instrument of labor, mobility within the city scape, and an assertion of sexual power. Kuiyuan uses the motorcycle in his work as a delivery boy, as a means of quickly navigating urban space, and as a ride for the women he pursues. What he lacks for in education and wealth, Kuiyuan makes up for with two-wheel horsepower.

In one of the most archetypal youth film sequences of the film, Kuiyuan picks up the young runaway teen Qingmei on his motorcycle, who consents to a ride to assert her independence from her mother after a fight. By the time she asks, "Where are you taking me?" it is too late: he grins and speeds up on the long, straight freeway. The film abruptly cuts to an open field, a long shot in which Kuiyuan begins to circle empty space. Unlike the mid-length shot on the freeway, in which Qingmei's protest and Kuiyuan's smirk are visible against the backdrop of a constantly

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[111] Wang shows how the Taiwanese spy film draws from a variety of cinematic archetypes, from James Bond out of the UK to the "Jane Bond" subgenre of action films with female leads that emerged in Hong Kong. Wang Chunchi 王君琦, "Lixin de dianying kuayu shijian: yi Taiyu jiandiepian weili 離心的電影跨域實踐：以台語間諜片為例 [= Border-crossings of marginal cinema: the case of Taiyu spy films]," in *Wenxue dongya : li shi yu yi shu de dui hua* 文學東亞: 歷史與藝術的對話 *[= Literary East Asia: the Dialogue of History and Art]*, ed. Chen Fang Ming 陳芳明 (Taibei Shi: Zheng Da Chu Ban She 政大出版社, 2015), 119–45.

[112] Shen Shiao-ying 沈曉茵, "Cuolian Taibei qingchun: cong 1960 niandai wunengnan tanqi 錯戀台北青春：從1960年代三部台語片的無能男談起 [= Bad Romance of Youth in Taipei: of the Useless Man in Three Taiyupian of the 1960s]," in *Baibianqianhuan busiyi: Taiyupian de hunxue yu zhuanhua*, ed. Wang Chunchi 王君琦 (Taibei Shi: Lianjing, 2017).

changing landscape, the long shot merely shows two far away figures amicably sharing a ride. Both the drama between them and their movement through an urban landscape have stalled: they are literally driving around in an endless loop (Figure 4). As the shot lengthens, Kuiyuan's Brando-like machismo begins to deflate.

The death drive and thrill of a reckless joyride is effectively diminished into a version of the absurd comic chase, as typified in 1959's *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Travel Taiwan* 王哥柳哥遊台灣. Brother Wang, chased by a gangster on foot, finds himself running in a circle around a bench. He gains the upper hand against his foe by simply climbing on the bench—at which point the villain continues running around the bench until he is spent (Figure 5). Presented as a long take, this physical comedy, like the shot of the looping motorcycle, feels incredibly slow. The point in such a comic set-up is not the build-up of tension in rapid cross-cutting, or a sense of danger and violence, but a classic Bergsonian joke, where the human body takes on the rigid and mechanistic quality of a machine. By stepping out of the chase machine, Brother Wang creates an observational position for the film viewer and transforms the chase into a gag. Similarly, the long shot in *Dangerous Youth* undermines the threatening power of the motorcycle, through which Kuiyuan seeks to dominate the vulnerable Qingmei, by allowing the viewer to step out of the youth film apparatus. While a closer shot embeds the viewer in Qingmei's sense of entrapment and imminent bodily harm, the long shot reveals that the ride is neither dangerous nor truly reckless: it is merely repeating a safe, pre-determined pattern stretched out over a long 40 second take.

Comedy for the viewer collides with coercion within the narrative. Qingmei agrees to try a new job as a bar girl, which earns Kuiyuan commission from the bar owner. From this point onwards, Kuiyuan becomes complicit in selling a teen girl into prostitution. At the same time, the loop becomes a metaphor for the fatalistic quality of Kuiyuan's life: though he has the means of mobility, in reality there is nowhere for him to go but back into an endless grind through the dirt. *Dangerous Youth* mocks its own status as a low-budget genre film by presenting the motorcycle ride as a loop—a "bad" action effect, if the point of the youth film is kineticism and danger—but uses this moment to great symbolic advantage.

Marine and *Dangerous Youth* demonstrate the ways in which the comic collision of genre codes injected self-reflection into the representation of dark social realities such as war and social precarity. If genre film as a product of film law and subsequent cinematic industrialization was becoming frustrating normative, ambitious directors like Yi Man-hŭi and Hsin Chi added a sense of irony back into cinema by playing the genre game. In doing so, they created new genre archetypes and tropes that were increasingly self-aware about both the relationship of domestic cinema to global cinema and the power of cinema to modulate public affect. They were not, however, full manifestations of the comic genre game, which in which irony was dominant and pervasive. In the next section, I will describe the contours of the comic genre game as a feature of the 1960s film comedy genre, and how the spy comedy as a privileged subset became the quintessential Cold War game.

Fun House Rules

The 1960s film comedies of Taiwan and South Korea, especially those that broach volatile

issues of gender and ideology, pose a question that is at the heart of comedy studies. In short, are comedies conservative or anarchic in nature? Do they preserve social order, or challenge and threaten it? The comic genre game answers that they can be both at the same time, or none of the above. In fact, the unresolved tension between the normative and transgressive elements within a single film comedy may be its greatest wellspring of comic collision.

On the balance, however, a pattern emerges: the narrative tends to begin and end in line with normative values, but the middle stretches as far as it dares to go in the opposite direction. If the film were figured as a man his with hands tied above his head and feet bound together, his belly would balloon plasmatically large, away from the restraints on his comically tiny extremities. Is this a caricature of a prisoner or a fat man? This may be a question that can only be decided by the individual film viewer; but on the balance, it appears from a glance through the film archive that the man is unfailingly rotund, and sometimes only loosely bound.

For example, the 1969 Korean film *Mine is Better* 내것이 더 좋아 (dir. Yi Hyŏng-p'yo) begins with a situation that strains conventional notions of marriage. A city dwelling single man, Pongsu (played by Ku Pong-sŏ), is constantly pestered by his landlady's matchmaking attampts. After running into a penniless rube Sŏngch'un (played by Sŏ Yŏng-ch'un 서영춘徐永春), recently arrived from the countryside, Pongsu offers him a place to stay on the condition that he cross-dresses and convinces the landlady they are betrothed. As the narrative escalates, it is revealed that their neighbors are a pair of women (played by Ko Ŭn'a and Yi Kŭm-hŭi) who are also passing as a heterosexual couple; Yi plays the butch to Ko's femme. By the end of the narrative, the queer couples are reintegrated into society when they fall for each other and pair off in heteronormative fashion. In the censorship process this film was initially panned for promulgating "unhealthy" and "abnormal" behavior; and yet it miraculously passed through to production and release by making some corrections "on paper."[113] The narrative frame binds the film to heteronormativity, but the comic spectacle of Sŏ and Yi's crossed drag performances form the primary attraction of the film.

As *Mine is Better* demonstrates, the stretching of norms in these comedies often took the form of inversions. This could also take place on an axis of class instead of gender. The 1966 Taiyupian *Philandering Old Man Hu* 風流的胡老爺 (dir. Wu Fei-chien吳飛劍), for example, features the skinny É-á-châi 矮仔財 as the wealthy Old Man Hu paired with his domineering wife, played by Ling Ling 玲玲. After losing a valuable ring to a band of poor shoe-shine workers (led by comic actor Khong Ding 康丁) in a comedy of errors, they are coerced into lending their mansion to the workers so that their friend, another bar girl character named Qingmei (played by He Yuhua 何玉華), can fool her visiting mother into believing she has married a wealthy man. During the masquerade of the mother's visit, the owners of the mansion are cast as servants, and are soundly berated by the elder country woman for being terrible at their jobs. The tables are turned—but only until the ruse is revealed by a disgruntled former lover of Old Man Hu, and Qingmei's mother discovers the truth. Nevertheless, repenting her terrible treatment of servants in the past, Mrs. Hu offers Qingmei, the whole ensemble of shoe-shiners, and even Qingmei's fake husband jobs in Mr. Hu's business. The final sequence of the film

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[113] Park, *K'omidiŏn chŏnsŏng sidae* 코미디언 전성시대 *[= The golden era of comedians]*. 524-525.

shows the whole ensemble leaving for work from a modern apartment building, and Qingmei's mother sending them off with a wave. The end of the film integrates the merry band of marginalized provincial people into the urban white collar economy, but not before giving them the pleasure of taking over the big house. Their collective exploitation of Mr. and Mrs. Hu turns capitalist social structure upside down, if only temporarily.

The spy comedy was no exception to the pattern of conservative frame and comic inversion. The reversal here, however, comes from the value for competence in the spy game: the bumbling comedian turns out to be more competent than the skilled spy at the game of espionage. Here I turn to the two films that I will compare later in the chapter as privileged examples of subgenre. *You Didn't Know Salsari, Did You? 007 Explosive Laugh Version* 살사리 몰랐지? 007폭소판 (dir. Kim Hwarang, 1966) and *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* 王哥柳哥〇〇七 (dir. Wu Fei-chien, 1967) both indicate the Bond series as inspiration in their titles. James Bond, despite his flaws, reads internationally as a one of Britain's most talented spies, and both these films begin with men who are too poor and too incompetent even in their low wage jobs to approximate Bond's assurance and masculine glamor on screen. Sŏ Yŏngch'un's Salsari is a clerk in a jewelry store, Brother Wang is a small time toy inventor, and Brother Liu is a noodle shop owner on the run from debtors. Nevertheless, Salsari aspires to become a spy like Bond, reading and acting out Ian Fleming novels at the beginning of the film; and the thoroughly civilian Brother Wang and Brother Liu are mistaken for the fearsome spies 008 and 009 upon their arrival in Hong Kong. In the course of their respective films, they perform the role of spy as hero, and are more successful than they ever dreamt of being as action stars. By the end of the film, however, all return to their mundane lives: Salsari returns to Seoul from Pusan, where he was under cover amongst gangsters, and Brother Wang and Brother Liu return to Taiwan after the real 008 and 009 show up to reclaim their roles in the Hong Kong spy network. The implication that physical comedy could double for spy work is contained, and the comedian protagonists are reintegrated into their positions as petty bourgeoisie in urban society. In a further step of social re-integration, the cross-dressed Salsari returns to Seoul as a re-masculinized figure in a leather jacket with a fiancée on his arm.

The spy comedy relied in particular on the lead comedic performer to carry this role reversal, and as such was nearly always a comedian comedy. This was, as aforementioned, a common quality in most film comedies playing the comic genre game, since the comedian was the perfect vessel for stringing together a series of genres. A true jack of all trades who was master of none, the comedian actor generated constant comedic effect out of the fact that his presence in the genre was ironic. Because of his strong extra-filmic star persona as comedian, viewers knew on sight that he did not belong in any given genre he purported to play, and yet the pleasure came from the incongruity of his attempt to belong.

In Korean film, comedians such as the aforementioned Sŏ Yŏngch'un and Ku Pongsŏ took on one genre after another, from ethnic encounter (*Yŏkchŏn Chunggkuk chip;* The Train Station Chinese Restaurant, 1966) to the dance hall musical (*Wŏk'ŏhil esŏ mannapsida*; Let's Meet at Walker Hill, 1966) to horror (*Unsutaet'ong ilbojikjŏn*; A Spell of Good Luck, 1970) to the Western (*Tangnakwi mubŏpsa*, Outlaw on a Donkey, 1970) to the previously mentioned queer romantic comedy (*Nae kŏt-si tŏ chowa*; Mine is Better, 1969) and spy comedies such as

Salsari.[114] *Salsari* is symptomatic of this phenomenon in that it not only draws on the audience's extra-filmic knowledge of Sŏ Yŏngch'un's stage persona, "Salsari," but also jumps from one genre to another within the same work. The film opens with what appears to be a parody of the Bond cycle, with a clerk at a jewelry store who aspires to become 007 as he daydreams on the job. When jewelry is stolen from right under his nose, he goes on the run to recover it, making use of his skills as a wannabe Bond to catch the crooks and get the girl. The narrative escalates as Salsari goes undercover by cross-dressing as "cabaret" girl—dancing and drinking with male customers at a dance hall— and closes with his re-masculinization. Besides this cross-dressing narrative arc, and a noir element that comes from Salsari's engagement with the crime organization running the cabaret, the film also splices the spy narrative with romance and the sports film (boxing). Of these, the boxing sequence is perhaps the most sudden: Sŏ finds himself low on funds to pay after bringing a girl to a Chinese restaurant, and seeing a flyer on the wall for a boxing tournament, sets off to get the prize money. In the next scene, he quickly triumphs through the comical flailing of his slender limbs and heads back to the restaurant just as the restaurant owner is beginning to harass his date. The base coupling of the spy film and the comedy serves as a jumping off point to demonstrate Sŏ Yŏngch'un's performance, including the physical comedy of the boxing sequence and his well-known cross-dressing act.

In Taiyupian, series such as the Brother Wang and Brother Liu franchise took the heroes into backstage musicals (*Liang sha chuang ge wu tuan*; Two Fools Barge into the Song and Dance Troupe, 1959), new year films (*Wang Ge Liu Ge hao guo nian*; Brother Wang and Brother Liu Have a Good New Year, 1961), and fantastic adventure in the underworld (*Wang Ge Liu Ge you di fu*; Brother Wang and Brother Liu Travel the Underworld, 1967); the beggar series beginning with 1965's *Yidan yu qigai* (The Courtesan and the Beggar) starring Hu Dou 胡斗took on various folk tales; and various other talents such as Khong Ding 康丁 and the Mandarin singer Zhang Di 張帝would appear in comic melodramas (*Kang Ding you Taibei*, 1969) and romantic musicals (*Zhang Di zhao A-Zhu*, 1969). *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* was clearly intended as a film with a spy-comedy base pairing, but opens with the two friends locked in comical combat at a judo practice. Abruptly, practice is interrupted by two simultaneous phone calls, and the old friends both find themselves taking secret business trips to Southeast Asia. Stopping over in Hong Kong, they are mistaken as the secret agents 008 and 009. They escape a series of increasingly dangerous machinations of the "Devil Network" (魔鬼黨, the Chinese translation for SPECTRE), aided by a masked "person in black" (*heiyi ren*) who turns out to be none other than Agent 007. At the end of the film, the misunderstanding is cleared up when their uncanny doubles (played by themselves) show up, and they return to civilian status. Their travels in Hong Kong echo their first hugely popular film, *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Travel Taiwan*, and the episodic structure of the travel film comedy runs through as an undercurrent beneath the spy and comedy genres. Specific episodes also evoke sports film (judo), horror, cross-dressing comedy, and dance hall performance.

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[114] Other popular comedians featured in film included Yang Hun and Yang Sŏkch'ŏn, whom I introduce in Chapter 1, Kim Hŭi-kap 金喜甲, Kwak Kyusŏk 郭圭錫 (better known as "Fly Boy"), and Pae Samnyŏng 裵三龍.

The actual execution of the genre game in these comedies often happened in quick succession within a single film sequence. For example, in a chase scene from *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007*, the two comedians are on the run from the Devil Network, and decide to disguise themselves as women. This is a common act that they have used in previous films when they are on the run from dangerous villains, but here they barely get down a hallway before the enemy agents recognize them by their iconic fat-skinny shape. The cross-dressing performance gives way to a comic chase in the halls of an apartment building, but as the whole ensemble runs under a ladder, a bucket of paint suddenly falls on one of the agents. Face covered in a monochrome coat of dripping white mess and unable to see, the man rises and stumbles forward slowly, hands held in front of him in a Frankenstein parody (Figure 6). The comic chase is transformed momentarily into a horror chase: the Devil Network agent is now the image of a movie monster.

The scene that sets up Sŏ Yŏngch'un's extended cross-dressed performance in *Salsari* was also presented as a quick instance of the genre game. After successfully rescuing his new love interest Myŏngja from the clutches of the Chinese restaurant owner, Salsari brings her to a love motel and promptly demands that she take her clothes off. He begins removing his own clothing, overpowering her objections and sneaking brief lecherous looks while she reluctantly complies. The scene turns when he begins to don her removed clothing, from head to toe. At this point, the camera shows only Sŏ in the process of transformation, so that if the camera does engage in a type of male gaze, it gazes only upon the man who is putting on the trappings of femininity, and not on the actress in her under garments. Myŏngja, catching on with a giggle, begins tossing her clothing items into frame at the bashful Salsari. The scene of sexual assault out of a youth film or pink film turns into a cross-dressing game that is also moment out of a romantic comedy: in the next shot, the couple appear on the street, arm in arm, wearing each other's clothes. At the same time, it is also an extension of the spy genre, because Salsari is on the run from both the police and the gangsters, and cross-dressing is the perfect disguise.

That Salsari's prowess as a spy comes from femininity and not a glamorous masculine persona places the film squarely in the field of mainstream Camp. As I argue elsewhere, *Salsari Mollat-chi* does not so much address the Bond series itself with its gender irony, but targets the phenomenon of "secondary Bond" (*aryu Pondŭ*) spy films in Korean genre cinema.[115] If "straight" Korean spy films are constantly aspiring to create the "Korean Bond" and inevitably failing due to their location within a "secondary," post-colonial cinema, *Salsari* digs into its insecurities about the power of Korean masculinity by making a bold gender inversion. The best spy in this spy comedy, the only one who has a chance of success, is a man who has given up all pretense of masculinity: a man who willingly and skillfully performs femininity.

A similar ironization of masculinity takes place in *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007*, but it builds on an existing code of mainstream Camp in the Taiyupian. Elsewhere in article on the archetype of the female top agent in 1960s Taiyupian, I argue that the trope of competent female spy and incompetent male subordinates comes out of doubled desires for historical redemption

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[115] Evelyn Shih, "Doubled Over 007: 'Aryu Pondŭ' and Genre-Mixing Comedy in Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 22, no. 2 (December 28, 2017): 365–88.

and distinctness as a "parallel cinema."[116] Because the realization of the "Chinese Bond" film was quickly taken up by major Hong Kong studios Cathay and Shaw Brothers, and these Mandarin films were readily available in Taiwanese cinemas, the Taiyupian created a space for itself with a "female 007" craze. In most of these films, the male spy is a Bond lookalike who thinks he is the top spy, when in fact he is subordinate to the female spy, who is under cover and controls the whole spy team via secret command. This formula allows the Taiyupian to ironize the Bond archetype on the basis of gender. *Brother Wang and Brother Liu* extend this pattern, but heighten the ironic contrast: the male "spies" in this film are not just civilians, they are literally bumbling fools who must be saved by the female top spy 007, played by a young Chiang Ching-hsia 江青霞, who is under cover as a member of the Devil Network. If the Hong Kong Chinese Bond films were at one remove from James Bond, and the Taiyupian female 007 film another remove from Hong Kong cinema, the spy comedy *Brother Wang and Brother Liu* further ironized the entire enterprise. The primary function of Chiang's female spy is no longer just to win the spy battle, but to serve as a tireless babysitter for two knockabout clowns.

Both *Salsari* and *Brother Wang and Brother Liu* align themselves with mainstream Camp by suggesting ironic distance from the Bond film and its global chain reaction in local genre film scenes. They also ironize cinematic gender hierarchies, which put pressure on the male lead to conquer through masculine charisma, by giving over the role of spy action to female and feminine figures. The most important accomplishment of the comic genre game in the spy comedy, however, and in film comedy in general, is its ability to shake loose the tense categories of ideology and political allegiance through the comic mechanism of misidentification. This mechanism, like the genre games played by Yi Manhŭi and Hsin Chi, turns upon the multivalence of genre elements, but are focalized on the figure of the comedian as protagonist.

I will conclude my study with a comparative analysis of *Salsari* and *Brother Wang and Brother Liu* that focuses on two related instances of misidentification as mechanism within the comic genre game. First, I take up a key motif in the global spy film of the 1960s: the Bond gadget. These objects, as an extension of the protagonists who wield them, evoke a larger discourse of war technology and arms race during the Cold War. Yet these discourses are soundly shaken when the film comedy reinterprets them as toys, and the men who deploy them as child-like players in a spy game. Next, focusing on the comedian himself, I consider instances of doubling and doubled identity that blur the line between the spy and the civilian, the Self and the criminalized Communist Other. What happens when we take seriously the paranoid screed of constant vigilance? Is everyone a spy, or is no one a spy? What if legal criminality is wrongly assigned? The comic genre game as employed in these and other spy comedies interrupts the ideology of paranoid suspicion propagated by the state in the 1960s. Though the spy genre itself was embraced as an anti-Communist genre in both Taiwan and South Korea, the spy comedy

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[116] Evelyn Shih, "No Longer Bond's Girl: Historical Displacements of the Top Female Spy in 1960s Taiyupian," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, Forthcoming in 2019.

challenges that categorization through the comic collisions of genres, creating new spaces of ambiguity in cinematic experience.[117]

The Spy Who Played Games

Jacqueline Foertsch once argued with regards to Anglophone spy films of the 1960s that going undercover was often an act of diminishing or hiding a dominant masculinity, and was related to a paranoia of emasculation (and its Freudian articulation, castration).[118] This "incredible shrinkage" often read at the time, and more so now after half a century, as something approaching Camp and comedy in films such as *Our Man Flint*, and even in "straight" spy films such as *The Ipcress File* (both 1965). Foertsch's associations with the diminutive include femininity and queerness, and while those are both relevant to the current study, I would add one more quality to the calculus: the child-like, and its related quality, the ludic capacity for play. For the spy comedy of Taiwan and South Korea, the figure of the child-like man and his toys, embodied by the comedian protagonist, are employed to great effect in undercutting the heightened stakes of an international spy war.

Two small nations within the Pacific Cold War theater, Taiwan and South Korea were witness to the arms race, which brought a particular urgency to the technological innovation implied in the Bond gadget. When the hottest regional conflict features a gross mismatch of both war technology and military force, of a the US titan taking on Vietnamese guerillas and civilians, the question for Taiwan and South Korea was not which side were on, but where they stood on the spectrum of military power. How powerful were their arms? On the scale of global security, not very. Yet the constant state of militarization and readiness encouraged by government policies generated a desire for the means with which to fight the ubiquitous enemy. To the extent that the campaign to inculcate the public with spy paranoia was successful in both countries, citizens also had to trust that their government's armed forces and information services had the resources to keep them safe.

Despite their different positions under the American security umbrella, with South Korean sending soldiers to Vietnam in great numbers and Taiwan serving mostly as a location for US soldiers' rest and recreation, Taiwanese and South Korean attitudes towards so-called "Bond gadgets" appear strikingly similar in the funny mirror of the spy comedy. This is perhaps related to the fact that the code "007" had entered media discourse in both countries as a sign for a technological arms race. An article in *Chosun Ilbo* in July of 1966, for example, reported on the attempt of Czech diplomats to bug the State Department with the headline: "Diplomatic

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[117] For more on the anti-Communist relevance of the "straight" spy film, see Wang, "Lixin de dianying kuayu shijian: yi Taiyu jiandiepian weili 離心的電影跨域實踐：以台語間諜片為例 [= Border-crossings of marginal cinema: the case of Taiyu spy films]." See also: Young-sook 오영숙 Oh, "1960yŏndae Ch'ŏppo Aeksŏn Yŏngwawa Pan'gongjuŭi 1960년대 첩보 액션 영화와 반공주의 [= The 1960s Spy Thriller and Anti-Communism]," *Taejung Sŏsa Yŏngu* 15, no. 2 (December 2009): 39–69.

[118] Jacqueline Foertsch, "Incredible Shrinkage: The Perils of Patriotism in 1960s Spy Films," *Studies in Popular Culture* 25, no. 3 (2003): 33–48.

Espionage: New 007 Weapons/ Now the Age of Outer-Space Spies."[119] An introductory blurb explains, "The 007 battle between Washington and Prague has spread to the point where diplomats have been expelled (from America)." Here, the "Bond gadget" in question was a tiny bugging device, smaller than ever before, with a powerful transmission range that could go through thick walls. As if to emphasize its newness, an accompanying photo showed a much larger device that was once used by Soviets and Americans alike, but was now outdated and "strictly museum use" (*pangmulgwan yong*). In Taiwan's *United Daily News*, a 1967 article also evokes technological progress, calling newly updated bulletproof police cars "007" vehicles, only to be rebuffed by an unnamed official who believed there was no such need for such "dramatization."[120] Korean news media seemed more eager to connect "007" with the spy activities in international headlines, but the overall message was similar in both countries. "007" was code for advanced weaponry, and buried within this discourse was a narrative of developmentalism and dependency upon the United States, which led the Free World. Spy films in both countries often featured secret weapons imported from the United States, as well as Western European countries such as Germany.[121]

The diminutive version of the Bond gadget turns out in both comedy films to be the child's toy, an instrument of fantasy when real weapons—and real threats—are absent. In *Brother Wang and Brother Liu*, Brother Wang plays a toy inventor working for the "Outer-Space Toy Agency," traveling at the behest of his boss to establish a toy factory in Southeast Asia. The name of the toy agency, like the *Chosun Ilbo* headline, codes technological innovation as related to space exploration, and behind it the space race. The innovation in the comedy film, however, comes mostly in the form of ordinary objects that transform into toy guns. In one scene early in the film, Brother Wang teases his old friend Brother Liu by showing a radio and a camera out of which pop triggers and a gun barrels. The timid Brother Liu is duly frightened by what he believes are real weapons, until they are revealed to shoot only water, and the two have a laugh while engaging in a friendly water gun fight.

Though Brother Wang's inventions are designed around the merging of two uses in one object, the true genre collisions begin when the toys are misidentified as real weapons. Brother Wang's valise, an iconic "007 briefcase" containing blueprints for a new toy factory and designs for new gun-like toys, is stolen by Devil Network agents and brought back to headquarters. (Figure 7) Upon examination, the agents even find secret compartments for demo versions of his

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[119] Chosun Ilbo Staff, "Oegyo Ch'ŏppo Sinmugi: Ijen Uju Kanch'ŏp Sidae 외교 첩보 신무기: 이젠 우주 간첩 시대 [= Diplomatic Espionage: New 007 Weapons/ Now the Age of Outer-Space Spies]," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 17, 1966. See also United States Congress House Committee on Un-American Activities, "Testimony of Frank John Mrkva (June 15, 1967)," in *Conduct of Espionage Within the United States by Agents of Foreign Communist Governments: Hearings, Ninetieth Congress, First Session. April 6-7, May 10, June 15, November 15, 1967* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 560–65.

[120] Lian He Bao staff, "Sheng Xingjing Dingzao Fangdan Zhenfangche 省刑警訂造防彈偵防車 [= Provincial Police Create Bulletproof Vehicles," *Lian He Bao (UDN)*, September 22, 1967.

[121] Communist agents in the films, on the other hand, tended to receive advanced weapons from the Soviet Union. See the Taiyupian *Special Agent: Female Top Spy*特務女間諜王(*Tewu nü jiandiewang*, 1965) for a spy battle in Hong Kong using weapons received from Germany and the Soviet Union.

toy armory, an extra layer of security that seems to imply greater potency. They become firmly convinced in their misidentification of Brother Wang and Brother Liu as agents 008 and 009. The primary tone in this scene of discovery is dramatic irony, since viewers have already seen the "weapons" at work.

When the two friends are finally seduced by a female agent and captured, however, the toys turn irony back on itself. Facing interrogation in front of the whole Devil Network crew and their leader, Brother Wang sets off a train of smoke using a wind-up toy that renders the villains unconscious and allows the two comedians to escape from the room. Later, the two engineer another escape from a jail cell by tricking their prison guard with the promise of a camera as gift, only to threaten him at gun point with the camera-turned-gun once he was in close range. This second transformation of the toy back into weapon shows not only a satisfying triumph of the comedic heroes, but also the power of genre expectation. The guard does not know that he is in a comedy, so the gun can only be violent weapon; he cannot imagine that he is being duped. Likewise, the more viewers expect toys to remain toys in a film comedy, the more they might be surprised at the effectiveness of the toys as weapons.

A similar two-step transformation takes place in *Salsari Mollat-chi*, in which Sŏ Yŏng-ch'un deploys some "Bond gadgets" to show other characters that he is serious about following in James Bond's footsteps. At the moment that he deploys them, the sound track even briefly plays the James Bond theme song—but Salsari's pretention to Bond status is always deflated by the uselessness of his gadgets. Early in the film, for example, he reveals to his boss at the jewelry store that he has a hidden switchblade in his shoe that pops out on command. His boss, played by a mustachioed Yang Hun, reacts with amazement and fear comically out of proportion with the size of the blade. This is a clear reference to a similar shoe blade in *From Russia With Love*, which could kill a person within 12 seconds of a cut because it was smeared with fast-acting poison. However, when Salsari attempts to deploy the gadget in a fight, he only manages to get the blade get stuck in the wall while attempting to stab-kick his opponents. Since his leg is stuck to the wall, his opponents take the opportunity to give him a good drubbing. They pluck his gun out of his back pocket and subsequently mock him for using a fake weapon made of biscuit. As in *Brother Wang and Brother Liu*, the gun is rendered a harmless object of child's play, but later takes a turn to become effective: Salsari successfully uses the same weapon to intimidate and capture two gangsters in an alleyway attempting to move sacks of counterfeit currency. As he subsequently parades his two captives down a boulevard to the local police station, he even takes a bite out of the barrel of the gun, as if to underscore the fact that he has triumphed in an action sequence through the comedic means of misdirection.

The gadgets in these two films occupy a liminal space of genre, acting as objects that hold equal potential to play by the rules of comedy and the rules of spy film. As a kind of "open icon," the prop gun is a thing becomes an object according to the genre of the film that it props, and in moments when genres collide, so does the object nature of the gun.[122] The spy comedy displays in turn the "incredible shrinkage" of the weapon and the maximal usefulness of the toy, suggesting through the temporary reversal of their value an ironic distance from the arms race.

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[122] For the concept of an open sign, I refer to Webb Keane, "Signs Are Not the Garb of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things," in *Materiality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 182–205.

Like irony towards the Bond cycle itself, which removed Taiwanese and South Korean filmmakers from the race to match the technology and high production values of American and British cinema, irony towards the Bond gadget diffuses the anxiety of technological and military dependency.

What happens, then, when the cinematic image of the lead actors themselves becomes an open icon? Character types from different genres colliding in the same person, as they do so often in the spy comedy, brings to the fore the crisis in identity that was fomenting in 1960s Taiwan and South Korea. Even more than Ku Pongsŏ's character in *The Marine Who Never Returns*, who brings irony to bear in disrupting the ideological codes of the war film, the comedians in these two comedies interrupt the drive of the spy film towards a clear moral binary. If a spy film plays into paranoia, the spy comedy mocks paranoia by realizing its worst fears with comic bodies.

Double 007s

In a scene near the end of *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007*, the eponymous characters suddenly find themselves face to face with agents 008 and 009, their uncanny doubles. They had been mistaken for the agents from the moment of their arrival in Hong Kong, which kicked off their adventures in the cross hairs of a spy battle between the Devil Network and agent 007. Now as they sit on boxes of dynamite in the narrative climax, the duos are doubled, bringing a new symmetry to the screen and laying bare the conceit of the film through a sight gag. (Figure 8)

Mistaken identity is a classic comic plot, infinitely repeatable due to its simple structure. There is a built in dramatic irony to the mistaken identity comedy, for the audience knows on sight that the comedian doesn't fit: his every move is from another genre of performance. At the same time, the other characters in the film mistake him for someone in their genre, interpreting his (mis)behavior according to their codes. In *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007*, the duo fumble even the simplest of tasks, such as driving or walking in a straight line, but their enemies read their erratic action as deliberate spy strategies. Meanwhile, the audience expects the two famous comedians to be as harmless as the toy weapons they possess—until, like the toys, they triumph over a host of spies through the simplest slapstick tricks.

The audience's firm extra-filmic knowledge of Brother Wang and Brother Liu as comedians seems to be the anti-thesis of Cold War paranoia, in the sense that not-knowing is the prime criterion of suspicion. One suspects that there may be enemy spies everywhere, or that strangers are not who they say they are, but being unable to confirm these suspicions as truths or mistruths, one sinks into perpetual undecidability, perpetual fear. Even if paranoia renders one utterly convinced that the worst is true, it is the speck of doubt that generates an excessive insistence upon one's beliefs through the accumulation of "evidence." [123] Certainty is a foreign idea to the paranoid text, which thrives on mystery and thrill of revelation.

The central comic mechanism of *Brother Wang and Brother Liu*, on the other hand, turns on the certainty of the audience that the suspected spies are actually comedians. Each piece of "evidence," which the paranoid members of the Devil Network interpret as proof of their

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[123] For more on this type of paranoia, see: Richard Hoftstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964.

prowess as top spies, is immediately legible as physical comedy. Their misunderstanding escalates in a series of proliferating fat-skinny duos, all interchangeable with one another. To begin with, the original tall, fat Brother Wang and small, skinny Brother Liu are mistaken for 008 and 009 at the Hong Kong airport and are almost taken in by Devil Network agents greet them with leis, but they manage to escape thanks to the help of a masked agent 007. Next, when two Devil Network agents pursue Brother Wang and Brother Liu to a hotel and attempt to capture them, they are themselves rendered unconscious and captured by the masked Agent 007. Since the duo happen to constitute another fat-skinny duo, their wrapped bodies are carried all the way back to Devil Network headquarters before it is discovered that they are compatriots. Both of these escapes are interpreted as the sole work of agents 008 and 009. Soon after, when the title duo go on the run, they become their own doubles on their own initiative, using cross-dressing as a mode of disguise. Their femininity fools their enemies at first, but the iconicity of their bodies as a fat and skinny woman tips off the agents, and they give chase. Finally, the comic effect reaches a climax when Brothers Wang and Liu come face to face with themselves, and the game of misidentification comes full circle.

In this moment of trick editing, incredulity—which has been stretched to a limit—meets credulity. If it seemed impossible that the Devil Network mistook two civilians for two powerful secret agents, and more impossible that they have managed to survive several maneuvers by skilled murderers, the initial mistake now appears to have been entirely reasonable. Miraculously, the appearance of 008 and 009 transforms Brother Wang and Brother Liu into decent action heroes. They are tasked by the agents to rescue 007, whose cover had been broken, and they succeed in saving her from a machine poised to feed her to a bandsaw with no comic shenanigans, prat falls, or detours. She subsequently finishes off her nemesis, the top female agent of the Devil Network, in hand to hand combat. The supportive role that the comedians play in this action sequence is not only what one would expect the real 008 and a 009 to perform for 007, but also fulfills the *taiyupian* spy trope of male subordinate spies supporting top female agents. Instead of being just comedians, Brother Wang and Brother Liu have now become true doubles of 008 and 009, proxies that act on their behalf. As with the comic Bond gadgets that eventually work as great spy weapons, the irony of misidentified spies now bends back on itself, and the comedians do real spy work.

The knowing audience is happily duped, and the Devil Network less so. Yet the surprise engendered through this second turn, this new development in the relationship between the comedy and spy genres, does not produce the thrill of a paranoid suspicion confirmed, so much as the pleasure of resonance between incongruous entities. In the comic genre game, paranoid suspicion might occasionally be right—Brother Wang and Brother Liu make great spies—but it is also deeply wrong about the big picture. In fact, the accumulation of paranoid "evidence" overlaps neatly with the accumulation of "comic iteration": the repetition of a joke within a longer narrative structure that recalls its earlier comic effect and builds upon its associations.[124] In the spy comedy, it is the suspicion and fear that are misplaced, not the comedian-spy.

Cross-dressing in *Salsari Mollat-chi* displaces paranoia not through the absurdity of

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[124] I am indebted again for the studies of Greek comedy for this concept. Harold W. Miller, "Comic Iteration in Aristophanes," *The American Journal of Philology* 66, no. 4 (1945): 398–408.

proliferating doubles, but through the absurdity of perfect disguise. Whereas Brother Wang and Brother Liu are iconic within their film, and the misunderstanding comes from their infinite capability to proliferate, the conceit in *Salsari* is that Sŏ Yŏngch'un has disappeared into a female role. Diegetically, his performance of womanhood is a flawless cover for him as he investigates the crime organization that stole jewelry from his shop in Seoul and tries to clear his name. As I argue elsewhere, his ability to be successfully play a woman is the key component of his success as an aspiring spy.[125]

Disguise was considered to be a major part of espionage in the public conception of spy work in South Korean media discourse of the late 1960s. Terms such as *pyŏnjang* and *wijang kanch'ŏp* (disguised or undercover spy) were applied to real life spies as much as they were applied to characters in film in television. A particularly imaginative feature ("Special Feature: Catch the Spies!") in a February edition of 1969 *Sunday Seoul,* for example, begins with a textual and cartoon dramatization of the spy Yi Su-gŭn's capture, calling him at first an anonymous "man in his 40s" until his false mustache, toupee, and glasses fall off in a tussle with South Korean agents, and he is revealed to be a *wijang kanch'ŏp.*[126] (Figure 9) A second article then moves on to a critique of Yi's sub-par mustache job according to television and film make-up standards, with large-size images of actors before, during, and after the application of facial hair. Although this feature was meant to be entertaining, it does show spy work and the performative arts on a continuum. It also reinforces the idea that the point of disguise is for the prosthetic parts to become perfectly integrated into the performer's appearance, be he a spy or an actor, and to be entirely opaque to the casual viewer until its revelation. Many "straight" Korean spy films, playing into this inherent drama of the disguise, made it a fixture in their plots.[127]

The pleasure of watching Sŏ's cross-dressing, however, derives in large part from the fact that one *never loses sight* of Sŏ Yŏng-ch'un's male identity. The perfect disguise in a Sŏ Yŏng-ch'un vehicle is always perfectly transparent. The thrill of cross-dressing emerges from the incongruity of two overlaid concepts: that of the cross-dresser as biologically male, and that of the cross-dresser as performatively feminine. Without holding these two concepts simultaneously in mind, the audience has little access to the joke presented.

Once he enters the cross-dress mode, Salsari constantly plays his own double, and nowhere is this clearer than in a sequence in which he attempts to investigate the office of the crime boss, played by Hŏ Chang-gang, as a man in typically masculine dress. When he is almost discovered by two henchmen in the middle of riffling through papers, he ducks into another room and is in cross-dress by the time they open the door. After the two walk away, shaking their heads in confusion, he tries again to find evidence in the office in his masculine dress, but this time he has no time to leave the room before Hŏ enters with his group of crime leaders for a

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[125] Shih, "Doubled Over 007."

[126] O Hak-yŏng 오학영 and Yun Yŏng-ok 윤영옥, "P'unomp'aen haeng Poing 727ŭl ch'ujŏk chiryŏng 푸놈팬 행 보잉 727을 추적 지령 [= Chase after the Phnom Penh-bound Boeing 727]," *Sŏndaei Sŏul (Sunday Seoul)*, February 23, 1969.

[127] Oh, "1960yŏndae Ch'ŏppo Aeksŏn Yŏngwawa Pan'gongjuŭi 1960년대 첩보 액션 영화와 반공주의 [= The 1960s Spy Thriller and Anti-Communism]." 49.

meeting. Not knowing where to go, he hides in a closet while the meeting proceeds, and the gangsters plan their next big move. Unfortunately, they hear a sneeze just before they are ready to leave, and find that someone may have heard too much. What tumbles out of the closet is, magically, not Salsari in the masculine dress in which he entered, but Salsari in cross-dress, playing drunk. Claiming to have been too inebriated to understand the content of the meeting, he charms the crime boss into letting him go. This playful toggling back and forth between genders drives home the absurdity of perfection in disguise, and like the camera trick giving the viewer doubled Brother Wangs and Brother Lius, snaps incredulity back into a narrative credulity. Salsari has been able to maintain his cover thus far because, as shown, his transformation is instantaneous and flawless. All it takes is the closing of a door—and some simple trick editing—to switch between Salsari and his feminine alter ego.

Salsari's superhuman ability to switch between identities might also serve as a figure for the identity of a double agent, whose concepts of belonging are not gender, but ideology and national law. This is not so far-fetched a claim when we consider the pivotal scene that inspires him to go into hiding. Having marched two would-be counterfeiters to a police station, he attempts to turn them in for reward money. As luck would have it, the police chief receives a call in the middle of their meeting in which Salsari's name, age, and physique are described as the target of a national search. In the act of reporting two criminals, he has been reported on himself by his erstwhile boss at the jewelry shop for stealing a diamond necklace. In a split instant, Salsari becomes both hero and criminal, the good citizen reporting on suspicious activity and the object of a good citizen's report.

Where the central mechanism of misidentification in *Brother Wang and Brother Liu* is iconic proliferation, that of *Salsari Mollat-chi* is the multiplicity of distinct identities within a single subject. It injects irony into heavily policed social categories such as gender and legal status by flipping back and forth over boundaries with shocking ease. Ultimately, both films make use of trick editing to play the comic genre game, bringing the comedy and the spy film together in adjacent frames; sometimes they even share one frame, split in two. These moments are both collisive, in that they offer the viewer the option of choosing one of two genres, but also formative of a new synthesis through the dialectic of two opposing interpretations.

Conclusion

The comic genre game shakes loose the boundaries between strong social categories, and at its best suggests a new path forward. If the status of criminality, Communist or otherwise, can come into serious question through a comic mechanism of misidentification, perhaps the concept of ideology as absolute could be deferred. If the gender hierarchy of the masculine and the feminine can be inverted twice in the course of one film, generating an ongoing irony of gender, perhaps it would be possible to move towards a permanent parabasis of gender as trope. This is particular surprising when it comes to a genre such as the spy film, which at this moment in the 1960s is so powerfully centered on the masculine archetype of James Bond, a global model of the charismatic male action star. In fact, global genre itself could be shaken from its hegemonic position through the comic genre game's mockery of aspirational genre film on the local level.

Through their active play with genre, film comedies of the era made comic attraction out of self-reflection. Though their genre game stopped just short of becoming truly "intellectual

montage," it generated a new ironic sensibility for popular film audiences with an appealing claim: that the viewer with a taste for genre film was not provincial or vulgar, but a knowing connoisseur who was smart enough to be in on the joke. In the process of following the comic genre game, one also becomes immersed in genre-philia, and the unique kineticism of a collisive cinema style.

As my historicization of the genre game outside of the film comedy demonstrates, the aesthetic of the comic genre game was infectious, its effects rippling out in popular culture throughout the decade of the 1960s as genrification of film proceeded apace with the pressures of social categorization. In an era where ideology was locked into binaries, a cinematic aesthetic that embraced the productivity of collision injected much-needed innervation into the mass culture scene. The genre game generated consciousness of impasses in public discourse under strong state control by cultivating consciousness of cinematic genre. It was a game that trained a filmgoing public to know and love genres, but to love them for their capacity to take each other apart. The vision of heterogeneity created thus in the 1960s and early 1970s would be crucial in the transformation of counterpublic spheres from mainstream Camp to enunciated political identities in the next turbulent decade.

Chapter 3.
Nonsense of Noise in Taiwan

From Noise to Nonsense

Wang Chen-ho opens his short story of April 1967, "An Oxcart Dowry," with an epigraph juxtaposing the works of a musician to silence, and the Henry James quote in English to its elliptical Chinese translation: "…There are always also moments in life when even Schubert would answer with silence…" (Figure 1) The configuration of the text suggests a warp and weft, the horizontal progress of English rotated to fit the even fall of characters down the page. If the Chinese rendition specifically offers the 19th century Austrian composer as the last bastion against silence, the doubled presence of Henry James' quote signals something else: the act of translation as a remedy to noise.

Information theory conceives of noise as the necessary counterpoint to redundancy in communication, where the former is the unknown and the latter is the known. If the English quote comes across as an alien if not entirely unknown text to educated Taiwanese readers, the redundancy of the Chinese translation clears up the scrambled signal. When sending messages by radio, there must be enough redundancy so that the listener may guess and fill in the gaps created by interference, but there must also be enough missing information to justify a communication in the first place. A wholly redundant message is useless and clarifies nothing.[128] Wang's story, which features a partially deaf protagonist named Wanfa living on the edge of poverty in provincial Hualien, is precisely about the entropy of communication as it passes through a damaged membrane. Like the words of Henry James, messages do get through—but they are transformed in the process of interpretation. Wanfa as an interpreter of the hearing world creates an alternative system of sense to order his existence, becoming the Subject of postcolonial nonsense. He troubles a hearing reader's sense by contesting the boundaries of noise.

Postcolonial nonsense as I conceive it in this chapter is inspired by Susan Stewart's broad conception of nonsense as "any activity that produces 'not-sense,'" which for her includes children's folklore, English nonsense literature of the 19th century, and modernist literature.[129] These activities, as Stewart explains, introduce a "splitting" in the domain of common sense by juxtaposing an alternate domain that cannot fit within the first context. This reflexive action "undermines the suspension of doubt" needed to maintain common sense as a closed system or a world view, and transforms it into one ideology among others. This view of the "split," created through various methods of juxtaposition, is consonant with that of Deleuze, who discusses the "paradoxical entity" as that which guarantees "the convergence of the two series which it traverses, but precisely on the condition that makes them endlessly diverge."[130]

Whether nonsense comes from the co-presence of two domains, two series, or *two*

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[128] Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

[129] Stewart, *Nonsense*. 51.

[130] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). 40.

languages, as I suggest in the case of Taiwanese literature, what is clarified by various attempts at describing nonsense is its duality, and the potential for interpreting the two sides as positivity and negativity. In English, this is patently clear in the linguistic constitution of sense and non-sense, the latter being derived from the negation of the former. Homi Bhabha further called attention to the potential for interpreting this within the force field of a coloniality, in which nonsense productively "displaces those dualities in which the colonial space is traditionally divided: nature/culture, chaos/civility." He offers Derrida's figure of the *hymen,* a metaphor of a two-sided surface much like the mirror in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, or like Wanfa's ear drum. Yet nonsense in Taiwan is *post*-colonial, and realigns the relationship of noise and nonsense in a way peculiar to the island's polylingual constitution. Bhabha's prototypical moment of nonsense is actually transcription of a mysterious noise in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924):

> *Ouboum* or the owl's deathcall…are not naturalized or primitivistic descriptions of colonial 'otherness,' they are the inscriptions of an uncertain colonial silence that mocks the social performance of language with their non-sense; that baffles the communicable verities of culture with their refusal to translate.[131]

Culture in the colonial India of British novels, notably, is English, and those for whom the noise "ouboum" is opaque and terrifying are the participants in that culture. They subscribe to the horizon of "common sense," to borrow Stewart's term—a sense which is threatened *by* nonsense, and a sense from which the colonized are barred. In Taiwanese nonsense, however, the point of audition is resituated in the marginal figure: the poor, the non-speaker of cosmopolitan language, or even, when it comes to Wanfa, the partially deaf. If their hearing is incomplete, and renders them vulnerable, it also places with them the agency to interpret the noise; it positions them to threaten the received notion of culture *with* nonsense.

Postcolonial nonsense, unlike the division-era nonsense that I will explore in the next chapter, locates the source of not-sense in *noise*, or the presence of linguistic other within a form of communication—here, the fictional text. I do not argue that there is no postcolonial nonsense in Korea, for of course the colonial experience created a generation of people bilingual in Korean and Japanese, and the presence of American military bases on the peninsula to this day indicates a constant undercurrent of English in South Korean society. However, the postcolonial nonsense of noise had deep roots in the polylingual island of Taiwan, which through much of its inhabited history was the site of noise in daily communication. Not only do the indigenous peoples speak more than ten languages, but ethnic Chinese settlers also cleaved to their separate Hokkien and Hakka linguistic groups up through the 19th century. The frontier status of Taiwan meant that Mandarin, or the language used by Qing officialdom, did not make many inroads into island society. Japanese colonialism brought with it Japanese as a modern lingua franca in 1895, to be replaced after retrocession in 1945 with modern Mandarin, which was the national language of the Republic of China. American military presence and the introduction of American education as a badge of elite competence in post-war society placed English at the top of a layered linguistic environment, in which mutual misunderstanding was not just a mistake—it was an inevitable fact of life.

The Cold War system as maintained by the Chiang government and its language policy

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[131] Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994). 124.

created a hierarchy of linguistic competency, with indigenous languages at the lowest rung; Hokkien and Hakka in the middle; Mandarin occupying all official space; and American English a distant but ever-present figure of a global system. Japanese also continued to be a shadow presence: due to the successes of colonial education, most Taiwanese were at least bilingual, with a middle and elite class literate in modern Japanese letters. Though Japan continued to lead the region economically under American guidance, raising the cultural prestige of Japanese culture, Japanese language was also associated the second-class status of Hokkien and Hakka language speakers in Taiwan.

The languages of Taiwan were *permeable* in that the same individual could have various competencies in many of them at once, and yet they were separate enough as linguistic systems that one language could simply come across as noise. When Wanfa, a Hualien man, hears nothing but "*yi yi o o*" from the moving mouth of Mr. Jian, a neighbor from Lugang on the other side of the island, it is a metaphor for the incomprehensibility that defines the everyday experience of the most marginalized islanders. The less social capital one has, the less symbolic power can be mustered through one's practice of language, both in speech and comprehension.[132] In "Oxcart Dowry," Wang Chen-ho figures this lack as disability, and the experience of such failed communication as noise; it is Wanfa's interiority as elaborated within his character zone that renders this noise nonsense.

In one passage, for example, the arrival of a neighbor, a new friend of Mr. Jian, is described from his point of audition:

> One evening when he marched over with his tribe of dirty flies, it happened the man named Jian was washing off his body odor at a nearby creek. Wanfa could make out the pickled goods seller's voice—with a tone so nasal, it was like his mouth was placed at the rim of one of his vats, a *buzz* at each word 一字一個嗡 —but he didn't go out to greet the man.[133]

The noise of the pickled goods seller's voice, as distorted by his nasal passage and Wanfa's ear, is reconfigured so that he becomes one with the flies that surround him at all times, thanks to his pungent occupation. Now literally reduced to buzzing, he is transformed from someone of higher hearing privilege to a nuisance as dismissible as the flying pests. In this inversion of power between Wanfa and the hearing-capable neighbor, Wanfa is able to opt out of an unwanted social interaction by pretending not to hear, a strategy for being "disabled but not incapable."[134]

Yet this nonsense world where a man, his stench, and his flies are one being disappears as a single word he utters as he speaks to Wanfa's son Fivey drills through Wanfa's defenses.

> "Where's the guy that fooled/fucked (*gan*) your mom 奸你母底?"
>
> "…" It wasn't clear how Fivey answered.
>
> "Jian 簡 (*gan*), Jian (*gan*), where'd that guy who奸*gan* your mom go?"

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[132] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[133] Chen-ho 王禎和 Wang, *Jiazhuang yi niuche* 嫁妝一牛車 *[= An Oxcart Dowry]* (Taibei Shi: Yuan Jing, 1976). 93. Emphasis added.

[134] 殘而不廢Wang. 91.

"Bastard." Wanfa sprinted out, shaking through and through with anger…[135]

In Taiwanese Hokkien, *gan* is the pronunciation for the words "fooled through treachery" 奸, "fuck" 姦, and the surname Jian 簡, a fact not entirely evident when reading in Mandarin. It is quite possible that the pickled goods seller was simply looking for his friend Mr. Jian/Gan, but through the repetition of the unfortunate homophone, the word transforms into Wanfa's worst fears: that Mr. Jian and his wife are having an affair outside of his hearing, and that everyone in the village knows of his cuckoldry. The nonsense world here turns against Wanfa, making him into the victim of his own paranoia. At the same time, the pun allows the reader with an ear for Taiwanese access to a satisfying affective position where the name of the interloper, Mr. Jian, is conflated with obscenity. Though later editions would explicate the pun for non-speakers of Taiwanese, the original publication in 1967 has no annotations, reserving comic recognition for the knowing reader; to others it was simply the indication of something just out of hearing.

Here we find the crucial distinction between the buzz of "gibberish" and the order of "nonsense," which exists even though it may be slightly beyond comprehension. As Michael Holquist usefully articulates: "If meaning in nonsense is dependent on the field it constructs, then the difference between nonsense and gibberish is that nonsense is a system which can be learned, as languages are learned."[136] To the reader who does not know Taiwanese Hokkien, "Oxcart" provides instruction by implying the shared aural qualities of the three characters (*gan*); to the Taiwanese Hokkien reader only educated in modern Chinese letters, the text teaches one to read in the aural capacity of one's mother tongue.

The pun and the literalization of the metaphor are, as Stewart notes, classic strategies of nonsense: "splitting discourse" by introducing various possible readings of the same word and confronting metaphor with its own impossibility. As types of "simultaneity," these kinds of nonsense "flaunt the juxtaposition of incongruous worlds."[137] These worlds are the hearing world and the non-hearing world in "Oxcart Dowry," but in subsequent works Wang would make the metaphor more explicit: the problem was different linguistic habitus, and the inherent social hierarchy therein.

Wang Chen-ho was not alone in his sensitivity to noise in the linguistic landscape, as a comic aesthetic of nonsense was emerging in the late-1960s literature of like-minded colleagues at *Wenxue Jikan* (Literary Quarterly; hereafter *Wenji*) where "Oxcart" was first published. Though the *Wenji* writers such as Wang, Huang Chunming, and Chen Yingzhen were retrospectively recognized as "realists" and the pillars of *xiangtu* nativist literature in Taiwan,[138] what this chapter isolates is their interest in language and play. Specifically, this chapter considers moments of nonsense as figured in representations of babble, poly-lingual puns, and

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[135] Wang. 93.

[136] Michael Holquist, "What Is a Boojum? Nonsense and Modernism," *Yale French Studies*, no. 43 (1969): 145–64. 151. See also Sewell, *The Field of Nonsense*.

[137] Stewart, *Nonsense*. 156.

[138] Lu Cheng-hui 呂正惠, "Cong 'Bihui' dao 'Wenji' 從《筆匯》到《文季》[= From Bihui to Wenji]," *Wen Xun*, no. 213 (2003): 43–46.

words from a guest language embedded in literature of a host language to identify a specifically literary use of comic incongruity. While nonsense literature does not constitute all of literature in 1960s and 70s Taiwan, this chapter argues that it played a vital role of cultivating a postcolonial readership, one that recognized the experience of language as noise and intuited the rules of the nonsense game.

To call this literature comic may appear flippant, considering that by representing multiple languages in conflict, they were taking on not only the government's Mandarin policy, but also expressing an oppositional stance to American neo-imperialism, which sought to unite global culture under the flag of the Free World. This was not a position to be taken lightly: Chen Yingzhen in particular served a sentence as a political prisoner from 1968 to 1975, and *Wenji* itself had a history of run-ins with the law which played a part in shutting it down after ten issues in 1970, with two brief revivals sputtering out in 1971 and 1973. At the very least, their attempts to represent Hokkien language and the experience of Hokkien-language speakers within their largely Mandarin fictional texts constituted a minor literature that noisily objected to the major tradition of Chinese letters. Postcolonial literature in Taiwan meant post-Japanese, but it also came in the aftermath of the Chiang government's new linguistic violence.

Yet as "Oxcart," many of Wang's later works, and certain works by Huang and Chen show, the turn to nonsense was absolutely vital. If their work was at times weaponized and tendentious, it was also engaged in a cutting form of play. As Freud argues: "An un-tendentious joke scarcely ever achieves those sudden outbursts of laughter that make tendentious jokes so irresistible."[139] When the joke drifts into the realm of the obscene ("used to strip someone naked"), marks an unarticulated aggression, or plays to a particular audience by excluding its others (the latter two being what Freud calls "hostile jokes"), it can prove the most psychically effective. A nonsense word salvaged from raw noise in Wanfa's imperfect hearing, *gan* performs all these functions: it strips Wanfa's wife and Mr. Jian naked, articulates Wanfa's rage and paranoia as a marginalized person, and identifies its audience through a play on words in Taiwanese Hokkien.

Schubert may find himself at a loss for words, but nonsense never rests in silence; it lays down new rules for the game. This chapter presents the prehistory of cacophony in the colonial period, the additional layer of sound brought by American soldiers and education, and the *Wenji* writers as the core group of Cold War era writers engaging with noise through nonsense. In doing so, it will explore the nonsense of naming and insult, a tendentious form of comic play beginning with colonial puns; the strategy of embedding English text as nonsense against the backdrop of developmental Taiwan and US army base culture; and finally, the nonsense of enterprise within global capitalism and the noise of the regional war machine. When we take seriously the agency of mishearing, a man becomes a cloud of flies, a buzz per word; a raven becomes like a writing desk; and Henry James' European drawing rooms are refigured as Wanfa's hovel by a Hualien cemetery. This chapter traces the relations that spring up between the separate elements of such irreconcilable comic incongruities.

The Nonsense of Naming

> It was all due to Master That-Old-Bitch's encouragement and direction that we could build such a model village, and everyone is discussing whether it was time to set up a contribution plaque for him, perhaps a

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[139] Sigmund Freud, *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Books, 2003). 91-92

> bronze statue in the future, or a new temple in his honor! Great contributor, Master That-Old-Bitch! Builder of the model village, Master That-Old-Bitch!
>
> Haha, great contributor? Haha! Model village? [140]
>
> —From "Model Village" (1935) by Chhóa Chhiu-tông

In 1935, Taiwanese vernacular writer Chhóa Chhiu-tông (pinyin *Cai Qiutong*; 1900-1983) published a satirical story exposing the doublethink required of Taiwanese villagers who lived under the thumb of a Japanese official bent on making their community a "model village." The conclusion of the narrative, cited above, is literally a dialogue between the voice of villagers extolling the official Nakamura and the voice of their better judgment scoffing at this flattery. Folded into the naming of this figure is another act of doubling, exchanging the Japanese name "Nakamura" for "That Old Bitch" 老狗母仔 in Taiwanese, which is pronounced "Ná káu bú-á."[141] The profanity of the name enabled a short hand for colonial reversed doublethink: whenever praise or honorific is performed, as when appending the word "Master" to his name, insult arrives in the same breath. In *Ná káu bú-á*, we find the Taiwanese colonial version of the macaronic, which is a literary construction written in more than one language.[142] It is a "controlled simultaneity" that splits the reader's knowledge in two: knowledge of Japanese and the power structures of a Japanese system, and knowledge of Taiwanese Hokkien as a profane mode of transcription.

Like most other practitioners of Taiwanese vernacular 台灣話語in this period, Chhóa was self-taught in his particular literary patois, which was inspired by the modern Chinese vernacular movement but replaced spoken Mandarin with spoken Hokkien as the model for vernacularization. He and his colleagues were engaged in the quixotic enterprise of participating in a modern Chinese nation while living in colonial Taiwan, where the "national language" (*kokugo*) was Japanese. They put down their stakes in a profoundly noisy literary landscape, populated by classical Chinese as learned in private studios, modern Japanese as learned in public schools, scarce but circulating texts from Republican China, and the Taiwanese vernacular of their own making.

Chhóa's brand of nonsense, which required the ear to decode puzzles for the reading eye, reveals a prehistory for nonsensical insult in Cold War Taiwan, when the prestige language was no longer Japanese, but American English. The language of the ear shifted to Mandarin as the post-war generation grew up with the new language. The target of insult, too, shifted from colonizer to the figure of the striving middle class Taiwanese professional, who inserted a smattering of English into their everyday speech as a performance of cosmopolitan linguistic competence.

Unlike Chhóa's text, which was an attempt at inscribing the language of the colonized in

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[140] Yang Yunping 楊雲萍, Zhang Wojun 張我軍, and Cai Qiutong 蔡秋桐, *Yang Yunping, Zhang Wojun, Cai Qiutong heji* 楊雲萍，張我軍，蔡秋桐合集 *[Yang Yunping, Zhang Wojun, Cai Qiutong joint anthology]*, ed. Zhang Henghao 張恆豪 (Taibei shi: Qian Wei chubanshe, 1991). 231.

[141] The Taiwanese consonant "b" is pronounced partly between a "b" and an "m" in English.

[142] Stewart, *Nonsense*. 165. Stewart's great array of examples include James Joyce in *Finnegan's Wake*, Edward Lear's verse, and the term *dada*.

fiction, the postcolonial literature of nonsense often took the position of minor literature, in which word clusters suggesting Taiwanese Hokkien peppered the body of a modern Chinese text.[143] Like Franz Kafka, a Czech Jew who "[opts] for the German language of Prague as it is and in its very poverty," Wang Chen-ho and his colleagues maintained the wholeness of the Mandarin vernacular—except in moments of intensity that stretched the bounds of Chinese character orthography by representing words in Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka, Japanese, or aboriginal language. Before even approaching the ludic level of nonsense, in other words, Wang and other writers of his generation represented the splitting of their own linguistic consciousness: their ideal readers would, like them, be competent in both the written and aural languages of the island.

In his 1973 story "Xiao Lin Comes to Taipei," published in a revival issue of *Wenji*, Wang Chen-ho takes aim at office workers in an airline company through the character zone of the eponymous Lin, who is newly arrived from the countryside. His character is established early on by his understanding of American and Japanese clients as *a-dok-á* 阿凸仔and *a-bun-á* 阿本仔, coded Taiwanese Hokkien colloquialisms for outsider groups. These *intensors* indicate the Taiwanese Hokkien wording of Lin's interiority and set him apart from the voice of the omniscient narrator, which is rendered in Mandarin. A lowly temp surrounded by those who interject English words such as "*Reservation Confirmed*," "*Sure*!" and even "*Budweiser*" into their everyday speech, Lin begins to imagine their English names as profanities, partly as a matter of mishearing. His strategies range from Taiwanese sound-mapping, as when "Nancy" becomes "Rotten Corpse" (*nūa*-si爛屍, also slang for "lazy-bones"), to Mandarin sound-mapping, as when "Dorothy" becomes "Dump the Trash" (*daolaji* 倒垃圾). There are names that match perfectly, such as "Kick Butt" (*tipigu* 踢屁股) for T. P. Gu (T.P. 顧); and names eschewing perfect mimicry for the even better insult, such as "Shitting Upside Down" for "Douglas" (*dao guo lai la shi* 倒過來拉屎). His mishearings are presented as parenthetical interjections within the text of his eavesdropping, often alongside his affective reaction: " 'Where did you hear that rumor, Rotten Corpse?' asked Dorothy (Xiao Lin was secretly flabbergasted: what was such a nice young miss doing with a name like 'Dump the Trash?') who was sitting to the right of Mrs. Wang."[144] The reader, like Lin, is embedded into a multilingual and macaronic soundscape.

This short story was later adapted into a novel titled *Portrait of the Beauties/Americans* 美人圖 (1982), a pun that ironically identifies Lin's co-workers as aspirational Americans and nonsensically compares the work of the novel to the classical Chinese genre of female portraiture. The word *mei* acts as an ironic, inverted invocation of the "ugly American," although what is mostly at stake is "ugly American*ism*" in the behavior of the airline employees. In the course of the narrative, it is revealed that those who speak even a modicum of English—and in some cases, Japanese—are quickly promoted at the company, and those who do not are regularly humiliated, since they are of little worth in serving foreign clients. Lin's arsenal of insults reverse

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[143] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[144] Wang, *Jiazhuang yi niuche* 嫁妝一牛車 *[= An Oxcart Dowry]*. 221.

this hierarchy by centering the power to interpret—or to mishear—in the character with the least social capital.

Unlike Wanfa, who merely reduces the words of the pickled goods seller to buzzing, Lin and Wang Chen-ho behind him perform a more tendentious act of nonsensical insult that glosses the very identities of the would-be cosmopolitans as scatological and grotesque. The characters are not transformed so much as the text, which, repeating the obscene names again and again, prompts the reader to imagine a woman named Rotten Corpse/Lazy Bones talking about going to a salon, or Shitting Upside Down flirting on the phone with a female operator.

Postwar uses of the nonsense insult tend to target these types of middle class figures more than figures of higher authority or power, like Nakamura in Chhóa's story. The adoption of English or Anglicized names by striving middle class figures was increasingly common, and nonsense literature identified this choice as a sign of servile acquiescence to the global hierarchy created by US aid and cultural hegemony. It masked a kind of self-hatred, which for Wang and other literary critics of neo-imperialism was just as insidious as an oppressive language regime imposed from the outside.

In his 1977 story "I Love Mary," Huang Chunming titles the opening section after a Confucian proverb, "Words flow from the rectification of names 名正言順" and elucidates this kind of self-naming from the perspective of neo-colonial comprador Chen Shunde.

> Dawei • Chen大衛•陳; his original Chinese name was Chen Shunde. It was only because he worked at a foreign business in Taipei and needed a Western name 洋名 that he was called Dawei • Chen. In the beginning, the Western name was adopted because it was convenient for Western tongues; who knew that friends who met him after the fact, and even his wife, would just call him Dawei? But the so-called Dawei, when used by Westerners and Chinese friends who understood a little Western language, was just the Western word DAVID. This, of course, was the authentic Western pronunciation. Other Chinese friends, calling upon his name, would use the two Chinese characters' pronunciation, clearly enunciating *dawei* ㄉㄚˋㄨㄟˋ; which would be the two characters Dawei大衛.

Co-workers eventually begin shifting to the two characters "Big Stomach" 大胃when addressing Dawei, a new gloss on his chosen name that in the narrative comes to represent both his big-bellied physique and his hunger for upper social mobility. The slippery slope that began simply as convenience at work eventually enters his family life, and even fixes itself to determinants of his body and his character. He becomes, like Brother Wang, a figure of caricature—but his plasmaticity is figured through the nonsense of the macaronic, and the fluid quality of the polyphonic, multiply significant Chinese character.

Huang, like Wang Chen-ho, was partial to the macaronic and its adjacent practice of the portmanteau word. In the same issue of *Wenji* that Wang Chen-ho published "Xiao Lin Comes to Taipei" in 1973 Huang published what would become one of his signature novellas, "Sayonara · Goodbye" 莎吻娜啦 · 再見. Featuring a translator named Huang who works with foreign clients, this time figured as Japanese businessmen visiting Taiwan for sexual tourism, the story demonstrates the co-presence of Japanese and English as cosmopolitan languages that may be

comically resituated within postcolonial nonsense. The narrating protagonist, Huang, feels humiliated by the assignment of bringing Japanese tourists back to his home town of Jiaoxi to visit a brothel, but cannot openly reveal his disgust. Frustrated when one businessman complains that the sound of Taiwanese language sounds like fighting—or, we might say, like *noise*—the frustrated Huang suppresses his anger and answers with a profane linguistic lesson.

> "We country people call it 'coming together in sin' 相姦,and soldiers call it 'firing the cannon' 打砲, and you think that is uncouth, unfit for the ear. But if you say 'make love' 做愛in Japanese, or use the gulping method of the Japanese language to swallow foreign loan words raw and say 'maigelao' 買個勞 (*Make love*) then you think it's elegant, and romantic, right." I saw them all laugh. I continued: "Actually, whether it's coming together in sin or firing the canon, or even if it's *maigelaozuoai* 買個勞做愛—isn't it the same thing! You can't say that just because you say *maigelaozuoai*, there is a different way of doing it, or that it doesn't create sin, or that it is a spiritual union of the flesh, or that it reaches the highest realm."[145]

Despite Huang's growing passion, his audience merely collapses in laughter at the nonsense construction of *maigelaozuoai*. In fact, this construction involves several layers of nested languages, dissected by Huang as a hierarchy of social power. Beginning with the "country people" of Taiwan, Huang moves to the "soldiers," who are on government pay and hence slightly higher up on the social ladder; the government also condoned the use of prostitution near army bases.[146] This is, of course, the same kind of military prostitution that the Japanese men benefited from when they were members of the imperial army during WWII. Yet the Japanese adoption of the term "make love" was intended to set the Japanese sexual act apart. Huang additionally notes that the Japanese word for making love is actually transliterated from English (*meikurabu* メイクラブ), which he encodes as *maigelao* in Chinese characters—literally "to purchase labor." Huang Chunming's macaronic sensibility is revealed in the final portmanteau, *maigelaozuoai*, which is actually a new formulation of Japanese sexual tourism: "to purchase labor-make love."

Like Chhóa's "Master Old-Bitch," Wang's "Douglas/Shitting Upside Down," and Huang's own "David/Big Stomach," *maigelaozuoai* offers one element of cosmopolitan culture—a word in English via Japanese transliteration—and a second element that profanes the first, introducing disorder and a most satisfying gesture of disrespect. Wang Chen-ho and Huang Chunming may not have learned their trade directly from Chhóa and his generation. Yet they shared a sensibility for nonsense of simultaneity in language, from the macaronic to the pun and the portmanteau.

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145 Huang, "Sha Yao Na La · Zai Jian." In *Sha Yao Na La · Zai Jian.* 147. Emphasized words appeared in English lettering in the original text without italics.

146 For a firsthand account of the partly government run brothels near army bases, see Ye Xiangxi 葉祥曦, *Basanyao junzhong leyuan* 八三一軍中樂園 *[Make love, then war]* (Taibei shi: Dala chuban, 2014). This account, the first part of which was published in 2006 in a newspaper essay contest on sexual matters, appears to have inspired the 2014 film, *Paradise in Service* 軍中樂園.

This reveals the ongoing split nature of linguistic consciousness in Taiwan, which cultivated the ear for nonsense among both writers and the reading public.

But if fluency in the Japanese language was entrenched in fifty years of colonialism and re-ignited by concerns of post-war neo-imperialism through business interests, how did English infiltrate the linguistic ecosystem and occupy the top level of the linguistic hierarchy by the 1960s? In the next section, I will account for the importance of American English as the language of global culture and elite education, using the 1960s literary journal as a locus of inquiry.

The Nonsense of English: A Lesson in Pirating

On June 5, 1962, the cover of a Taiwanese book catalogue made it into the New York Times. (Figure 2) [147] The issue at hand was not so much the nonsensical whimsy of a mirror image found half way across the world as it was about litigation. Nevertheless, as the copied double sails began cropping up back in their seas of origin, the litigants proved themselves not unaware of the comic potential.

> Perhaps it is the subtle humor of the Nationalist Chinese book pirates, an American publishing executive said yesterday, but at least three Taiwanese publishers that have been flooding American campuses with cheap editions of American textbooks have all been using the same symbol—the Viking ship, the trade-mark of the Viking Press of 625 Madison Avenue.[148]

If the United States can be considered a neo-imperialist empire working through capitalistic networks, this was a tale of the empire striking back. According to David Kaser's study of this phenomenon, Taiwanese book pirates flourished by exploiting both their own state's non-participation in international copyright law, and the military policies of the United States, which stationed servicemen and personnel in Taiwan from 1955 to 1979, tens of thousands at a time.[149] It was returning servicemen attending college in the United States that introduced—or even personally smuggled— pirated Taiwanese textbooks to US campuses in large quantities by the early 1960s. [150]

Yet it would have been impossible for a young American serviceman to have come up with

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[147] New York Times Staff, "Trademark Pirated, Publisher Says," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1962.

[148] New York Times Staff, "3 Pirate Publishers Using Viking Symbol," *The New York Times*, June 15, 1962.

[149] America began committing military personnel to the island after 1955, thanks to the PRC attack on Jinmen and Matsu. Craft writes that by 1957, there were over 10,000 Americans in Taiwan, with members of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) constituting 61% of that population. American military presence was abruptly ended by President Jimmy Carter in 1978, with the last troops leaving American bases in Taiwan in 1979. Stephen G. Craft, *American Justice in Taiwan: The 1957 Riots and Cold War Foreign Policy* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2015). 35-36.

[150] David Kaser, *Book Pirating in Taiwan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969). 56.

this scheme without an existing black market for American educational texts in Taiwan. The initial demand, as it turns out, was among Taiwanese students who could not pay for original copies of American textbooks, and sought access to their education content through other means. Due to "the extensive use of American equipment, the large number of American-trained professors and teachers, the substantial cadres of American technical advisers" in Taiwan, the percentage of English language books printed in Taiwan that were American exceeded 85 percent by the late 1950s.[151]

Though literary works were not the primary concern of book publishers, they were among the popular titles copied, as the pirating of the Viking ship demonstrates: the independent Viking Press was primarily known for classic literature and children's books before it was sold in 1975.[152] Another article of March 1960 in the New York Times corroborates this by listing *Lolita* and *The Ugly American* among the incredibly cheap pirated books available from Taiwan publishers, alongside encyclopedias and *Gray's Anatomy*.[153]

Wang Chen-ho, Huang Chunming, and Chen Yingzhen came of age within this web of copies and unofficial reprints. American literary publishing, as well as the American field of literary critique, occupied space in the pages of *Wenji* literary quarterly in the form of literary translation, citations in critical essays, and even, as we see from Wang's redundant use of a Henry James epigraph at the top of "Oxcart Dowry." In a sense, *Wenji* continued the work of the earlier publication *Modern Literature* 現代文學, which was launched just as the international pirating hit its peak in early 1960, translated both criticism and literary works into Chinese in each issue, and featured a host of writers and editors from the National Taiwan University Department of Foreign Literatures. *Wenji* writers' use of the ever-present American text, however, distinguished itself by being nearly always contrapuntal, cited and framed in relation to the domain of everyday life in Taiwan. The English word was the site of trickery, offering not so much a portal to the desired world of competence in American thought and culture but providing instead a shortcut to self-critique for that aspirational impulse itself.

More specifically, English words were embedded into texts as units of visual noise, jammed in at an oblique 90 degree angle to the text in order not to break the line of vertical Chinese print; they were then contextualized and made redundant as nonsense. Chen Yingzhen, for example, highlights the absurdity of the decontextualized English word and its attendant ideologies in *The Comedy of Tang Qian* (1967). The title character is a young intellectual woman whose series of love affairs with men are also love affairs with intellectual trends. She attaches herself to existentialism, neo-positivism, Americanism, and military industrial scientism in turn.

The end point for Tang Qian is the full expression of her xenophilia through immigration to the United States, but the journey begins with the transplantation of existentialist thought in Taiwan. Her first act is to cite the new object of her passion, the existential philosopher Old Mo

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[151] Kaser. 49.

[152] "Viking Press Is Sold To Penguin Books," *School Library Journal* 22, no. 4 (December 1975): 16.

[153] New York Times Staff, "$35 Encyclopedia Costs $7.13 in Taiwan Copy," *The New York Times*, March 21, 1960. *Lolita* sold for $.75 against a $5.00 official sale price, while *The Ugly American* was priced at $.63 against a $3.95 going rate.

老莫, in breaking up with her poet boyfriend Yu Zhou 于舟.

> "Happiness is forgetting we were abandoned on this world."
> "Oh!" Yu Zhou paled. He said, with difficulty, "I know what you're feeling."
> "Pay attention to the word 'abandoned'!" She couldn't help thinking of Old Mo's expression, and waved the hand in which she held a cigarette as if she were disposing of something hateful. "*abandon, a sense of being abandoned.*"
> "Yes, yes."[154]

The words of Jean-Paul Sartre, evoking Man's abandonment upon earth by God, are here repurposed as a break-up line. The repetition of the key word in English text (italicized above) does nothing to help Yu Zhou understand existential philosophy, a world to which he has no access. Yet the distancing effect of quoting in English is wholly effective: he knows immediately that she is abandoning him to the world of Chinese texts (his poetry) with the word "*abandon*." Even if her utterance constitutes noise as an obstruction to communication, it is powerfully performative. At the same time, the incongruity of the two abandonments—of Man and of a man—strikes the knowing reader as a comic juxtaposition, a skewering of Old Mo's grandiloquence through profane application of his words.

But what ideology has been smuggled in along with the text of the words in English? The careful reader will notice that the foreign words intruding upon Tang and Yu's conversation are not the French of Sartre's composition, but English, indicating an Anglophone sphere of translation. Mo further situates himself within an American intellectual and discursive sphere when he shows Tang Qian a scrapbook full of Vietnam War photographs culled from *Life, Newsweek,* and *Time* magazines. He then takes a stand against Bertrand Russell, otherwise his philosophical idol, for taking part in condemning American war crimes.[155] "Fatty Old Mo insisted: America didn't use any poison gas as Russell said. That was just a chemical to corrode leaves and weeds, so that those annoying little monsters in black shirts would have nowhere to hide…"[156] Mo abandons the existentialist commitment in politics (Russell and Sartre were behind a war tribunal condemning US crimes in Vietnam) in favor of American Free World ideology, becoming the butt of Chen Yingzhen's satire of intellectual dishonesty among Taiwanese educated elites.

The resonance of Chen's citational nonsense was picked up by fellow *Wenji* writer Qidengsheng in a metafictional register in 1972 when he wrote "Anticipating the White Horse

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[154] Chen Yingzhen 陳映真, "Tang Qian de xiju 唐倩的喜劇 [= Tang Qian's comedy]," in *Di yi jian chai shi* (Tai bei shi: Yuan Jing chu ban she, 1976), 55–87. 58.

[155] Russell's public comments were gathered and published later in the same year, 1967, as Bertrand Russell, *War Crimes in Vietnam* (New York: Monthly Review Pr., 1967).

[156] Chen, "Tang Qian de xiju 唐倩的喜劇 [= Tang Qian's comedy]." 63

But Tang Qian Appears: a Variation on The Comedy of Tang Qian."[157] This second text abridges the original, keeping the structure of the narrative and repeating many important lines verbatim, including Tang Qian's rejection of Yu Zhou with the English word "*abandon*." It pirates the already pirated text, re-contextualizing Chen's fiction as a parable: the narrator is waiting by a sandy river for the vision of a mythical white horse, rumored to be a messenger from God, who gifts those who pursue him with an honest and bountiful life. Instead, he sees Tang Qian emerge nearly naked from the river, and her story plays out before his eyes; but as he admits at the end of the short story, "She could not constitute any meaning for me."[158] Qidengsheng's "copying" of Chen's early narrative doubles the gesture of futility: not only are Tang Qian's words often nonsensical, but her narrative deconstructs the striving of Americanist cultural elites without providing a meaningful alternative path.

In a way, Chen anticipated this very critique in the same issue of *Wenji* where he published "Tang Qian," in his review of Fellini's *8 1/2* (1963). The piece was written under the separate pen name Xu Nancun and titled "ASA · NISI · MASA" after the film's famous nonsense phrase.[159] The inexplicable phrase triggers a flashback to a scene from the childhood of Fellini's protagonist, in which he chants the term with other children to make the eyes of a painted portrait move. Chen espouses a mixed admiration for the film, whose farcical nature "plays a prank" on intellectual viewers 知識份子 seeking to gather philosophical meaning from it, but does not offer a path out of moral complacency. He ends the essay, however, by joining Fellini in a performance of nonsense: "So, if *8 1/2* can give us anything positive, it is probably Fellini's childish, mysterious, melancholy and nostalgic incantation: *ASA NISI MASA! ASA NISI MASA! ASA NISI MASA!*" Nonsense as configured in Chen's critical practice as a linguistic act that may accumulate affective power simply through the context of its repetition. In its phonemic redundancy, and in pointing to the problem of Western intellectual trends themselves becoming nonsense in Taiwan, "asa nisi masa" performs the meaning of non-meaning.

Chen Yingzhen and Qidengsheng are among the least comically inclined of the writers coming out of *Wenji*, but they are certainly practitioners of a "ludic genre" that situates itself between the aspirational mode of modernist writing based on American models of culture and the discourse of everyday life in Taiwan. Stewart provides a useful definition of ludic genres as " [involving] a transgression of common-sense interpretive procedures either by presenting paradoxes of framing, or by juxtaposing two or more universes of discourse and thereby erasing a common-sense context."[160] This practice points to the impossibility of truly pirating American

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[157] Qidengsheng 七等生, "Qidai baima er xianxian Tang Qian: Tang Qian de xiju zhi bianzou 期待白馬而顯現唐倩：唐倩的喜劇之變奏," in *Wo ai heiyanzhu* (Taibei shi: Yuanxing chubanshe, 1976), 19–32.

[158] Qidengsheng 七等生. 31.

[159] Chen Yingzhen 陳映真, "ASA · NISI · MASA," *Wenxue jikan*, no. 2 (January 10, 1967): 205–9.

[160] Stewart, *Nonsense*. 39.

culture, even with *word by word reproductions* of desirable texts.[161] Though Chen, Wang, Huang, and Qidengsheng all published in *Modern Literature*, their literary praxis in *Wenji* was characterized by the recognition of this impossibility, noisy practices of translation, and ludic recourse to nonsense.

On the spectrum of postcolonial nonsense in Taiwan, the works I have introduced in this section fall closer to the lofty, emerging from a social milieu of writers reading worldly texts and engaging primarily with others who do the same. Considering the fact that English language education did not become a part of the compulsory middle school curriculum until 1968, it would be safe to conclude that English continued to constitute noise for the average reader into the 1970s and beyond.[162] Even if it was incomprehensible, however, American English was a palpable presence filtering down into various aspects of social and everyday life, and this, too was of urgent interest to the *Wenji* writers.

In the next section, I turn to examples of the English word as nonsense in a broader social context, created as Taiwanese enterprise attempted to embed itself within an American capitalistic world system. Organized around the principles of capitalism and the bottom line instead of moral or cultural values, enterprises nevertheless reveal themselves to be systemic enforcers of ideology. They orchestrate human actions around a set of beliefs about the generation of profit. As the following literary representations reveal, however, the American-style enterprise was far from being "common sense" to most local business owners, and in fact constituted something closer to an alternative system of sense, one which could easily devolve into gibberish upon the failure of the business venture.

The Enterprise of Nonsense

As Wang Chen-ho's "Xiao Lin Comes to Taipei" and Huang Chunming's "Sayonara · Goodbye" demonstrate, English was the new language of enterprise, while Japanese was a colonial tongue re-emerging as a business language in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps it is no coincidence that both Wang and Huang have also written works in which enterprise itself, put into practice by local neo-colonial compradors, proves to be nonsensical. I refer here to Huang Chunming's 1975 novella *Little Widows*, and Wang Chen-ho's 1984 novel *Rose, Rose I Love You*, both of which take as their premise the sudden assemblage of prostitution businesses upon the arrival of American soldiers in Taiwan after 1965.

In the previous section, American servicemen were identified as linchpins in the international book pirating schemes of the early 1960s. With the advent of American military intervention in the Vietnam War, they became a different kind of carrier. Three thousand American servicemen visited Taiwan *each month* at the peak of American deployment in

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[161] Perhaps it was as much of a fantastic enterprise as that of Pierre Menard, the Borges character who sought to "produce a number of pages that coincided—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de Cervantes." Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," in *Ficciones*, ed. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 45–56.

[162] Chu-ching Hsu, "The Analysis of Linguistic Hybridity in Wang Chen-ho's Literary Works," *Chien-hsin Academic Journal* 36, no. 4 (January 1, 2017): 43–64.

1968.[163] The brochure offered by the local R and R center, which gave soldiers guidelines on local prostitution, added a special note: "Venereal disease is a growing problem, so be forewarned."[164] From the perspective of local operators, however, this was a problem intimately linked to the soldiers' activities before their arrival. Wang's title, for example, is a reference to a euphemism for a form of gonorrhea dubbed the "Saigon Rose," thus named for its origins in Vietnam.

The house of prostitution became a zone of intimate bodily contact between Taiwanese and Americans, but it also became the new site of nonsense. In Huang Chunming's fictionalized account, miscommunication between the "bar girls" and the American GIs was not as much an issue as the miscommunications between the returned businessman with a US education and his local counterparts—the owners of the brothels. These two groups came together for the purposes of marketing to the new clientele and transforming women into objects of American fantasy. The sex industry, in other words, becomes a synecdoche for Taiwanese enterprise in general, which was straddling global capital and local business practices. Belonging to two different "domains" of life and language, the American returnee and the local small business owner belong to a middling stratum, being neither the most privileged nor the most marginal figures in society. Yet here in the middle is where the various languages of Taiwan rub against each other with most friction.

Huang Chunming's character Ma Shanxing, who has returned from working in the US advertisement industry, literally becomes incomprehensible in the course of a business meeting. Ma's nonsense words, jumping out of the Chinese text in Romanized lettering, range from jargon like "*Catch Phrase*" or "*Headline*" to casual speech tics like "*OK! I See*" and "*Charming*." (In this, he is rather similar to Tang Qian's penultimate lover, a US-trained engineer who "really couldn't stop the English slipping out."[165]) It is only after his business partner, Manager Huang, points out that his audience cannot understand him, that he makes a half-hearted effort to translate.

Ma's audience includes two male managers of bars and two *madamu* (馬達母)—or Madames, following a Japanese-style transliteration of the French term.[166] At their "high-powered meeting," as Huang slyly calls it, the local business people possess the funds, the real-estate, and ready access to the women who will become "Little Widow" bar girls. Because of the nature of their work, members among them speak a smattering of English or Japanese, but they lack the experience in America that Ma Shanxing purportedly brings to the venture. As business people, they are on the same side of the power equation. Yet even so, they come to a breakdown in communication.

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[163] Sydney Gruson, "'R and R' Tours in Taiwan: American Servicemen Bring a Mixed Blessing to the Island," *New York Times*, February 14, 1968.

[164] Gruson.

[165] Chen, "Tang Qian de xiju 唐倩的喜劇 [= Tang Qian's comedy]." 79.

[166] *Madamu* (馬達母) is written in characters that could literally be read as "motor mother," a pun that implies the women's role in moving things forward, and the mechanistic quality of their capitalistic enterprise.

> "In any case, when you are doing anything, it is important to have a set of methods." Ma Shanxing said, as if protecting something: "Only after you have a *Concept* for something can you set down a *Policy*, and then you execute."
> As they watched him light his cigarette, they thought, why did he speak English this time and not add an explanation? Was he angry?
> Madamu Xie had another difficult puzzle in mind! She couldn't figure out why you had to have a *Concept* to set down a *Police*. Why would they want the police? She thought so privately and let it go.[167]

This business meeting is, in effect, the production of noise in action. Words are spoken and appear to communicate, but instead evoke something wholly incongruous—and perhaps slightly troubling, in the sex industry—the figure of the police.

Huang Chunming, however, has not just this communication problem in his sights, but the whole enterprise from beginning to end. As Ma Shanxing finishes his long-winded pitch, which the bewildered local business owners find "completely new to their experience and powerfully persuasive" due to their respect for his experiences in America, he reveals his vision for the project. In four paragraphs each beginning with "Ma Shanxing said:" (馬善行說：), as if to imply the sort of syntax used when framing the words of a classical sage, he details how the ladies of "Little Widows" should be painstakingly costumed to resemble Qing court ladies or early Republican women; how the décor should be done over with the care of a movie set; how apartments could be bought to double as housing and sexual workplaces for the prostitutes; and how they could sell cigarettes and alcohol out of the apartments—even sell package trips around the island, for which they could ask a commission from taxi drivers. This series of speech acts then dissolves into one last utterance: "Ma Shanxing said: bei la ba la bei la" 貝拉巴拉貝拉. A Chinese transcription for words in English signifying gibberish itself, "blah blah blah," the phrase becomes doubly nonsensical in transposition.

As readers, we find ourselves again at the point of audition of those who lack social competency in a cosmopolitan language. Ma Shanxing's strangely cinematic business plan constitutes a nonsense world, to be peopled by women who are to be perfect actors or puppets, playing the part of chaste women in a utopic, ahistorical fantasy of prudish Chinese backwardness. The gibberish phrase "bei la ba la bei la" binds his two kinds of nonsense, that of English words and that of enterprise, together in one representation. It stands in for both "*Concept*" and the little widow living anachronistically in an allotted apartment and selling cigarettes.

In the remainder of the novella, Huang allows interactions between the flesh and blood working women and servicemen to deconstruct the fantasy constructed by Ma and his associates, who fully succumb to his vision. This movement of the text to deconstruct itself has led some critics, such as Hillenbrand, to note that it "[veers] uncomfortably between slapstick and

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[167] Chunming Huang, *Xiao gua fu* (Tai bei shi: Yuan Jing chu ban she, 1984). 112.

pathos."[168] The reader's discomfort, I would venture to argue, is often the point: instead of genre purity, Taiwanese postcolonial nonsense pursues an incongruous juxtaposition of the comic mode and the melodrama. Nothing, not even affect, is permitted to carry out its course without disruption. Postcolonial nonsense is not just an alternative system based on abstract logic, as the works of Lewis Carroll may be; it is an alternative system *against* the systems of neo-colonial and social power within which many of the figures in these narratives find themselves diminished or trapped. The higher the personal stakes of the protagonists, the more ridiculous the nonsense enterprise appears by contrast. The nightmare and the game exist in dialectic.[169]

Wang Chen-ho's construction of the Vietnam War era nonsense enterprise, in contrast to that of Huang's, takes a strategy more akin to that of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: the critical action, the actual meeting between the Taiwanese "*bar-girl*" prostitute and the American GI, is deferred again and again through various digressions so that it never actual happens within the actual narrative.[170] The entire novel leads up to the induction of the bar-girls into the nonsense enterprise, during which they are trained in matters linguistic and sexual to prepare them for their imminent task. Instead of splitting the narrative between a proposal of the nonsense enterprise and its execution, as in Huang, *Rose, Rose I Love You* exists entirely within the stage of the proposal, when the enterprise is made entirely of fantasy and anticipation.

This enclosing of the nonsense enterprise within the time frame of its fabrication is of a piece with Wang's overall project of looking back on Cold War structures of feeling. Writing in 1984, during a period of loosening cultural policy when the Vietnam War was long over, Wang encapsulates the period in which American R & R in Taiwan was a reality within fictional time. I include *Rose, Rose I Love You* in my study not only because it is considered one of Wang's crowning achievements as a writer of the comic mode, and because it deals with nonsense enterprise of the late 1960s, but because it is on a continuum with his earlier works and brings many of his techniques to fruition. Consciously retrospective, the text is speckled with parenthetical reflections on how the characters would speak if they knew what they did in the present; if they knew there was an end to the Cultural Revolution; or if they had heard the 1976

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[168] Margaret Hillenbrand, "GIs and the City: Images of Urbanisation in Some Postwar Taiwanese Fiction," *Asian Studies Review* 25, no. 4 (2001): 403–21.

[169] Here I evoke Elizabeth Sewell's classic 1952 study of nonsense, which mainly studies the works of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. Though she mostly discusses nonsense as an extension of Carroll's studies in logic, she also takes care to describe the "dialectic" of nonsense as it drifts between the dream and the game. Sewell, *The Field of Nonsense*.

[170] Sterne's novel was nominally about the "life" of the title character, but multiplying digressions defer the tale to the extent that he is not even born until the third volume. Bertrand Russell famously used Tristram Shandy to propose a logical paradox worthy of nonsense: if the narrator took one year to write an autobiography of one day of his life (including the day of his conception), and if he had infinite amount of time to write it, eventually no part of his biography would remain unwritten. For a summary of Russell's argument and the philosophical implications, see R. J. Diamond, "Resolution of the Paradox of Tristram Shandy," *Philosophy of Science* 31, no. 1 (1964): 55–58.

hit song “Plum Blossom” 梅花.[171] Parentheticals are also marshaled to the task of translation. Instead of leaving puns in Taiwanese Hokkien or other languages unexplained, as he did in “Oxcart” (1967), or inserting the joke as an aside or internal monologue, as he did in “Xiao Lin Comes to Taipei” (1973), Wang uses the parenthetical space to make sure that all readers can understand the polylinguistic communications of his characters, most of whom speak in Taiwanese Hokkien inflected with remnants of colonial Japanese. By doing so, he embarks on a project that actually *exceeds* minor literature, and begins to produce a Taiwanese Hokkien literary language in its own right. In her quantitative analysis, Chu-Ching Hsu finds that the percentage of *Rose, Rose I Love You* that can be read in Taiwanese Hokkien stands at 61 percent.[172]

The majority of the nonsense in the novel, then, no longer derives its primary energy from the duality of noise and nonsense—and when the text dabbles in macaronic play, the stakes are much lower. Instead of *intensors* that break through major language in a moment of pain or caricature, the multi-lingual pun can be played as a simple joke, such as calling a minor character “Black Meat Chicken” 黑肉雞.[173] This is an indication of the new age to come in the late 1980s and the 1990s, in which Hokkien culture could be openly celebrated and taken as the grounds for building a major political identity.[174]

English, however, remains a thorny issue in this emerging polylinguistic landscape, and in *Rose* it generates the animus for the enterprise of postcolonial nonsense. Much like Ma Shanxing, the heavily satirized protagonist Dong Siwen is an adept at English who “cannot help” slipping into English-inflected babble. In this case, however, he is not a returnee, but a local English teacher in Hualien who was a foreign languages and literatures major in college—much like Wang himself, and many among his *Wenji* and *Modern Literature* colleagues. His point of audition, juxtaposed against that of other characters, draws the experience of reading back into a field of noise and nonsense.

In the ultimate scene, for example, in which the new class of *bar-girls* is inducted into their new métier, Wang uses techniques suggestive of film editing to deliver a simultaneous tripartite soundtrack. Interfering with one another, the three tracks press the reader to keep several aural components in mind at once, recreating the cognitive situation of noise in reading. The base layer

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[171] This was the theme song of the 1976 film *Victory* 梅花, a propagandistic Mandarin film that was highly popular thanks to its spectacular set pieces and glamorous cast. Plum blossoms were evoked to symbolize the perseverance of the Chinese nation.

[172] Hsu, “Wang Chen-ho xiaoshuo de duoyu hunza xianxiang fenxi 王禎和小說的多語混雜現象分析 [= The Analysis of Linguistic Hybridity in Wang Chen-ho’s Literary Works].”

[173] When pronounced in Taiwanese Hokkien as *oo-bah-ke,* 黑肉雞becomes a good approximation for the Japanese word *obake* おばけ, or demon. On top of these three spheres of connotation, “chicken” was a slang word for “prostitute” adapted from Cantonese. In the text, the nuance of the insult shifts from slight disrespect on the level of “dark whore” to a full “monster.”

[174] For more on the “Hokkien renaissance of the 1990s” in Taiwan, see Jeremy E Taylor, “From Transnationalism to Nativism? The Rise, Decline and Reinvention of a Regional Hokkien Entertainment industry,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008): 62–81.

is the voice of Dr. Yun, a medical doctor and Christian who has been tasked with giving a tutorial on safe sex to the assembled prostitutes and investors. When he introduces the topic of "Saigon Rose," Siwen is struck with a sudden inspiration that splits the text into the public sphere of the assembly and his private character zone. He begins to plot a new level of pageantry in the enterprise, in which the girls are trained to sing the song "Rose, Rose I Love You" in English and Chinese to welcome the American soldiers.[175] The page irrupts into numbered musical notation for four bars of the song, set at a 90-degree angle with the rest of the text like the Henry James quote in "Oxcart." Dong becomes so absorbed in this internal soundtrack—evoked as both *"Meigui meigui wo ai ni*" and "*Rose, Rose I love you*" in the text—that he cannot hear Yun's further comments:

> When the strains of "Rose, Rose, heavy with loving thoughts/Rose, Rose, thick with loving thoughts/…The heart's promises, the heart's loving thoughts/Sacred rays of light shone upon the land" gradually quieted, gradually died down in his ears, Dr. Yun was already saying:
> "And now, with my pious Christian heart I wish you all daily achievements, improvements upon improvements, and at the same time I give you a solemn reminder: for yourselves, and for the health of other compatriots, please be careful and don't contract the Saigon Rose!"

Though character zone and switching between different perspectives is nothing new in fiction, Wang focuses here on the exercise of tuning in and out, pinpointing the synch point at which the visual focus of Dong Siwen's attention, Dr. Yun on stage, is reunited with his voice.

When Dr. Yun subsequently begins leading the Lord's Prayer to close out the opening ceremony of the *bar-girl* class, a second split occurs: though the seated women are asked to repeat the prayer line by line, two of them begin a separate conversation.

> Sitting in front of Siwen were two students—who were about to be promoted to bar girls—who would soon rise in social standing—who would soon experience a bountiful increase in income—also lowered their heads, but their eyes were not closed. They countered every line that Dr. Yun spoke with a line of conversation, even occasionally bursting into low sounds of *ji ji ji* laughter—handily throwing all talk of praise for God to the side.
> "I'm so scared!"
> "What of?"
> "Saigon Rose."

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[175] The song's storied history of translation began when it appeared in the soundtrack of the 1940 Chinese film *Tian y age nü*, where it was performed by famous songstress Yao Li. A decade later, it was apparently adapted into English through a series of transnational movements: "The man responsible for transplanting the tune is Wilfrid Thomas, Australian disc jockey, who picked up the record in a back street in Hong Kong, brought it to London with him last winter. The oriental lilt caught the British fancy. A flood of letters and inquiries at record shops sent Columbia Records' British affiliate on a hot-breathed search for the old master copy of the Chinese record. Their Far Eastern division finally uncovered it in India, flew it to London." American music studios flipped this English version into a chart-topping hit featuring the vocal talents of Frankie Laine in 1951. Time Magazine staff, "A Rose Is a Rose...," *Time Magazine*, May 14, 1951.

"Just do as Dr. Yun says. Put a helmet on the American soldier's stick, and there's nothing to be afraid of!"
"But what if—"
"Don't think nonsense." 別黑白亂想。

Coded to be read in Taiwanese Hokkien through such phrases as the last line quoted above, in which "nonsense" is written as *oo-pe̍h*, the girls' conversation is positioned against the official Mandarin intonations of Dr. Yun and the Chinese-English soundtrack of Dong Siwen's fantasy. Again, the text dramatizes the stark difference between those with the social capital to rise above the nonsense enterprise as planners and technocrats, and those who are tasked to complete the labor within said enterprise. Dong Siwen's nonsense vision of girls wearing crudely exoticized *qipao* and aboriginal folk clothing and welcoming American GIs with rings of roses, set against a full band playing his newly chosen theme song, constitutes a high level of nonsense within the circle of power to balance out the nonsense of the girls, which is the well-deserved paranoia of the powerless.

After Dong Siwen is allowed to orchestrate one final flourish in his mind, where the girls' singing in English is represented by a reproduction of a full verse, the novel reaches its final synch point: the last line of the Lord's Prayer as spoken by Dr. Yun, and then repeated "listlessly" by all the ceremony's participants: "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen."[176] Translated into Chinese and isolated, this line echoes into an open question: to whom among those speaking these words do nation, power and glory belong? All three competing sound tracks of this final scene join here—but do they unite only to bequeath nation, power, and glory to the US troops, upon whose arrival they have built an entire system of business, labor, and speech? Profaning the church in which they have initiated a prostitutional enterprise, and the words of prayer with the worship of American military power, Wang closes his work with language that is nonsense not because of mutual incomprehension, but because of its universality, its semantic openness to the point of meaninglessness. He pirates the Lord's Prayer and "Rose, Rose I Love You" for his own ends, finding yet another way back to ASA NISI MISA.

Conclusion: Dinner Table Nonsense

Postcolonial nonsense in Taiwan, with its roots in a colonial past and gestures towards a new linguistic horizon by the 1980s, was fundamentally bound up with the global situation of the Cold War, and Wang Chen-ho crystallized this sentiment as early as "An Oxcart Dowry" in 1967. In a work that would come to represent his oeuvre and his emergence among the *Wenji* cohort,

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[176] I use here the English Language Liturgical Consultation's version of the Lord's Prayer, both because the organization has a stated goal of producing an international standard version of prayer in English, and because it reads very close to the Chinese translation in Wang's text (因為過度，權柄，榮耀全是你的，直到永遠，阿門). The earliest version of this text was introduced as *Prayers We Have in Common* in 1970 by the by the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET). English Language Liturgical Consultation and International Consultation on English Texts, *Praying Together: Agreed Liturgical Texts* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1990).

Wang bound together the worlds of film comedy and global politics lightly with a system of comic Cold War metaphors describing the embattled triangle formed by the main characters: Wanfa, Mr. Jian, and Wanfa's wife A-Hao. This is another configuration of the nonsense system as an alternative system of meaning: though they were a group of disparate figures for the same three characters, the metaphors are inter-related and accumulated comic effect as the narrative progresses. The linked metaphor system increasingly dramatizes sharp incongruities between the contours of the tense ideological atmosphere in anti-Communist Taiwan and the drama of the characters' marginal lives in provincial Hualien. Neither the Cold War nor their lives are entirely the stuff of nonsense here; it is the linked metaphor system, standing between them and holding them together, that produces the effect of postcolonial nonsense.

The triangle and the linked metaphor system both begin when A-Hao and Wanfa agree to have their son, Fivey, spend some time working for Mr. Jian every day in town. A-Hao begins following them on the pretext of selling some vegetables she has picked in the wild, and promptly spends the money gambling, as is her wont. "But it was all very confidential and counter-espionage 保密防諜, so Wanfa knew nothing,"[177] Wang writes, making the initial comparison between A-Hao's secrecy and anti-Communist spy campaigns that were current at the time. She did not hide it from Mr. Jian, but "even if he were to report her Wanfa, it would have been for naught. Wanfa could never figure out what he was *yi o*-ing about!" The secret codes, in this spy battle, have been provided by distortion of Wanfa's eardrum, instantly transformed into noise.

Soon, tongues in town began to wag, and the "spy film" takes a turn into comedy. "They said, you couldn't even see something so funny in a Brother Wang and Brother Liu *eiga* 王哥柳哥映畫. The Man named Gan and A-Hao were in-and-outting each other 凹凸上了！"[178] In addition to being a coarse metaphor for the sexual act, "in-and-outting" or *ao tu shang le* evokes a second comedy duo of the late 1950s to early 1960s, Brother In 凹哥 and Brother Out 凸哥, played by Zhong Fucai and Hu Dou. As the narrator explains, Gan and A-Hao were just as much an odd couple as Gan and Wanfa were opposites, ill-matched but somehow fitted together.

Soon made aware of the rumors, Wanfa begins to "martial law" 戒嚴著 his home, preventing his wife from leaving his side during the night. An inevitable clash ensues when Wanfa almost catches his wife and Mr. Jian in the act, but has no clear evidence because of his hearing impairment. The clothes salesman subsequently goes on a two-month trip, during which the couple struggle to make ends meet without the extra income from Fivey, and soon his landlord makes a move to evict him in favor of a relative. At this juncture, A-Hao negotiates a new treaty, making the proposal "like a diplomat giving a report": Mr. Jian would move in with their family, paying for room and board, and they could live off of both this income and Fivey's

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[177] Wang, *Jiazhuang yi niuche* 嫁妝一牛車 *[= An Oxcart Dowry]*. 80.

[178] Wang here uses the Japanese term for "movie," pronounced *eiga* in Japanese. I preserve *eiga* here to show the mixing of languages in postcolonial Taiwanese Hokkien.

salary.[179] In effect, the family economy would be subsidized with foreign aid, much like the US aid package after Taiwan became the last territory of Free China. Wanfa cannot afford to refuse.

This, of course, is destined to be an uneasy peace. "At the dining table was when the Cold War was hottest," Wang writes, bringing the stakes of the linked metaphor system into the open.[180] Indeed, it is in shared spaces, in contact zones between Americans and the citizens of allied states in East Asia, that violence—and nonsense—always threatened to surface. Linguistic conflict was a Cold War front, whether it was due to a literal collision, as in Huang Chunming's 1972 short story "The Taste of Apples," in which an American officer runs over the father of a Taiwanese Hokkien family who subsequently cannot understand his apology; or in the practice of prostitution; or in the process of anticipating and building the nonsense enterprise. In these literary encounters, as this chapter has shown, nonsense plays the key role of centering more marginal points of audition, of realigning the power structures between languages and linguistic groups through literary praxis. At the same time, it accrues comic affect to the object of the nonsense word, so that a unit of meaning without meaning that becomes a synecdoche for the affect of displacement: *yi yi o o*, *Na káu bu-á*, *abandon, bei la ba la bei* and *Amen*.

In closing, I find it quite interesting that the word "nonsense" as I have been using it finds no clear or ready translation in Chinese—or perhaps more relevant to the current study, in Taiwanese Hokkien. There are perfectly serviceable translations such as *wu yi yi* 無意義, but this translates back as literally non-meaning, and in fact post-colonial nonsense constitutes a different system of meaning, often through a minor language. There are also anachronistic translations such as *wu li tou* 無厘頭, which was popularized by Hong Kong popular culture of the 1980s.

I find recourse in the works of the *Wenji* writes and Wang Chen-ho, who often use the phrase *oo-pėh* (most often written as 黑白, but with more etymological basis in烏白). Meaning literally "black-white," the phrase refers to disorder of various sorts by juxtaposing the lack and presence of color; the lack or presence of light.[181] Like nonsense, it can be appended to action (*oo-pėh lâi*) and speech (*oo-pėh kóng*), and is linked to disorder, purposelessness, and even prevarication. In a quote from *Rose, Rose I Love You* cited above, we have perhaps the most dangerous of these activities in a Cold War context of ideological tension: *oo-pėh luān siūnn* 黑白亂想, or "thinking nonsense." Constantly passing between the boundary of black and white, of profound interference and profound redundancy, a Taiwanese sense of nonsense displaces what might be simply terrifying and paralyzing with the intonation of insult. It pirates language while playing with the very idea of pirating itself. And finally, it always returns to the primal duality: the very small and the very large, the dinner table and the Cold War, Taiwan between coloniality and neo-imperialism on the verge of coming into its own.

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[179] Wang, *Jiazhuang yi niuche* 嫁妝一牛車 *[= An Oxcart Dowry]*. 90.

[180] Wang. 91.

[181] Some dictionaries also suggest writing this phrase with the characters as *hubai* 胡白, a move that links the first character to "barbarianism" as in the Mandarin phrases *huluan* 胡亂 and *hushuo* 胡說. Although this changes the particulars of the two opposing qualities I am suggesting, I believe it actually goes towards confirming my greater argument that nonsense disturbs the homogeneity and wholeness of a certain world view.

Chapter 4.
Nonsense of Redundancy in Korea

Nonsense Out of Redundancy

> I picked up that strange rubber slipper and poked at it here and there. It was clearly a man's rubber slipper, no more and no less. It wasn't particularly large or small; it was just about standard sized. If there was anything strange about it, it was the quality of its whiteness, as if it had just been washed. That was what made it all the creepier, and what ruined my mood.
> "So then, was it a thief?"
> "If it were a thief, wouldn't he have at least left some footprints? And is he crazy, to set a shoe there in such a docile manner?"
> "Who knows? They could have done it as a kind of psychological warfare."
>
> --Yi Hoch'ŏl, "Big Mountain," from *Wŏlgan Munhak*, July 1970

> [Newest Model Loudspeaker Imported to be Used in Anti-North Psychological Warfare] The Korean Army imported OO number of the newest high-functionality loudspeakers from America on December 1st to be used on the front against the North.
>
> --*Tonga Ilbo*, December 2, 1966

> You have been listening to "The Voice of the Governor-General," a ghost broadcast on the occasion of the sixth presidential election and the seventh congressional election of the Republic of Korea. Radio commentary produced by the Underground Chōsen Governor-General, a secret underground organization in Korea affiliated with the sister organization of the National Liberation Front in French Algeria.
>
> --Ch'oe Inhun, *The Voice of the Governor-General* (1), July 1967

In Yi Hoch'ŏl's short story "Big Mountain" (1970), the narrator wakes up one morning and discovers a *komusin*, a cheap rubber shoe, sitting on a cement block near their front door. With no mate and not a speck of dirt, it is unnaturally white and relentlessly standardized in size and appearance, as if fresh from the factory where it was mass produced. Both he and his wife are immediately filled with what he calls terror, or *kongp'o* 공포恐怖: was it left by shamans doing a ritual at a neighbor's house the night before? Was it a prank by the garbage collectors? Was it a subversive thief employing psychological warfare 심리전心理戰upon a middle-class couple in an up and coming neighborhood?[182]

If this appears to be much ado about nothing, an example of a neurotic character reading too much into a chance occurrence, it is actually a comic rendering of the atmosphere of terror and paranoia that was cultivated by the Park Chung-hee government in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. Psychological warfare went both ways: it was Anti-Communist propaganda literally

[182] Yi Hoch'ŏl 이호철, "K'ŭn san 큰산 [= Big mountain]," *Wŏlgan munhak*, July 1970. 137-145.

aimed at the North, as the second epigraph demonstrates; and it was also the subversion of South Korean society by North Korean agents. The Communist threat was purported to be behind each corner, and potentially amongst one's friends and neighbors.

The narrator's anxiety, as evidenced by his reference to psychological warfare, comes partly from the anonymity and reproducibility of the shoe, and partly from the fact that it is divorced from all contexts of use for which it was produced. What drives home this sense of terror, however, is the fact that the incident repeats itself: despite the couple's efforts to discard it, first by dumping it in the trash and then by throwing it over a neighbor's fence, the shoe reappears in their yard several days later in a slightly different location. They conclude that the shoe must have been tossed from yard to yard in the neighborhood until it came back again in a potentially infinite loop. It was a cyclical bad omen, or *aek* 액 (厄), that everyone hoped would pass them by. "Logically," the narrator explains, "it was quite funny, and I laughed"; but paradoxically, he is still gripped by terror when seeing the shoe once again. Communal paranoia —that is, the common experience of the same affect—is risible because it points to the absurdity of an unfounded, "illogical" fear in each individual household, but it also magnifies that fear in spite of reason.

Like Thomas Pynchon, an American novelist whose work was known for thematizing paranoia, Yi Hochŏl perfected the art of sitting on the edge between paranoia and nonsense during the height of the Cold War, and the most brilliant instantiations of his comic aesthetic arise from this liminality.[183] Both paranoia and nonsense are oriented against the realm of common sense: nonsense as a matter of definition, and paranoia as a matter of revealing a deeper, more systematic truth to challenge official narratives. When signs incongruous with common sense repeat—an ownerless shoe, for example—paranoia gains evidence and nonsense builds a more systemic world. What tips paranoia into nonsense, however, is the presence of ironic distance necessary to recognize that the signs are a part of a game, which makes the narrative into a "ludic text," and I quote Susan Stewart again: "texts bearing paradoxical messages regarding their own existence."[184] A text, after all, cannot be properly paranoid if the terms of paranoia are instantly negated as comically incongruous with the situation at hand.

In "Big Mountain," ironic distance is forged in the comic opposition of husband and wife. After the narrator mentions the possibility of "psychological warfare" in the conversation with his wife cited above, he notices in her face an expression of slight contempt, and interprets her inner monologue in a parenthetical voicing. "(You're just sticking in that explanation that because you always worry more than necessary at times like these. That's how psychological warfare gets you, isn't it? Exploiting such weaknesses.)" While he imagines her dismissing his paranoia, the wife's voice also confirms the existence of actual "psychological warfare," to

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[183] Pynchon's predilection for nonsense based on paranoia was noted by his contemporaries, who called him a purveyor of "Black Comedy" alongside Joseph Heller and Terry Southern. Hausdorff says of the novel *V* that it deals in "sick jokes" and "nonsense poetry," among other absurdities. See Don Hausdorff, "Thomas Pynchon's Multiple Absurdities," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature 7, no. 3 (1966): 258–69. 258. See also Emily Apter's extended discussion of a paranoid aesthetic in Pynchon's fiction. Emily Apter, "On Oneworldedness: Or Paranoia as a World System," *American Literary History* 18, no. 2 (June 20, 2006): 365–89, https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajj022.

[184] Stewart, *Nonsense*.

which he would be particularly vulnerable. As the conversation progresses, the wife's imagined voice interjects once more, repeating the diagnosis: "(This guy. Getting mental again.)"[185]

Yi Hoch'ŏl borrows the comedy stereotype of the hen-pecked husband and the nagging wife to evoke comic affect: the empowerment of the woman "with a modern education" is asserted here through her dismissal of a mentally weak male spouse. The comic duo—or more accurately, a split consciousness—is used here to open up a paradox at the site of "psychological warfare." Did it have material consequences, or was it literally all in the head? By the late 1960s, "psychological warfare" had become the most important front in the global Cold War, and was a particular priority for the Park Chung-hee government after the outbreak of the Vietnam War.[186] The husband's incongruous use of the label, however, had turned it into a symptom of his neurosis, placing "psychological warfare" at odds with common sense. Though it goes unstated in the text, his paranoia reveals that he has been well disciplined in Cold War language: like an automaton, he indiscriminately repeats the same analysis for all situations, creating comic incongruities with context. The indoctrinated head, we might say, had material consequences.

Korean division-era nonsense was based in the combination of these two gestures: repetition and paradox, which culminate in a playful inversion of common sense values and power structures. Along with Nam Chŏnghyŏn, Sŏ Kiwŏn, and Ch'oe Inhun, Yi was among a group of writers who turned to nonsense in order to forge a space for continued literary practice under increasing censorship. Though many of their works in this vein have been labeled by critics at the time and into the present as "satire," alluding to their orientation towards social criticism, I argue that their comic aesthetic is continuous with the lineage of *nŏnsaensŭ* culture in Korea going back to the colonial period. Korean division-era nonsense was a new practice of popular comic gestures within a developmentalist, Cold War context.

While the last chapter explored a kind of nonsense reached through an engagement with "noise," this chapter begins from the other end of the information theory metaphor: "redundancy." Unlike the nonsense that results from a polylingual cultural landscape and the hierarchies amongst languages that create obstructions to communication, the nonsense of redundancy arises out of two structural conditions of singularity. First, the relative continuity of modern Korean literature from the colonial era to the Park Chung-hee era meant that Korean words and cultural practices had more continuity through time compared to Taiwan, where locals had written a significant body of Japanese language literature and were forced to shift quickly to modern Chinese after 1945. As aforementioned, the word "*nŏnsaensŭ*," a transliteration of the English "nonsense," may find its modern etymology beginning in the 1920s, and accumulates meaning through colonial modernity, the post-war entertainment culture, and the mass media

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[185] Yi, "K'ŭn san 큰산 [= Big mountain]." 138-139.

[186] For example, see: Kyŏnghyang Sinmun staff, "Simnijŏn Pudae Sinsŏl: Chuwŏl Han'gukkun Ane 심리전 부대 신설: 주월 한국군 안에 [= New Psychological Warfare Unit Established within Korean Forces in Vietnam]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, June 2, 1966. Taiwan's continued propaganda efforts against the PRC were also reported as *simnijŏn*: Sangwu Yi. "O'nŭl Ŭi Taeman: Illyŏn Nae Subok Kkum i 17 Nyŏn Kkŭl'ŏ; Kŭkchang to It Nŭn Ch'odae Chiha Yosae; p'ungsŏn, Sŭp'ik'ŏ Tae Kong Simnijŏn [Taiwan Today: Dream of Taking Back the Mainland in 1 Year Stretched to 17 Years; Super Big Underground Fortress with a Theater; Balloons and Speakers Deployed in Psychological Warfare]." *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*. June 29, 1966.

culture of the Park era. It therefore opens up the possibility for a critique of historical repetition: if 1920s nonsense was in many senses reborn in the 1960s, the censorship and cultural suppression of the Park era was also an echo of cultural regimes during Japanese colonization.

Second, after the consolidation of the censorship regime in the mid-1960s, anti-Communist ideology was reproduced and broadcast in various forms of state media such as radio, newspapers, and television—often in the same phrases repeated again and again. Unlike Taiwanese state media, which would have been opaque to a portion of the population not schooled in Mandarin, the Korean media that was increasingly omnipresent in households and public spaces afforded no clear avenues of escape. As the narrator in "Big Mountain" demonstrates, there was no relief even in the space of one's own mind. It was only an excessive redundancy, the repetition of ideological language unto absurdity in literature, that could identify the core paradox: an overwhelming singularity of message communicates nothing. Entering an infinite loop, it only transmits the figure of its own reproduction.

In other words, division-era nonsense literature in Korea owed a good deal of its form—and sometimes its citational content—to the sensorial bombardment of modern mass media. A "machine-age" sense of the comic, as Michael North argues, developed in tandem with the age of mechanical reproduction, and took it obsession with repetitious, machine-like figures in film and literature from the new interdependencies between the mechanical and the human. Summarizing Walter Benjamin's thoughts on the liberating potential of film comedy, North writes that "the most thorough mechanization can produce, out of its very regularity, a new form of nonsense."[187] Though these arguments concern the beginnings of an industrialized, modern culture in the 19th and early 20th century, I argue that in Korea these trends accelerated and reached exponentially higher social saturation during the Cold War period. Specifically from the 1960s to 70s, broadcast media such as radio and television became widely affordable, the film industry experienced rapid industrialization, and "psychological warfare" extended into all corners of mediated life.[188]

Not only did a nonsense based on repetition and inversion through paradox resonate with the experience of living in the accelerated modernity of the Park Chung-hee era, but the division-era nonsense literature actually turned to popular culture sources to find a vision of alterity within the deadening sameness of propagandistic state broadcasts. As this chapter will show, writers often pitted nonsense from the popular culture of stage, radio, film, and television comedy against state uses of the same mass media. A key component of subversion in division-era nonsense was to create an inversion in importance between entertainment and issues of national concern, such as anti-Communism and North Korean aggression.

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[187] Michael North, *Machine-Age Comedy* (Oxford [u.a.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009). 18.

[188] For more on the popularization of radio and television, see Song Eun-Young 송은영, "1960~70yŏndae Han'gugŭi taejung sahoehwawa taejungmunhwaŭi chŏngch'ijŏk ŭimi1 960-70년대 한국의 대중 사회화와 대중 문화의 정지적 의미 [= The Process of Becoming Mass Society and the Political Meaning of Popular Culture in 1960s~1970s' Korea]," *Sanghur Hakbo: The Journal of Korean Modern Literature*, no. 32 (June 2011): 187–226. For more on the rapid industrialization of cinema, see Chapter 2, as well as Pak, "1960, 70 nyŏndae han'guk yŏnghwa chŏngch'aek kwa san'ŏp 1960, 1970년대 한국영화 정책과 산업 [1960s and 70s Korean film policy and industrialization."

Despite this head-on engagement with mass media modernity, however, division-era nonsense was also obsessed with the longer duration concept of *historical* repetition, which inverted the Park government's ideology of "revolutionary" liberation and developmental progress. Instead of opposing popular culture and state uses of media, Ch'oe Inhun's "The Voice of the Governor-General" series (1967-76) offers an opposition between the media practice of two states: the current Park government, which had just been re-elected at the time the first piece in the series was published, and the Japanese colonial government, which was figured as an "underground organization" gathering forces to retake the peninsula. As the third epigraph shows, Ch'oe uses the simultaneity of a live radio broadcast to create a nonsensical anachronism, in which the Governor-General and the re-elected President of the Republic of Korea become paradoxically co-present.[189]

The mid-1960s were a time of post-colonial paranoia, of a growing fear that a colonial world order would be replicated under the name of national security and development. Writers, intellectuals, and youth showed up in great numbers to protest the talks for the normalization of relations with Japan in 1964, which led to two months of martial law and severe limitations of literary freedom. Critics warned that Korea would continue to trail Japan in technology, global power, and economic development, taking a subsidiary role to the former colonizer within Pax Americana while the debt of colonial exploitation remained unresolved.[190] Ch'oe's premise gives form to post-colonial paranoia: that agents of the erstwhile Japanese empire might still be hidden all around the peninsula, waiting for the right moment for their return to glory. The "ghost broadcast" constitutes its own form of "psychological warfare," seeking to convince "peninsularians" that they are culturally incapable of self-rule and destined to be a subjugated people once more. By presenting the direct inverse of patriotic state broadcasts in Park's Korea, Ch'oe's work emerged unscathed by censors, despite his controversial suggestion that the South Korean government was just as much a comprador of neocolonial America as North Korea was a "puppet" of the Soviets.

The nonsense of anachronism, therefore, accompanies the nonsense of entertainment as the two major components of division-era nonsense. Honoring the gesture of cyclical return and redundancy, this chapter completes a historical loop. It begins with *nŏnsaensŭ* culture at the nexus of entertainment and literary practice during the colonial period, and follows the etymology of the term into the post-war era. Honing in on the literary landscape of the 1960s, I argue that the adaptation of this popular nonsense culture enabled literature to open up spaces of discourse in an era of increasing censorship. Nonsense could penetrate even the smothering atmosphere of paranoia, driving it to its logical end of absurdity. Finally, I return to works of

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[189] Ch'oe Inhun 최인훈, "Ch'ongdok ŭi sori 총독의 소리 [= The Governor-General's Voice]," *Shin Donga*, August 1967.

[190] For more on Ch'oe and the "6.3 Struggle" (6.3항쟁抗爭), see Chang Seijin 장세진, "Kangbagŭrosŏŭi singminji, kŭmgirosŏŭi chegugŭl nŏm'ŏ 1960yŏndae Han'guk chisigindŭrŭi Ilbon sangsanggwa Ch'oe Inhun t'aeksŭt'ŭ kyŏpch'ŏ ilgi 강박으로서의 식민지, 금기로서의 제국을 넘어 1960년대 한국 지식인들의 일본 상상과 최인훈 택스트 겹쳐 읽이 [= Going beyond Colonialism as Compulsion, Empire as Taboo: 1960's Korean Intellectuals' Imagination about Japan and Interconnected Reading with Choi Inhoon's Texts]," *Comparative Korean Studies* 24, no. 3 (2016): 165–210.

anachronism, which evoke colonial experience as a nonsensical intertext for the present.

An Etymology of *Nŏnsaensŭ*

Most scholars agree that the Korean word *nŏnsaensŭ* was a product of colonial modernity. As Figure 1 shows, readers of the *Tonga Ilbo* in 1930 were curious about modern terminology appearing in the newspaper, and the Japanese term *nansensu* is presented in katakana script as an object of interest. Re-transliterating the neologism as *nŏnsaensŭ* in hangŭl, Reporter H answers the reader's question: "nonsense" is "non-meaning" 무의미無意義, but tends to be taken as something "without reason within which a tendency can be found that is not boring." Later articles in *Tonga Ilbo* also associated "nonsense" with capitalism, American culture, and consumerism: a world of leisure, entertainment, and frivolity in contrast with proletarian art.[191] What bears remembering, however, is that this culture of *nŏnsaensŭ* was roughly contemporaneous with Japanese "ero-guro-nonsense," and emerged as a genre of textual performance and practice in Korean language periodicals.

One of the chief platforms for this from 1926 to 1931 was the entertainment magazine *Pyŏlgŏn'gon*, which replaced the more serious general interest magazine *Kaebyŏk* when it was closed down by authorities in 1926, marking the end of the more lenient "cultural rule" period (1920-1925) in colonial policy. While *Kaebyŏk* gave voice to many ideological debates about social change,[192] *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* was consciously edited to be more frivolous and apolitical, put forth by the same publisher with the aim of maintaining a cultural space of expression.

Nevertheless, as scholars have noted, the nonsense in *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* continued to make jabs at the hegemony of capitalistic modernity, its normalizing force, and the shifting horizon of gender relations with the advent of the New Woman.[193] Nonsense articles usually took on one of four formats: a literary "exhibition of freaks" (figured as 박람회博覽會 or 전시展示); how-tos about to catching up with consumer society while having no money; anecdotes about the erratic actions of unemployed intellectuals (*lumpen* 룸펜); fabricated "roundtables"; and farcical dialogues, often between a heterosexual couple.[194] Repeated themes included the up-ending of gender expectations through role reversals; defamiliarizing the use of money and the capitalistic concept of property ownership; and the irrepressible whimsy of the dispossessed. In effect, nonsense in

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[191] Ch'ae Ch'ae Cha'un 체자운, "Sinhŭng yesul: t'ŭkhi ch'ŏmdanŭl kanŭn kŏnch'uge taeha yŏ 신흥 예술: 특히 첨단을 가는 건축에 대하 여 [= Newly emerging arts: especially in the cuting edge art of architecture]," *Tonga Ilbo*, January 24, 1931.

[192] Jae-Yon Lee, "Magazines and the Collective Rise of Literary Writers in Korea, 1919–1927" (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2012). Chapter 3.

[193] Kwak Eun-hee 곽은히, "Ilt'arŭi kamgak, yudonganŭn singminji-『Pyŏlgŏn'gon』ŭi nŏnsensŭ·yumoŏrŭl chungsimŭro 일탈의 감각, 유동하는 식민지-『별건곤』의 넌센스·유모어를 중심으로 [= A Sense of Deviation, A Liquid Colony-Focused on Nonsense·Humor in 『Byeolgeongon』]," *Pan'gyoŏmun yŏngu* 43 (2016): 137–68.

[194] Ch'ae Sŏkjin 채석진, "Chegugŭi kamgak: 'aero kuro nŏnsensŭ' kamgak: 'aero gŭro nŏnsaensŭ' 제국의 감각: '애로 구로 넌센스,'" *P'aeminijŭm yŏngu*, no. 5 (October 2005): 43–87.

the 1920s and 30s constituted something like Deleuze and Guattari's "lines of flight," showing cracks in the shiny surface of Korea's colonial modernity.[195]

The colonial era's most canonical satirist Ch'ae Mansik offers one of the best examples of nonsense as "machine-age comedy" in a piece for *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* dated to 1933, years before his more famous works such as "My Idiot Uncle" (1938) and *Peace Under Heaven* (1938) were published.[196] Like "Big Mountain," this bit of nonsense is framed as a conversation between a husband and wife, here presented as a farcical two scene play titled "If Only They Were Gone, Part 1: I Don't Know."[197] The man, who promises his lover in the first scene that he will leave his wife and marry her instead, has come home to ask his wife for a divorce. Upon hearing his request, she neither confirms nor denies her acquiescence, but only repeats "I don't know."

MAN: I'll provide you with alimony.
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: I'll give you all of my inheritance.
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: I beg you on my knees.
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: Truly?
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: Even if I drink poisoned water in front of you and die?
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: Truly?
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: Even if I commit suicide and leave you a widow?
WIFE: I don't know.

The dialogue proceeds in this manner through seventeen repetitions of the phrase "I don't know," an almost automated response on the part of the wife that drives the husband to offer increasing

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[195] Defined, in passing, as "movements of deterritorialization and destratification." Gilles Deleuze and Pierre Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). 3.

[196] Ch'ae's nonsense work was largely written under pseudonyms and understudied until collected by Chŏng Hongsŏp in Ch'ae Mansik 채만식, *Ch'ae Mansik sŏnjip* 채만식 선집 *[Selected Works of Ch'ae Mansik]*, ed. Chŏng Hongsŏp 정홍섭 (Seoul: Hyŏndae Munhak, 2009). Titles of nonsense pieces include "Nonsense • Fantastic Symposium—Roundtable on In-laws," "Humor • Satire • Novelty, Exhibition of Candidates for Marriage, Free Admittance," "Secret Tales of Theft That Anyone Can Fall Prey To—How Not to Be a Victim of 'Pickpocketing' 스리," "A Moving Magazine Roundtable: Truth in Humor—Featuring *Tonga Ilbo*, with Cameos from Song Chin'u and Yi Kwangsu," "Untitled Standard Nonsense Roundtable—Just Between The Magazine Writers," and "Theory on the Uselessnes of Gold."

[197] The title, "잡아먹고 싶은 이야기, 1: 나는 몰라요," is difficult to translate but expresses the wish that "someone" unspecified would be conveniently out of the picture. Part 1 has a man wishing his wife would be gone; part 2 has a wife wishing her husband would be gone. In order to preserve the gender-neutral title, I have chosen to use the pronoun "they." Originally published in *Pyŏlgŏn'gon*, June 1933 edition.

concessions, then threats, then return to repeated concessions before falling silent. Completing a loop without having made any progress on his objective, the husband—nominally the head of the household—is left in complete despair, while the wife holds the ground with her moral and legal rights, not budging an inch. "I don't know" becomes paradoxically both words of evasion and words of power by being loosened from their original meaning.

MAN: Are you truly not hearing a word I'm saying?
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: Then who knows?
WIFE: I don't know.
MAN: Gosh…so that…um…um…so…..if only you would just be gone!

The husband finally gives up, ending the scene, when it is clear that her words have become completely non-communicative: they are only redundant.

Ch'ae shapes his nonsense around a central irony: that the indecisiveness of the words "I don't know" actually become the most powerful denial. The more it is repeated, the less the sentence cleaves to its denotative meaning, and the more it enforces its new connotation: a de-accumulation proceeds apace with a re-accumulation.[198] In the post-Korean War period, however, as mass culture entertainment industries took off and penetrated more deeply into everyday life than colonial media could do, the process of accumulation itself became a *prerequisite* of the nonsense experience, instead of its form. Nonsense worlds imagined through the products of entertainment were evoked in synecdoche throughout mass periodicals, radio, film, and more until they accreted a presence within collective memory. These virtual bodies, then, became the avatars of nonsense that snuck into the common sense world, showing the potential of shaping everyday lived experience.

For example, the character K'ochubu, created by cartoonist Kim Yonghwan, was a nonsense figure who soared to fame in the mid-1950s during the boom of comic publications, as well as monthly entertainment magazines such as *Arirang* and *Myŏngrang*. It was during this very period that "*nŏnsaensŭ*" became a part of *myŏngrang* culture, which I discuss in Chapter 1, as demonstrated in this March 1957 feature in *Myŏngrang* magazine (Figure 2). Titled "K'ochubu 'Nonsense,'" the first-person essay consists of vignettes from Kim Yonghwan's life in which he is not only less well-known than his famous character K'ochubu, but often drawn into K'ochubu-like adventures and even cast in comic plays and films because of his association with the character. Curiously, he is not the illustrator of the article, but the artist Kim Kyŏng'ŏn *imitates* his style so that he appears as K'ochubu in his adventures, realizing the transformation Kim Yonghwan into his comic alter ego (Figure 3).

In this usage, *nŏnsaensŭ* begins to indicate the phenomenon of K'ochubu as an entertainment icon, reproduced and transmitted through the mass medium of popular periodicals and newspapers, infiltrating the conception of a privately lived life. The nonsense of the

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[198] I take inspiration here from the concepts of "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" presented by Deleuze and Guattari, but I hope to evoke a more mechanical process, in line with the mechanical modernity that I study in this chapter, through the word "accumulate."

magazine feature derives from this central inversion, which was made possible by the infinite repeatability of the K'ochubu character. In the face of such powerful comic presence, it is almost absurd for Kim to insist that he is *not* K'ochubu.

By the mid-1960s, nonsense was strongly associated not only with this blurring of lines between the private life and entertainment, but specifically with comic style of cartoons. This film review of the 1965 comedy "I Like Being a Woman Better" shows how these categories were conflated. (Figure 4) The reviewer writes: "More than 'wit' or 'humor,' it is 'nonsense'; and more than being a comedy, [the film] spreads absurd cartoon-like laughter" (어이없는 漫畫調웃음이 판을 치는다).[199] Nonsense here is almost equated with caricature, but we can also infer that this emphasis on visuality and comic spectacle is associated with the gender play of cross-dressing, which is Sŏ's trademark comic performance. "Nonsense" is used to define body-related funny business against more intellectual, more verbal comic aesthetics such as "wit" and "humor."

The new intermedial status of nonsense, and comic culture at large, was fueled by the convergence of various mass media. Sŏ, who plays a thwarted lover pursuing the love of his life into her new marriage by getting a job as a maid in her household, is introduced as "the '*ka-al ka-al kal*' man who suddenly emerged in recent days on the wave of mass media."[200] This onomatopoetic laughter was actually the catchphrase that Sŏ had made famous in stage comedy and on the radio (the then newly established RSB), and would later bring to television.[201] Quoted without comment in the article, "*ka-al ka-al kal*" had become a shorthand for Sŏ's brand of comedy, and for the innervative effect of his comic performance: the text invites readers to imitate the comedian in open laughter. Instead of the single figure of K'ochubu bleeding into the single figure of Kim Yonghwan, the cartoonist, Sŏ's iconic laugh was poised to infect any consumer of mass entertainment with the nonsense of his comic performance.

Yi Hoch'ŏl's 1970 story "Inside and Outside the Fence" 울안과 울밖picked up on this type of infectious nonsense and pitted it against the state use of mass media, which was aimed at aligning the public with Park Chung-hee's brand of anti-Communism. [202] Yi cites Sŏ Yŏngch'un's nonsense by presenting him, much as the article above, as a figure of public imagination.

> "Hey, hey, have you heard the radio? They say Sŏ Yŏngch'un's been abducted to the North. At 1 pm there was a KAL plane that was hijacked."

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[199] Reporter Yŏng, "Manhwajo 'nŏnsaensŭ' Sogŭk: 'Yoja Ka Tŏ Chowa' 만화조 '넌센스' 소극: '여자가 더좋아' [= Cartoon-Style 'Nonsense' Comedy: 'I Like Being a Woman Better']," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 15, 1965.

[200] Reporter Yŏng.

[201] RSB was renamed JBS in 1965, when it also became associated with the Chungang Ilbo Corporation. Its name changed to TBC, and it became one of the biggest players in radio and television broadcast until its demise in 1980 during a media crackdown. The company was revived as "JTBC" in 2011 by the Chungang Ilbo Corporation.

[202] Yi Hoch'ŏl 이호철, "Uran'gwa ulbak울안과 울밖 [= Inside and Outside the Fence]," *Hyŏndae munhak*, April 1970. 122-141.

Mun Sangwu's voice over the phone crackled in a crisp staccato.
Hyŏn'o hurriedly pushed the food in his mouth to one side.
"What are you talking about?"
"I'm saying a KAL plane out of Kangnŭng was suddenly yanked off course and rerouted to Wŏnsan."
"What?"
"Just turn on the radio and wait for it. Sŏ Yŏngch'un was on that plane."
"Sŏ Yŏngch'un?"
"Whaddaya think of that? Just imagine, comedian Sŏ Yŏngch'un daintily setting booby traps in the Wŏnsan airport."

The nonsensical inversion that Yi enacts in the short story is simple: though the hijacking was a real event torn from the headlines of December 1969, everyone who hears the news is more interested in the fact of Sŏ's presence in North Korea. In Sang'wu's retelling of the news, Sŏ's kidnapping by North Korea comes *before* the fact that an entire plane was hijacked, as if the point of the mission was to capture the comedian. Sŏ's name is repeated four times in quick succession, as if to reproduce the repartee of a comedic duo on stage. Even his plight is imagined with more detail than the military implications of the incident: the idea of Sŏ setting booby traps for North Korean agents in the Wonsan airport is offered as a joke. In fact, this was a clever reference to Sŏ's spy comedy film of 1969, *Catch Them All and Laugh 'til it Hurts* 요절복통 일망타진 (dir. Sim Usŏp 심우섭), in which he played a country bumpkin who helps to capture a nest of spies through slapstick pranks in Seoul.

Hyŏn'o's facial expression in this moment, described in detail by Yi as "half shock mixed with deep pain, half about to explode into laughter," shows the affective incongruity of overlaying this reference and the report of the plane hijacking: feeling called upon to express decorum and proper melancholy when it comes to state news of North Korean aggression, while simultaneously being drawn into world of comic entertainment represented by Sŏ Yŏngch'un. It becomes clear as the narrative progresses that Hyŏn'o far prefers the latter: he is tired of living in the "atmosphere of terror" that came from living on the brink of global war at all times. The negative affect had been intensifying since the January 21 incident of 1968, when a team of North Korean agents broke past the 38th parallel and attempted to assassinate Park Chung-hee. This was quickly followed by the capture of the USS Pueblo, a US Navy spy intelligence ship; and news of a shake-up in the relations between East and West Germany. The constant barrage of Cold War news had turned the KAL hijacking, and serious conversations about such matters, into a deadening cliché. "It's started again," thinks Hyŏn'o to himself. "Again this boring chit-chat where we shoot off clichés, only to find there's nothing we can do." "Cliché" (상투常套) is, appropriately, one of the most repeated words in the short story, as if to emphasize Hyŏn'o's inability to escape the infinite loop of his every day, mediated experience.

Nevertheless, Hyŏn'o feels compelled to switch on both the television and radio during dinner at home with his wife and two teenage children, in order to keep abreast of the developing situation. This, too, feels like a cliché, in which tuning in was an expected and inescapable part of their domestic ritual. However, the conversation begins to get interesting when the children

pick up on the image of Sŏ Yŏngch'un making merry behind enemy lines. The daughter Yŏng'ok says, "Sorry Dad, but I don't know anything about Wonsan except the concept of it." She explains that whether it was Wonsan as the site her father's life before coming south, as the harbor where the USS Pueblo was reported to be moored, or as an important base for North Korea, she had no concrete grasp on it. What she *did* feel was completely comprehensible as reality 실감實感, however, was the idea of Sŏ Yŏngch'un laying booby traps in the Wonsan airport.

The idea of the Cold War, anti-Communism, and national division, as represented here, had made little impression on the young generation, but entertainment as embodied by Sŏ Yŏngch'un had made it through. As if to demonstrate the realization of entertainment culture in their lives, the two teens begin a rousing rendition of Sŏ's "Sightseeing in Seoul" 서울구경 (1970), making a point of repeating the onomatopoeic laughter (transliterated as *ŭ a a a a a a a, ŭ ha ha ha a a*…) with the full thirty beats per verse, a tribute to his virtuosity.[203]

In theories of film comedy, this impulse to imitate the comedic performer has been formulated as "innervation," a concept drawn from the work of Walter Benjamin. As Jennifer Bean has noted, a veritable Chaplinmania of both vaudeville performers and film fans imitating rippled out during the height of Charlie Chaplin's silent film fame. In a utopian interpretation, this energy has the potential to create a collectivity among the masses by literally *moving their bodies*.[204] The teenagers' physical repetition of Sŏ's song in this short story, as instantiated by the word-by-word transliteration of the lyrics in Yi Hoch'ŏl's text, provides an opening for them to "realize" the news through their own performance, and to join in collectivity with their father from Wonsan.

Being a nonsense story, however, the narrative soon bursts their bubble. The same radio and television that gave them a strong feeling of family unity betrays them: the news suddenly reports that Sŏ Yŏngch'un was not, in fact, captured with the KAL flight. The entire fantasy, which made the incident feel "real," was an alternative reality that had threatened to swallow the facts of the hijacking. In that nonsense world, the news was both affectively and factually wrong: it could not awaken the numbed sense of the masses to the urgency of North Korean aggression, and it reported a plane hijacking instead of a comedian's romp behind enemy lines.

Repeating Sŏ Yongch'un's virtuosic laughter, a transcribed sound become iconic in text, leads the family to face the paradox of their existence: that they cannot relate to each other, or feel situated within their Cold War positionality, without entertainment culture. Yi Hoch'ŏl's nonsense literature, too, dramatizes the rift between state media and everyday life through the clever citation of Sŏ Yŏngch'un's iconic comic presence. He and others began to come to this strategy in the mid-1960s, when the valve of censorship tightened, just as a torrent of socially and politically conscious literature was ready to flood public discourse. Though many would

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[203] For an example of how this song may have been broadcast on television, please see: https://youtu.be/pu5n1Rpcxso (Accessed June 13, 2017)

[204] Jennifer M. Bean, "The Art of Imitation: The Originality of Charlie Chaplin and Other Moving Image Myths," in *Slapstick Comedy*, ed. Tom Paulus and Rob King (New York: Routledge, 2010).

identify their works as "satire," their citation of entertainment culture marks them as canny inheritors of *nŏnsaensŭ*, as well.

Reverse Engineering: Back to Nonsense

A young man steps into a neighborhood barbershop and demands service. Within minutes, he has upended the cozy, humdrum atmosphere of camaraderie among the barbers and their regulars, and transformed the mundane service into an army training ground. Why are they lazing about? he fires off without using deferential grammar to men who are certainly his elders. Why don't they look smart and stand up straight? What would they do if Commies suddenly entered the premises?

A second young man shows up, dressed like the first in a military jacket. "At the appearance of yet another prestigious personage, the barbershop became twice as chilly," comments the omniscient narrator with some irony. "Everyone was scared stiff, fidgeting nervously." Whereas the first young man may have been a single bully, the two young men together began to signify the force of Park Chung-hee's military "revolution" or the coup of May 1961. Together, they interrogate a senior customer about his profession, suggest that everyone should be sent to Nonsan training camp to "learn what Democracy truly is, how to carry oneself properly, and things like that." Not satisfied, they line up two pre-conscription age teen boys who are working as barbers' assistants, make them stand at attention, and bark questions at them as if they were being initiated into the army.

Yi Hoch'ŏl's 1966 short story "In a Certain Barbershop," published in the first issue of the journal *Changjak kwa p'ipyŏng* 創作과批評 (hereafter, *Changbi*), featured this dynamic duo terrorizing a whole community with their army act. [205] And it turns out that this was truly an act: after the senior customer brings a plainclothes policeman to check their papers, it is revealed that the two are "mere citizens of the Republic of Korea," no more and no less. They are neither military officers nor agents of the revolutionary government sent to whip up anti-Communist preparedness amongst the populace; they are civilians like everyone else.

Yi's use of the duo here presents the diametric inverse of a film comedy of 1959 that is analyzed in Chapter 1, *Holjjuki and Ddungddungi Go to Nonsan Training Base*. Instead of two civilians who threaten to upset the whole order of the army during their basic training through physical comedy, Yi arranges for two former soldiers to threaten the order of civilian life through an excessive performance of military rigor. Unlike comedians Yang Sŏkch'ŏn and Yang Hun, who between them suggest a plasmaticity of the human body, the two young men suggest the standardization of the ideal male form, made to serve as interchangeable units of the military machine. Nevertheless, it turns out that their pairing as a duo is essential for the comic effect of the short story.

In response to the television news reporting an armed North Korean agent on the loose in Seoul, all eyes in the barber shop fall on the two militant youth. "What's up with that," one says coolly. "Bastards," remarks the other. As those in the room wonder how they can be so calm at the report of actual Communist aggression, and who they are calling bastards, the news moves

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[205] Yi Hoch'ŏl 이호철, "Ŏnŭ ibalsoesŏ 어느 이발소에서 [= In a certain barbershop]," *Ch'angjak kwa pip'yŏng*, 1966.

on to report on fishermen off the west coast kidnapped by the North; the real lives of off-shore islanders; and the new schism in the Minjung political party. "What's up with that," one says coolly again. "Bastards," remarks the other, finishing the routine. In effect, despite their claim to patriotism and staunch military morals, they are stuck in an eternal loop, foreclosing action.

Yi Hoch'ŏl's clever citation of the comic duo configuration, and his neat inversion of the wildly popular comedy film several years prior, indicates the formation of a new relationship between literature and popular culture at the precise moment that literature was renewing its relationship with critique. *Changbi*, as editor Paik Nak-chung wrote in an extended manifesto in the first issue, set forth a new standard for "participatory literature" which spoke to sociopolitical concerns of the moment, as opposed to the "pure literature" championed in more conservative literary journals such as *Hyŏndae Munhak* 현대문학現代文學or even the erstwhile standard of critical discourse, *Sasangye* 사상계思想界.[206] Within the shifting literary scene, what role did Yi Hoch'ŏl's work play? As an established writer who debuted in 1955 and received the prestigious Dongin Prize in 1962, Yi was entering a new period in his career, in which the comic structures of nonsense were central to his "participatory" literary orientation—and this was at least partially due to necessity.

Yi has spoken in retrospect about his consciousness of censorship at the time. For example, he has stated that he changed the title of one July 1964 story to "The Heaviness of a Chilly Evening," in order to avoid drawing attention to a story that made nonsense of the relationship between a military officer and his aide-de-camp. This was a particular sensitive time, as the story was published *during* the two months of martial law (June 3 to July 31) following major protests against diplomatic relations with Japan that year. This strategy proved successful; an analysis of the story in *Sasanggye* was perhaps not so canny in the ways of nonsense, and was yanked before publication.[207]

Most critics at the time, and many contemporary ones, called Yi's mid-1960s turn a trend

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[206] For a summary of this general view of *Changbi* as representative of the generational break in literary and intellectual discourse, see Ha Sang-il 하상일, "《Ch'angjakkwabip'yŏng》kwa 1960yŏndae hyŏnsilchuŭi pip'yŏngdamnon《창작과비평》과 1960년대 현실주의 비평담론 [= Ch'angjak kwa pip'yŏng and the 1960s discourse on realist critique]," *Onŭl ŭi munye pip'yŏng*, no. 56 (March 2005): 68–95. Other publications such as *Munhak kwa Chisŏng* (1970) and the re-established *Shin Tonga* (1964) joined *Changbi* in publishing literary works along these lines. For a study of how *Sasanggye* may have been obliquely implicated in CIA funded activities through the Congress for Cultural Freedom, see Bodŭrae Kwŏn, "'Sasanggye' Wa Segye Munhwa Chayu Hŏe Ŭi 1950-1960 Nyŏndae Naengjŏn Yideollogi Ŭi Segyejŏk Yŏnsoe Wa Hanguk [The Sasanggye and the Congress for Cultural Freedom: The Global Sequence of the Cold War Ideology and Korea in the 1950s-1960s]," *The Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 2 (June 2011): 246–88.

[207] Kim Junhyŏn 김준현, "Pan'gongjuŭiŭi naemyŏnhwawa p'ungja sosŏl: 1960 yŏndae Yi Hoch'ŏl sosŏrŭl chungsimŭro반공주의의 내면화와 풍자 소설: 1960 년대 이호철 소설을 중심으로 [= The internalization of anti-Communism and satirical fiction: a study of 1960s fictions by Yi Hochŏl]," in *Yi Ho-ch'ŏl : wŏnyung ŭi sam kwa kodŭn chihyang ŭi munhak*, ed. Kang Chin-ho 강진호 (Seoul: Kŭl nurim, 2010), 189–222.

towards "satire," or *p'ungja* 풍자諷刺.[208] Discussions of the tradition of satire in Korean literature appeared to have been in vogue in 1970, with a symposium at the Seoul YWCA featuring Yi Hoch'ŏl with fellow writers Pak T'aesun, Mun Dŏksu and Yi Hyŏnggi firing questions at young critics Kim Hyŏn (a founding figure behind *Munhak kwa chisŏng* 문학과 지성文學과 知性*,* hereafter *Munji*), Yŏm Mu'ung, and Hong Samgi.[209] The critics highlighted three periods rich in *p'ungja*: the 18th century, during which the yangban class system of the Chosŏn dynasty began to show signs of strain and partisan strife; the 1930s, represented by Ch'ae Mansik; and the 1960s, with Yi Hoch'ŏl a representative of the 60s trend. Satire was more important in times of social change, because "instead of aesthetic values, it spoke to the deeper meaning of existence life, reality, and the dark side of history." Later that year, Sim Tong'uk argued in *Munji* that proper *p'ungja* was a space in which "both author and reader may participate in their age through cultural concern."[210]

These definitions of *p'ungja* as a literary form largely establish its grounding in a moral position, of fostering political self-consciousness in times when literary expression reached an impasse. Of course, this speaks to most of the works discussed in this chapter; it also handily overlaps with nonsense, which often stages the co-presence of a common sense domain and a nonsense domain, which rises to challenge the former's hegemony. However, it is important to note that the values of nonsense and satire are different, and that an exemplary work of nonsense may read as very poor satire. For example, if a writer is suspected of focusing too heavily on comic effect—that is to say, on value as entertainment—the work may no longer qualify as satire.

The difference between *p'ungja* and the simply humorous literary work was articulated in Paik Nak-chung's review of several new short stories in August 1967, among which were "Reason" 이유理由 by Sŏ Kiwŏn and "The Voice of the Governor General" by Ch'oe Inhun.[211] Comparing both stories to Ch'ae Mansik's "My Idiot Uncle," which he considered a classic of modern Korean satirical literature, Paik lamented that Sŏ's work fell short, while Ch'oe's lived up to the model. "Voice of the Governor General" was able to deliver a "ghost broadcast at the same time that it was clearly a part of reality 현실現實," despite not being based on a "concrete

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[208] This is usually conceived of in tandem with Yi's shift away from autobiographical material to the everyday lives of citizens, or *sosimin*. See Kim T'ae-ho 김태호, "Ilsange ŏgap toen sosimindŭre taehan p'ungja: 1960yŏndae sosŏrŭl chungsimŭro 일상에 억압 된 소시민들에 대한 풍자: 1960년대 소설을 중심으로 [= Satirizing the oppressed lives of everyday citizens: on 1960s fictions]," in *Yi Hochŏl: wŏnyungŭi samgwa kodŭn chihyangŭi munhak* 이호철*:* 원융의 삶과 곳은 지향의 문학 (Kŭl nurim, 2010), 83–110.

[209] Tonga Ilbo Staff, "P'ungja munhagŭi chŏnt'ong: YMCA simin nondanesŏ풍자 문학의 전통: YMCA 시민 논단에서 [= The tradition of satirical literature: from the YMCA citizens' symposium]," *Tonga Ilbo*, July 3, 1970.

[210] Sim Tong'uk 심동욱, "Pung'ja sosŏl ko: 'Marok yŏljŏn' e paldan hayŏ 풍자 소설고: '마록열전'에 발단 하여 [= Study of satirical fiction: starting from 'Marok Yŏljŏn']," *Munhak kwa Chisŏng* 1, no. 2 (November 20, 1970): 328–36.

[211] Paik Nak-chung 백낙정, "Chaktan sigan: ŏnŭ tal poda kwansimjak mana 작단 시간: 어느 달 보다 관심작 만아 [= Contemporary takes on the world of letters: More works of interest than other months]," *Tonga Ilbo*, August 29, 1967, sec. Lifestyle.

character." In other words, it successfully staged an aesthetic co-presence of the fantastic and lived social reality. Sŏ's work, on the other hand, was "based on an issue of earnest concern; but perhaps it was too earnest, it was content to only touch the matter." Although it had "excessively humorous lines" and "vivid interactions between the speaker and other characters," it went no further.

As discussed earlier, "Voice of the Governor General" is an excellent example of division-era nonsense literature in its attention to co-presence, its evocation of modern mass media, its skillful use of paradox, and its post-colonial paranoia. However, Ch'oe Inhun's style seemed calculated to deal in accusatory gestures and negative affect: the Governor General's voice berates listeners—and readers—for belonging to a race that loves its own subjugation. This was strikingly different from Sŏ's "Reasons," which circles around a profound lack of meaning, moral or otherwise: a government spy chooses a target to investigate for anti-Communist activity for what ends up being no reason at all. Written as a first-person report, as if the reader were the speaker's superior in the KCIA, the text reveals that the subject was chosen for investigation because he was spotted not laughing at a film comedy amongst a sea of laughing faces at the movie theater.[212] This "suspicious" behavior leads the speaker to interpret the man's "model citizen" demeanor as a cover, his visit to an underground tea house frequented by youths as a secret meeting with another agent, and his conversation with one particular young woman there as an attempt at "brainwashing." The latter assumption is only strengthened when it is revealed that the subject was a psychology lecturer, perfectly poised to carry out psychological warfare in the college classroom.

In other words, the speaker systemically weaves a web of nonsense from an initial assumption, despite the fact that the evidence—including a recorded conversation between the subject and his young lover in a love hotel—merely points to a middle-age crisis. Like "Inside and Outside the Fence," a simple misrecognition enables a systemic nonsense world to spring up in the speaker's imagination, animating it far more than the simple truth: that there is no reason for suspicion. The glaring lack of "reason" in the investigator's case is made evident when the subject confronts him face to face.

> "Hello there. What is the <u>reason</u> you are chasing after me?"
> "To follow behind you is my mission."
> "Who are you? What authority do you have to make people suffer like this?"
> "Since it's come to this, let's go talk about this over some tea."
> The subject pressed me further, his eyes filled with enmity.
> "If you don't reveal your identity, I'll assume for now that you're from an investigative agency. If that's so, on what suspicion are you putting me under surveillance? What is your mission? What does it have to do with me?"
> "Forgive me for not being able to get into the <u>reasons</u> right now, but if you ask yourself you should have the answers in your own mind."
> At this point, the subject's expression changed ever so slightly, as if he couldn't quite keep it in check, but he spoke again.

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[212] Sŏ Kiwŏn 서기원, "Yiyu 이유 理由 [= Reasons]," *Shin Donga*, August 1967.

"What is it you need? Money?"

Like the wife in Ch'ae Mansik's farcical dialogue, the speaker gives evasive non-answers that loop back to the suspect, resulting in escalating conjectures and concessions that are destined for failure. The speaker's faith in his culpability are unshakeable.

The text does not offer any direct accusations, only a gentle caricature of mediocrity in the secret service. However, in its citation of spy film conventions, from the furtive foot chase to a car chase, the femme fatale, and a high-tech bugging device, it is quite brilliant as nonsense. While the protagonist goes through all the motions of counter-espionage, and repeatedly assures the reader of his report that he is following "protocol," he voids the meaning of the government's surveillance machine by placing a blank face at the center. At the same time, it paints a vivid portrait of two opposing types of paranoia constantly at play: the paranoia that spies have infiltrated everywhere in South Korean society, and the paranoia that anyone, however mundane, may become an innocent suspect in the national hunt for North Korean operatives. As in "Big Mountain," a misplaced paranoia casts a greater social atmosphere of anti-Communist animus in the position of nonsense, and it is in this gesture that Sŏ Kiwŏn's short story performs as "participatory" literature.

If works like "Reason" and "At a Certain Barbershop" demonstrated the mimetic adaptation of nonsense in popular culture as a pathway to nonsense literature, a divergent path to the same destination revolved around the mimetic representation of state media, which permeated everyday life. Instead of inspiring innervation or caricature, state media served a powerful disciplinary and ritual function. Accordingly, nonsense is achieved in these literary works through the exploration of compulsion: if Bergson found the comic in the "mechanical encrusted upon the living,"[213] these fictions offered ideology encrusted upon the psyche of the individual—and through psychosomatic symptoms, their bodies as well. Finding the nonsense in these varieties of repetition, they participate in the deconstruction of such media regimes, learned responses of paranoia and fear, and Park Chung-hee's May revolution.

The Nonsense and Paranoia of Redundant "Revolution"

In Yi Hoch'ŏl's 1965 story "The Deputy Mayor Does Not Report for Duty," Kyuho is a paranoid man on the run.[214] After coming home from the school where he works as a teacher, he is informed by his nervous wife that three men in army uniform came looking for him while he was gone. Convinced that he will be brought in for questioning, torture, and possible incarceration, Kyuho takes off immediately to hide at a colleague's home, a series of cafes, and eventually in small towns on the southeastern tip of the peninsula, where he alternates between bars, hot springs, and the beds of prostitutes. Unfortunately, everywhere he goes, he is followed by radio broadcasts that all begin the same way: "We make anti-Communism the first national priority…" Each time he hears it on the radio, he automatically mutters "That's right, that's

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[213] Henri Louis Bergson, *Laughter - An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Shovell Henry Brereton (Rockville, Maryland: Arc Manor, 2008).

[214] Yi Hoch'ŏl 이호철, "Pusijang pu'imji ro an kanda 부시장 부임지로 안 간다 [= The Deputy Mayor Does Not Report for Duty]," *Sasanggye*, January 1965.

right," an involuntary affirmation of state ideology. His allegiance to the Park Chung-hee regime and its anti-Communist cause, however, is belied by the fact that he experiences the broadcast as an assault: he jumps in surprise, feels so much anxiety that it triggers his loose bowels, and exits hearing range as soon as possible.

Like the radio broadcasts, Kyuho's life is stuck on constant loop: he calls his wife for news, hears that soldiers have been back to look for him, lets loose nervous flatulation, and rushes to a café bathroom to relieve his diarrhea; rinse and repeat. As he begins calling home less frequently, the source of anxiety shifts to the radio broadcast. Far from being an inspiring public rallying cry, the anti-Communist slogan becomes a powerful laxative that penetrated the far reaches of the peninsula. Scatological humor notwithstanding, Yi Hoch'ŏl's depiction of fear as the paradoxical product of patriotism inverts the two affective states in their relation to state media.

Perhaps as compensation for his anxiety, Kyuho begins compulsively telling all the strangers he meets, such as bar girls and shop owners, that he is a "revolutionary," implying that he is a participant in Park Chung-hee's May 16 Revolution. Though he is, in fact, an army veteran, his insistence begins to lose meaning as he repeats it ad nauseum. In one scene, a friendly shoeshine boy offers to guess Kyuho's occupation, and places him as a local merchant who has the leisure to take a break in the middle of the day. Unhappy with this working-class image of himself, Kyuho retorts:

> "Sonny, I'm a revolutionary."
> The boy stopped shining the shoe for a moment and wrinkled his face. "Whatever, Mister, that's some bullshit."
> "Sonny, what's with that face?"
> "Whatever, Mister, that's bullshit."
> Tell him revolutionary and he says bullshit. Without really knowing if the boy meant that revolutionaries were bullshit, or that it was bullshit to say that Kyuho was a revolutionary, Kyuho just said, "Sonny, it's true."

By loosening the word "revolutionary" from its meaning and turning it into nonsense, Yi Hoch'ŏl manages to write the words "revolutionaries were bullshit" without being censored.

The overarching nonsense structure of inversion, however, is finally revealed three quarters of the way through the narrative when an army friend of Kyuho visits his wife and informs her that he is not being arrested. Instead, the military government had been sending messengers to his home to bring the official news that he had been chosen to be the deputy mayor of Masan. As in "Inside and Outside," the mistaken notion of his imminent persecution generated an alternative reality, a nonsense world with a system of cues that he had woven into complete cloth through his paranoia. Far from being the persecuted man, he was being given a position within the revolutionary government.

Before that could happen, however, he had to be found; and that was no easy matter, as he had stopped calling his wife and she had no way of reaching him. Described as a "middle-aged man with slightly stooped shoulders wearing no hat and corduroy pants," he was near impossible to locate on sight. "Why were there so many people with slightly stooped shoulders wearing no hat and corduroy pants? It seemed that the streets and alleys were full of them," comments the

narrator, repeating his description. Like the best North Korean spy, or like the suspect in "Reason," Kyuho had gone undercover, and his disguise was perfect. It was an ironic mirror image of spy paranoia: he could be anywhere. And yet this paranoia, like Kyuho's own, is rendered nonsense through an inversion of ideological category.

Nam Chŏnghyŏn plays with an even deeper paranoia in "The Sky Above and the Earth Below" 천지현황天地玄黃, a short story of the same year: if Kyuho is worried that he has been reported as a pro-Communist in "Deputy Mayor," the protagonist Dŏksu is so worried about guilt by association that he is ready to report anyone and anything—including his own rebellious body parts.[215] This, of course, is a figure for how paranoia had sown fissions within the family and the home, so that a son may seek to sever ties with his own father in order to save himself.

Like Kyuho, the protagonist Dŏksu is prey to physical compulsions, but in his case, it is tied to biological inheritance: he is deathly afraid that he, like his father, will become a carpenter. His hands move without his bidding, wielding hammer and nail with skill and ease despite his unwillingness to do the work. In an extended soliloquy at the beginning of the narrative, Dŏksu self-reflexively diagnoses himself with compulsive repetition. "What do I mean by repeating morning and night like an idiot that I can't use my hands? What I mean to say by emphasizing that I 'can't use them' is that they tend to resist me and become useless, moving naturally on their own." These "acts of betrayal" fill Dŏksu with terror, because it was precisely carpentry that landed his father in jail, where he died.

In a nonsense turn, Dŏksu's hands are described as "reactionary," "subversive," and "enveloped in subversive thought," and he considers reporting them to the authorities out of fear of being prosecuted as an "accomplice." "Law is law, and human connections are human connections," he thinks, and is ready to act despite "our relationship of thirty-odd years." This is a fairly transparent figure for his struggle to separate himself from his father, with whom he has had an equally long blood relationship. In the flashback that follows, it is revealed that Dŏksu's father was in jail for subversive activity because he offered an official a handmade table as a bribe for his son's advancement, only to have a table leg break during a visit from Japanese conglomerate representatives. The loss of face suffered by the official was apparently used as evidence of sabotage plotted by the North Koreans.

Visiting his father in prison, Dŏksu is suddenly filled with an uncontrollable compulsion of laughter when his father begs him to remember "the truth" and not to join his accusers in casting him as a subversive. "Whenever someone throws out that word 'truth,' for some reason I lose the sense of truth and feel that the whole world is a huge joke. And as the whole world is transformed into a comedy, it makes me laugh like an idiot," he says in explanation of his unusual reaction. Dŏksu includes "the government, the congress, and the revolution" as participants in that comedy, for that is the only way an "almost idiotically nice man like my father" could be on trial.

Nam Chŏnghyŏn's short story practices a nonsense aesthetic by portraying a protagonist compelled to repeat the language of Park Chunghee's revolution, and also paradoxically compelled to laugh at its absurdity as he loses touch with reality. Dŏksu is deeply paranoid about

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[215] Nam Chŏnghyŏn 남정현, "Ch'ŏnji hyŏnhwang 천지현황 天地玄黃 [= The Sky Above and the Earth Nelow]," *Sasanggye*, June 1965.

becoming the target of government suspicion and of dying a political prisoner, and in this case this paranoia is figured as a fear of inherited complicity. In the second act of the story, the act of reporting on one's own family member is doubled in the narrative of another family. Trying to escape his fate by becoming a boarder a "western style house," Dŏksu is asked to join the son of his landlord in accusing his father of spying for North Korea during a father-son quarrel. This second act of reporting sheds light on the opening soliloquy, in which Dŏksu nonsensically contemplates accusing his own hands of sedition: the latter is a figure for the former, brought to the level of nonsense by the literalization of a metaphor.

Despite a carefully wrought and nested nonsense structure, however, the short story remains less comically inclined than Yi Hoch'ŏl's work. Like Chen Yingzhen's oeuvre, Nam Chŏnghyŏn's work tended towards satire, and one could even argue that nonsense is subordinated to the critique of an over-active anti-Communist ideology in "Sky and Earth." This aspect of Nam's work made it significantly more vulnerable to censure, and like Chen he served time in jail. In 1965, as this story was being published in *Sasanggye*, Nam was being brought to trial himself for a story he published earlier that year, "Land of Excrement" (분지糞地).[216] One of the most famous legal prosecutions of an author under 1960s National Security Law, the "Punji incident" put Nam on trial for "anti-Americanism" and "Communist sympathy."

Studies of this well-known fiction, however, rarely analyze its participation in nonsense literature: the soliloquy of the protagonist, Hong Mansu, is punctuated by two highly redundant broadcasts from the "Pentagon" as he waits to be obliterated by nuclear weapons on "Mt. Facing America" (향미산向美山), one at twenty minutes to blast and the next at ten. Nam's clever ventriloquism of America's military power, occupying Korean territory as it does to the present day, emphasizes an ideologically loaded word that is repeated unto nonsense by pro-American media in South Korea: "freedom." Repeatedly addressing "free citizens of the world" and "free people," the broadcast portrays American soldiers as "protectors of freedom" and itself as the "the stalwart of free peoples' security and prosperity." Ironically, the broadcasts call for "free people" who find themselves in the vicinity of Mt. Facing America to go into hiding deep underground, as it is too late to evacuate before the nuclear blast; they are trapped.

In Nam's articulation, "freedom" becomes decoupled form its other meanings, and becomes coded exclusively as a sign for allegiance to America as a world power, which grants personal safety and a promise of prosperity—unless one happens to be in the way of its military target. To wit, the Pentagon broadcast declares that in its benevolence, it has dedicated a prestigious sum of 30 million dollars to the purchase of weaponry for this "historic effort" to eradicate Hong, a non-human "pollutant," from the face of the earth.

Nam effectively reaches a comic turn by articulating two mutually affirming types of paranoia: the first, a Korean paranoia that US military power (and the atomic bomb specifically) could be used again on Korean soil if the Cold War turned hot; and the second, the American paranoia of Communist spread, which was expressed as a disproportionate show of force against any who would resist their power, even if they were not proven Communists. In Mansu's case, the punishment is purposefully incongruous with his crime, which was an attempt to exact an opposite and equal revenge. Compensating for two generations of sexual victimization at the

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[216] Nam Chŏnghyŏn 남정현, "Punji 분지 糞地 [= Land of Excrement]," *Hyŏndae munhak*, March 1965.

hands of American soldiers—his mother right after liberation at the end of World War II and his sister in the present—he rapes the visiting wife of the American officer Speed who is keeping his sister as a concubine. For this, the Pentagon has mustered resources to drop nuclear weapons on a Korean mountain where he is hiding.

These two types of paranoia are both represented, true to the engagement of the nonsense lineage with mass media, in the new and advanced platform of the broadcast. By its own account, the "Frontier Television" broadcasts are transmitted by the Pentagon via the "Cosmos satellite everywhere on the globe," and its cameras are primed to broadcast Mansu's demise to the world live. As a manifestation of American technology during the space race, and a tertiary manifestation of its reach, the transmission and the very image of American power is virtually inescapable. Again, we are reminded of Emily Apter's concept of paranoia as "oneworldedness," in which "oneworldedness traduces territorial sovereignty and often masks its identity as another name for 'America.'" [217] The end-game of psychological warfare, after all, is to encompass the entire world under a singular ideology.

The Other Shoe Drops

In Nam's (1932-) obsession with repeated trauma in different generations of the same family, particularly the mother and daughter in "Land of Excrement," he figures historical repetition within the post-War period. The mother's rape by an American "liberator" after her celebration of freedom from Japanese tyranny is followed by her daughter's suffering at the hands of a "protector of the Free World." Other nonsense writers of his generation, including Yi Hoch'ŏl (1932-2016), Sŏ Kiwŏn (1930-2005), and even Ch'oe Inhun (1936-2018), were even more fascinated with historical repetition between the height of colonial power in the 1930s and the moment of development and autocracy they were experiencing in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Born in the midst of colonial modernity and of an age to have experienced Japanese public schooling before coming of age in a divided Korea, their historical consciousness was characterized by a kind of double vision. The nonsense that resulted from this constant superimposition made its way into their literature, figured as both uncanny repetition and anachronism, which confounds common sense.

The second shoe in Yi Hoch'ŏl's "Big Mountain" is a case in point. Intercut with the vignette of husband and wife struggling with paranoia after repeatedly seeing the lone white *komusin* is the narrator's memories of a lone black shoe from the speaker's childhood in the North. The *jikatabi* that caused him "terror" at the time, was a working-class shoe like the *komusin,* but its popularity was bound up in local wartime economics. It was a split-toed, rubber soled boot from Japan that was extremely popular in his village during the Great Pacific War, due to the fact that workers in the nearby bronze and leather factories could be excused from conscription; at those factories, this was the shoe of choice.

The terror, it would seem, either stemmed from the reasonable fear present in everyday life during wartime, or from an anachronistic fear of national division, which had yet to occur. The narrator relates the heightened fear he experienced because torrential rain had cloaked Big Mountain in clouds, and without the sight of that mountain—which he identifies as second only

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[217] Apter, "On Oneworldedness."

to his mothers' breasts in giving him comfort—he feels lost. As in the present, he is unable to see Big Mountain, which is above the 38th parallel; but even his wife has no idea of its significance when he mutters its name under his breath.

This inverted historical repetition, simply rendered as a flashback to a sharp childhood memory, suggests what Susan Stewart calls "simultaneity" in her study of nonsense. The nonsense of simultaneity denies "the sequentiality of logical, temporal, and causal order" and "[flaunts] a juxtaposition of incongruous worlds," which are interchangeable.[218] The anachronism of national division haunting a small boy in 1940s colonial Korea certainly denies the forward-moving flow of temporal logic in an abstract sense. Most importantly, however, it turns against the flow of developmentalist logic in the Park era, which claimed to be moving Korean inexorably forward into modern, capitalist democracy, a teleological line of progress. What if what came after "revolution" was only a circular return to the terror of the colonial period?

Sŏ Kiwŏn began playing more radically with temporal logic and developmental teleology in 1971 when he began his linked short story series, *Marok Chronicles* 마록열전馬鹿列傳, the title of which was itself nonsense in the form of a pun.[219] "Marok" is literally "horse-deer," and Sŏ treats it as an endangered, composite creature in the prologue to the first story. It is also the name of the first protagonist, Ma Rok, who is linked to the four other protagonists as members of the family Ma. If theirs is a genealogy, however, it is one of idiocy, for "marok" also takes its Sino-Korean characters from the Japanese word *baka*, or "idiot." Like the Jabberwocky in Carroll's nonsense poetry, the reader both knows and does not know what a "marok" is, and that is the point. The premise of the "marok," like Nam's in "The Sky Above and the Earth Below," is based on inheritance as a compulsion towards repetition. The way that generations are related in Sŏ's nonsense world, however, is much like the "marok" itself: the chronotopes that they inhabit are composites of the modern and the pre-modern, neither here nor there.

This is perhaps best articulated in "Marok Chronicles 1," in which a pre-modern government official makes use of modern mass media to communicate with his subjects. The local (Chosŏn-era) magistrate 사또 in Ma Rok's county counted among his accomplishments the establishment of "free radio broadcasts in each household."[220] The radio broadcasts were used in tandem with announcements that were posted in paper form at the East Gate of the city. After the end of the curfew was declared through a bulletin paper at the East Gate, for example, the radio broadcast provided three days of detailed explanation, in addition to "singing repeated praises of the magistrate."

After this anachronism is revealed early on in the story, Sŏ reveals at intervals that Ma Rok's grandfather may have been a member of the anti-Japanese "righteous army" that resisted annexation in 1905; and that he was so poor he couldn't afford to have proper commemorative

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[218] Stewart, *Nonsense*. 156. Stewart also draws from the comic theory of Henri Bergson.

[219] Sŏ Kiwŏn 서기원, *Marok yŏljŏn* 마록열전 馬鹿列傳 *[= Marok Chronicles]* (Seoul: Munhak kwa pip'yŏng sa, 1988).

[220] Sŏ. 12.

rites 제사 for his father during the Korean War. Proud of his family's anti-Japanese legacy, Ma Rok spits in front of the old "Nakamura Pharmacy," which was now run by the erstwhile Japanese owner's former errand boy. These past events place Ma Rok squarely in the post-liberation, post-war period, at the very least. Yet he still lives in a town where civilians 백성百姓 are commanded to stand aside for the magistrate's procession, and in which he is able to arrange for a contractual concubine for the purposes of producing a family heir.

As Song Chaeyŏng notes, the satirical side of this anachronism is revealed in the incident of the traditional market, in which the magistrate suddenly decides that the "corrupt practice of the four-day market shall be reformed into a three-day market. Why? Because we can."[221] The following debate on the radio featured a "Sirhak professor" who argued for the reform in terms of economic efficiency; and a "young lecturer from a local Confucian studio school 향교鄕校" who argued passionately that "It would not be a good decision to do away with the pre-modern practice of the market."[222] The latter subsequently resigns from his post under mysterious circumstances. This is just a foreshadowing of the silencing of dissent that would follow: incensed at the threat to their livelihood, market vendors rise in protest, and the unfortunate Ma Rok is arrested by accident when he gets mixed up in the fray, resulting in a prolonged incarceration. The magistrate's control of discursive space and his curtailing of the freedom of assembly—not to mention his suddenly announced decision to "speed up" the market—are too reminiscent of Park's practices of cultural policing and his developmental ideology to be anything but an oblique critique of the present.

This critique, however, would have been just as available had Sŏ chosen to contain the narrative entirely in a historical era, as he does in "Marok Chronicles 2" (during the Korean War) and "Marok Chronicles 3" (mid-to-late Chosŏn), and to most of "Marok Chronicles 5" (Japanese colonial period).[223] Why did he feel the need to juxtapose Chosŏn government apparatuses with the state use of modern mass media, as in "Marok 1," or the Chosŏn practice of secret inspectors investigating the provinces with modern transportation (high-speed buses and airplanes) in "Marok 4"?

Sŏ's anachronism exceeds the needs of satirical allegory in its suggestion of historical redundancy. The serial but non-chronological form of the *Marok Chronicles* offers a gesture of random repetition: not only is it true that what has happened will happen again, but it is quite possible that, despite the theme of inheritance and lineage, all of Korean history *is happening simultaneously*. The non-sequential nature of the series is revealed in their prologues, which when placed adjacently read like a list of negations. Each entry is introduced as a project of re-telling that is "not entirely meaningless": "Marok 1" introduces a story of foolishness in a non-classical fashion, "Marok 2" does so in a non-symbolic fashion, "Marok 3" distinguishes itself

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[221] Sŏ. 25.

[222] Sirhak is "Practical Learning," a school of thought stretching roughly from the late 17th to the 19th centuries and emphasizing a pragmatic approach to governance, rather than a more strictly neo-Confucian approach.

[223] Incidentally, an English translation of the series by Kevin O'Rourke chooses only these three entries to translate, leaving out "Marok 1" and "Marok 4." Perhaps Sŏ's more openly nonsensical temporal play was simply more difficult to fully translate without substantial annotations.

by being non-concrete, "Marok 4" is non-pedantic, and "Marok 5" is simply a "generous account." Because they are given the classical moniker of "chronicle" 열전列傳, implying pre-modern historical writing, what each entry negates is a different aspect of that genre and its pretensions towards prestige and moral authority. In short, as chronicles, which should be concerned with making meaning out of historical time, they are nonsense.

Following the colonial definition of *nŏnsaesŭ*, the *Marok Chronicles* deal in "non-meaning," but remain "interesting" because they refuse to find any point in history a unique set of circumstances. If the points in a chart are all figures for one another, it is quite impossible to draw a line marking historical trajectory of any sort, including one of progress. At the same time, this overlapping effect brings about startling comic incongruities which elicit comic affect through their inversion of narrative tropes of progress.

"Marok 5" is an interesting example of how division-era nonsense literature could skewer both historical teleology and Cold War paranoia through this method of anachronistic superimposition. As aforementioned, the narrative is set entirely within the colonial period, and features a Korean informant for the Japanese police, Ma Yŏng. Essentially a spy, much like the speaker of "Reasons," Ma Yŏng is tasked with digging up dirt on subversive Koreans (the Japanese phrase *futei senjin* 不逞鮮人is used) to boost the record of his boss Kinoshita, a Japanese police official. Just as in Sŏ's earlier spy spoof "Reasons," the protagonist follows a target and finds that he is guilty of suspicious activity: he has befriended a young group of leftist intellectuals, and has just purchased a mimeograph—the primary medium for printing subversive pamphlets at the time.

This narrative of Ma Yŏng's struggle to fulfill his mission is overlaid with another narrative: the target of his investigation is the son of a Korean official in the Japanese government, Councilor Kim, himself a well-placed toady of the colonial power, and he is determined to save his son at all costs. To Ma Yŏng's shock, this includes a punishment straight out of dynastic history: Kim locks his son in the basement indefinitely in order to force him to change his ideology. "The story of King Yŏngjo murdering Prince Sado by starving him in a rice cabinet came to [Ma Yŏng's] mind. Was a Councilor's position precious enough to do this? It was mad, even for a high official in the governor-general's office."[224]

Though it is done through comparison, and not as literal an anachronism as in "Marok 1" and "Marok 4," the overlap here is perhaps even more complex in conception. In essence, three situations are superimposed over each other: the colonial period paranoia for leftist and anti-Japanese subversives; division-era paranoia of leftist thought crime in every corner of society; and the ultimate sacrifice of filicide, committed in the name of preserving the royal Chosŏn lineage. Yŏngjo famously decided to do away with his own son, who was suspected of having mental illness and committed several acts of murder, in order to protect his grandson's claim to the throne.[225] Whether a "marok" is in pre-modern Korea, colonial modernity, or the

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[224] Sŏ, *Marok yŏljŏn* 마록열전 馬鹿列傳 *[= Marok Chronicles]*. 107.

[225] For a first-hand account, see the memoirs of Sado's wife: Hyegyŏnggung Hong Ssi and JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng: the autobiographical writings of a Crown Princess of eighteenth-century Korea*, 2013.

developmental modernity of the present, it may find itself in the same situations of moral compromise and complicity with systemic corruption. Ma Yŏng, for his part, devises a plan in which Councilor Kim publically announces the death of his son, while sending him into exile with funds—a good portion of which Ma Yŏng pockets for his own use.

Much more than Ch'oe Inhun and Nam Chŏnghyŏn, Sŏ Kiwŏn exhibits a preoccupation with the figure of the middle man, whose mediocrity is infinitely reproducible in both time and space. As in Nam's "The Sky Above and the Earth Below," "Marok 5" contemplates the cruelty of a system that rewards the sacrifice of one's own family members for the sake of personal safety, but from the perspective of a bystander who seeks profit for himself. At the same time, he links the compulsion to repeat a familial fate to this peripheral figure, who is finally revealed to be the idiot that he is in this last installment of the *Chronicles*. It is when Kinoshita berates Ma Yŏng for his lack of results that the Sino-Korean characters for "marok" are used alongside a transcription of Japanese profanity: *baka yarō* 馬鹿野郎. Like Ch'oe, Sŏ insults "peninsularian" nature through the voice of the Japanese colonizer; but it is through an anachronism that stretches further back in time, to the later centuries of the Chosŏn state. "Marok 5" serves as a summation of Sŏ Kiwŏn's anachronism in the full series, demonstrating the potential for both comic affect and terror in the nonsense of historical redundancy.

Conclusion

Division-era nonsense in Korea, while more heavily coded as a response to anti-Communist ideology than nonsense in Taiwan, reveals itself to be a post-colonial nonsense after all. Yet instead of a Japanese legacy leading to opacities in contemporary communication, the Korean practice of literary nonsense is interested in the problem of too much transparency. Just as Sŏ Kiwŏn spells out the equation between "marok" and the Japanese "*baka*," Yi Hoch'ŏl, Nam Chŏng-hyŏn, and Ch'oe Inhun find the Park Chung-hee era to be too clear a reproduction of a colonial order. Redundancy is just as "idiotic" as noise, which may sink down to gibberish.

Like Taiwanese nonsense, Korean nonsense returns to the abstract opposition of black and white: of common sense and nonsense, of *jikatabi* and *komusin*, and finally, of guilt and innocence. When Kyuho's colleague from the school where he teaches asks him what his is suspected of, he answers: "Who gets detained for <u>any</u> reason? They put aside matters of black and white. If they have even just the slightest suspicion, they'll dig out the evidence later." Paranoia, like nonsense, plays with the constant animation of negation as a logical system against social fabrications of common sense. Locked together paradoxically and revealed through the repetition of transmission, bodily compulsions, and loops in time, black and white invert discourse, and find in nonsense a new articulation of communal affect.

Epilogue.
The Stuttering Automaton

> "Haha, come look at this, the ad guy is smiling. The ad guy's eyes and mouth are all screwy!"
> (I am a big puppet, I am a big puppet.)
> He smiled. His shadow stretched out long in front of him, a head on top of a boxy sign, resembling nothing human. The street kid was stepping on his shadow for sport, but somewhere far away in the back his mother was calling, and the child stopped there, though he followed Kunshu with regret in his eyes and cast envious glances at his friends, whose mothers did not stop them. Kunshu thought silently about how smart A-Zhu was, tasting the words of her metaphor again and again: "big puppet, big puppet."
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> --Huang Chunming, "My Son's Big Puppet," 1968

I return at the end to Henri Bergson's theory of laughter, in which the "mechanical encrusted upon the living" gives rise to comic affect. This 1899 formulation, along with Sigmund Freud's 1905 writing on the joke, initiates more than a century of thinking about the function of comic activity in culture and society. In a typically Bergsonian move, "Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic" finds a primal conflict between the organicism of the living human spirit and an increasingly rigid world defined by mechanical repetition.[226] Like the nonsense of repetition presented in the last chapter, the Bergsonian comic sensibility arrived at a historical moment when the human was on the verge of being reduced to the automaton. Moreover, as Donna V. Jones reminds us, it was marginal groups demarcated by class and race that ran the most risk of being characterized as mechanical, unthinking, and hence ideal for mechanical labor: the "Southern Negro," the coolie, and manual laborers of a Marxian proletariat.[227]

For Taiwanese and South Korean societies, a moment of accelerated incorporation of working bodies into industrialized machines of capitalism came in the 1960s and 1970s. Not only was the state taking a hand in quickening the growth of industry and urbanization, but it was doing so as a part of an overall strategy of incorporating the small nation into the global economy, led by the American engine of capitalism. It was a part of a global effort to prove, once and for all, that the capitalist system was superior to the communist one in being more productive, more abundant, and even more scientifically advanced in its pursuit of market progress.

The nonsense of redundancy of nonsense in Taiwan demonstrated the mechanization of the laboring human body with particular poignancy. In Huang Chunming's "My Son's Big Puppet,"

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[226] Bergson, *Laughter - An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. 18.

[227] Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Negritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (Columbia University Press, 2010). 35. As she notes, Bergson himself wrote from a limited lens of race, writing, for example, that black bodies could be considered comic because the (white) viewer imagined them as white bodies artificially covered in soot. This chapter is indebted to Jones' insights on the thematization of race, labor, and the human/mechanical binary in Bergson, Bourdieu, and the postcolonial writings of the Carribbean writers involved in *Tropiques* (Aimé Césaire, René Ménil, etc).

the protagonist Kunshu transforms from a living human, an organic body, into a marionette instrumentalized to create desire for capitalistic consumer. Driven by economic need, he takes a job as a "Sandwich-man,"[228] a profession so new to his small town that it has yet to be named. The town eventually settles on the common usage of "kóng-kò-ê" (廣告的), a Taiwanese Hokkien neologism meaning roughly "one who functions as or does advertisement."[229] The job provides the bare conditions for Kunshu's life: it is only after he is hired that he tells his wife A-Zhu to call off her abortion, a decision which results in the birth of their son A-Long.

Nevertheless, he finds it a profoundly alienating occupation, one which sets him apart from the small-town community and literally turns him into a marionette.

> The powder on his face dripped down with his sweat, so that he resembled a melting wax figure. The false mustache fastened inside his nostrils was also soaked with sweat, so that he was forced to breathe with his mouth. It was true that the feather on his top hat fluttered, implying coolness. Of course, he wanted to get into a covered corridor to hide from the heat, but the movie ad board on his shoulders made it impossible for him to enter. Recently, he also began hanging boards on the front and back sides of his body: the front was herbal tea, the back was roundworm medicine. In this way, his walk was as restrained as a marionette.[230]

In evoking the image of the marionette, Huang echoes a Bergsonian tradition, in which the marionette—and its sibling the automaton—play a dual role in comic release: both human behavior which resembled its mechanical counterpart and automatons bearing an uncanny resemblance to the human emerged as comic.[231] In the former case, laughter has the potential to jar loose rigid human behavior, and to restore it to an organic elasticity. In the latter, machinic mimesis reflects upon the mechanical aspects of human social behavior, producing a comedy of manners in which the machine becomes a caricature of so-called "civilized" practices.

Both these types of comic ritual, however, are not initiated by the perfection of the inhuman automaton, but the incidence of error: an unintended repetition, or stutter, which ironically reveals its mechanical nature. Kunshu's smile, an index of his interior dialogue, signals to the neighborhood children that he is *not* an actual marionette. Though the get-up itself and his

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[228] Written with capitalization and dash in English in Huang's text.

[229] In the epigraph, I have translated this to the colloquial sobriquet "the ad guy."

[230] Chunming Huang, "Er zi de da wan ou [My Son's Big Puppet]," in *Qingfangong di gu shi [Qingfangong's tale]* (Taibei Shi: Crown Publishing Company, 1985), 267–99. 270.

[231] Bergson himself drew inspiration from Blaise Pascal's fragmentary *Pensées*, published posthumously in 1670. The comic potential of "two faces which resemble each other" in Pascal's epigrammatic observation becomes Taylorist theater: "This time, we distinctly think of marionettes. Invisible threads seem to us to be joining arms to arms, legs to legs, each muscle in one face to its fellow-muscle in the other: by reason of the absolute uniformity which prevails, the very litheness of the bodies seems to stiffen as we gaze, and the actors themselves seem transformed into automata."
Bergson, *Laughter - An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*.

seemingly automated perambulations around the town seem to have disciplined his body, shaping it to a mechanical task, Kunshu's smile is something in excess of that daily practice. As Pierre Bourdieu writes, there can be "blips" (*ratés*) in habitus, "critical moments when it misfires or is out of phase."[232] These moments, the exceptions that prove the rule, are more commonly experienced by those who are uncomfortably situated in their social milieu: the marginal, the *déclassé*, or—like Kunshu—the laborer whose mind is alienated from his very body through the transformation of his body in labor.[233]

The children are not privy to the irony that the smile is, in fact, triggered by the winnowing of Kunshu's wandering interior monologue down to one looping, redundant phrase. Throughout the narrative, Huang breaks into a fragmentary free indirect discourse whenever Kunshu begins moving automatically along his predetermined daily route. Just before he smiles to the delight of the children on the street, Kunshu begins recalling a conversation with his wife, A-Zhu, in which she mocks him for feeling a connection with his infant son A-Long. "You think he really likes you?" she says with derision. "The kid actually thinks this person that you are now really exists!" Indicating Kunshu's "sandwich-man" costume, A-Zhu argues that A-Long almost never sees his father in everyday clothing, or even out of make-up. To A-Long, he has no father—only a "big puppet." Kunshu reflects upon this information with a mixture of pain and pleasure: "(Hehe, I am A-Long's big puppet, big puppet?!)"

The second half of that utterance, "big puppet, big puppet," becomes an incantatory refrain as his consciousness moves back to the present, and back in sync with his puppet-like body. The repetition of the phrase works to close a loop, in which Kunshu finds himself unable to extricate himself from the puppet-nature that has ingrained itself upon him. In the moment that he is relieved of his duties and reassigned to do ad work on a bicycle, he reflects upon the ridiculousness of his métier. Almost involuntarily, he flashes back to his childhood experience of climbing a tree to watch films being shown in a local church, at a time when access to the cinema was still behind the reach of children in his provincial town. The image burned into his memory was none other than a frame showing a "Sandwich-man," surrounded by a crowd of children. "We didn't realize then that this could be a reality," Kunshu thinks to himself. "It was too ridiculous."[234]

Not only was he risible in the eyes of the children in the present, but the sandwich man was risible to the children in the film of the past, and to Kunshu himself as a child. The absurdity of this closed loop, the return of the visually iconic sandwich man in his own life and labor, again

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[232] Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 2000). 162. *Raté* in French has the alluring connotation of a misfiring motor or gun.

[233] Bourdieu. 163. Bourdieu details the uneven spread of alienation: "The degree to which one can abandon oneself to the automatisms of practical sense obviously varies with the situation and the area of activity, but also with the position occupied in social space: it is likely that those who are 'in their right place' in the social world can abandon or entrust themselves, and more completely, to the ease of their dispositions (this is the 'ease' of the well-born) than those who occupy awkward positions, such as the *parvenus* and the *déclassés;* and the latter are more likely to bring to consciousness that which, for others, is taken for granted, because they are forced to keep watch on themselves and consciously correct the 'first movements' of a habitus that generates inappropriate or misplaced behaviors."

[234] Huang, "Erzi de dawanou 兒子的大玩偶 [= My Son's Big Puppet]." 293.

becomes laughable to Kunshu at the moment of his escape. However, Huang does not allow his protagonist to escape his puppet-nature so easily. At the close of the narrative, Kunshu comes home from work for the first time without his costume and make-up, only to find that his son no longer seems to recognize him. Heartbroken, he reaches for his make-up and begins to *voluntarily* transform himself back into a puppet—more specifically, his son's puppet. Caught in the act by his wife, who promptly asks him if he has gone mad, he reverts to a stuttering automaton. " 'I…' Kunshu's words shook, for he was pushing something down: 'I, I, I…'"

A Taiwanese nonsense of redundancy, then, draws from the redundancy cultivated through mass media, but focuses more keenly upon a critique of alienation through labor during a time of industrialization and Cold War development. This was, in turn, embedded in the economic relations between the US as a global power seeking to contain the Communist mainland and the ROC as a state increasingly unlikely to reclaim its continental territory. The time of most intense US aid to Taiwan was from 1950 to 1965, beginning with the outbreak of the Korean War and petering out as the objectives of aid appeared to have been achieved: Taiwan had recovered from post-war destruction, significantly upped agricultural input, and become self-sufficient through the growth of manufacturing in the form of small and medium-sized businesses.[235]

The price of the "Taiwan miracle," which arguably showed results earlier than the "miracle on the Han River" because of the devastation of the Korean War on the peninsula, was a surge of demand for mechanical labor. In Marxian terms, Taiwanese workers were faced with an accelerated "freedom": thanks to the developmental gains of the state, they were free to sell their labor. Unfortunately, this came with the price of submitting one's life to rationalization and mechanization; to becoming a puppet. Where Korean nonsense writers were primarily concerned with the redundancy of anti-Communist state propaganda and the historical repetition of colonial era tyranny, Taiwanese nonsense writers identified with the redundancy in the mechanization of the human body, which was being trained into usefulness for a globalized economy.

Nevertheless, Kyuho in Yi Hoch'ŏl's "The Deputy Mayor Does Not Report for Duty" is nothing if not a stuttering automaton, programmed for paranoia and the repetition of revolutionary slogans. The social machinery of "In a Certain Barbershop, 1965" misfires with the entrance of the two young men in military dress, who are themselves automatons revealed to be merely human by the end of the narrative. Even Ch'oe Inhun's "ghost broadcast" is a machinic transmission that continues past the lifespan of colonial governance, and Sŏ Kiwŏn's anachronistic narratives reveal glitches in the grooves of the national historical narrative. The primal conflict between human experience and the automatisms of labor, ideology, culture and society occupy nonsense writers of the 60s and 70s in both Taiwan and South Korea.

As charismatic as it has remained, however, Bergson's theory of the comic is not without flaws. As Mary Douglas pointed out in her comparison of the comic theories offered by Bergson and Freud, Bergson's theory can feel laden with too much "moral judgment."[236] In the

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[235] Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1986). The ROC government shifted to the development of science and technology after 1965 in an effort to maintain aid relations with the US. See J. Megan Greene, *The Origins of the Developmental State in Taiwan: Science Policy and the Quest for Modernization* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008). 74.

[236] Douglas, *Implicit Meanings*. 94.

Bergsonian balance, the rigidly mechanical is always bad, and the flexibly organic is always good. This formula begins to fall apart when we examine a comic aesthetic such as caricature. The "rigid" aspects of caricature coincide with its iconicity, which tends to generate the positive affect of recognition and familiarity rather than a fatalist sense of entrapment. There can be joy in the act of repetition, especially if it is paired with a gradient transformation such as plasmaticity. Similarly, the different genres brought together in a film that plays the genre game must hold at least some vestige of the genre as ritual in order to achieve the desired comic collision.

A Freudian take on the comic finds the comic not necessarily in the inversion of diametrical opposed quantities (ie, the mechanical and the living), but in the incongruity of two quantities, which implies their unexpected presence in each other. This co-presence can effectively jar both sides from their position of social fixity.

> The joke merely affords opportunity for realizing that an accepted pattern has no necessity. Its excitement comes from the suggestion that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective. It is frivolous in that it produces no real alternative, only an exhilarating sense of freedom from form in general.[237]

Douglas' insight has powerful lessons for the Cold War comic, and not only because it was a comic sensibility with a tendency towards Camp. The Cold War comic aesthetics of Taiwan and South Korea emerged at a time when a clear alternative was not available—and anything that resembled such a thing would face immediate erasure in the name of national security. Comic work was transgressive in this ability to suggest that the automatisms of society were *merely* repeatable, not eternal truths. Hence the Cold War comic produced a frivolous and entertaining form of negativity, suggesting the imagination of a time when the center could no longer hold.

After all, who demanded that Kunshu remain a puppet? Not his boss at the theater, who liberated him from the sandwich boards by proposing a new form of advertisement on bicycle. Capitalism must always move on in a cycle of novelty in order to create more desire, and more demand. No, the tyrant with the most power over Kunshu is in fact A-Long, his son, who had learned an entertaining game and demanded its rules be followed. A-Long is not simply a symbol of futurity for Kunshu and A-Zhu, but a creature of id defined by ludic desire. He wanted to play with the big puppet, and what appeared was only his father.

This figuration of the child commanding the father to perform automatism was also present in Yi Hoch'ŏl's "The Heaviness of a Chilly Evening," in which a hapless aide-de-camp is forced to follow a superior officer in his daily rounds as he devises little games to escape his own boredom. At one point, he is ordered to repeatedly to stand at attention and then stand at ease through an endless loop of humiliating commands. He recalls his own son playing this game with him at home, earlier, using military language to test the power of his own performative utterances through nonsensical repetition.[238] Conditioned by his training in the army, the father

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[237] Douglas. 96.

[238] Hoch'ŏl 이호철 Yi, "Ch'uun Chŏnyŏgŭi Mudŏum 추운 저녁의 무더움 [= The Heaviness of a Chilly Evening]," *Munhak Ch'unch'u*, July 1964.

complies, stopped only by the voice of his spouse, who disciplines the boy for cruelly toying with his father after the latter had had an exhausting day at work.

In the locus of what should be the greatest privacy, the home, the two fathers find themselves returning to the role of the automaton. This appears to be nothing more than the greatest of tragedies—where even the child has learned the ways of automatism and enforces them—but in fact, it also holds the opposite possibility in Huang Chunming's version of the narrative. If the clown-like costuming of a "sandwich-man" is no longer useful in a capitalistic sense, and has become purely the fulfillment of a child's ludic demand, Kunshu's willingness to don the costume reclaims the act of clowning as an act of love. In Huang's story, father-nature was always present in puppet-nature. Though Kunshu stutters in the final scene, his automatism is finally liberated through A-Long's invitation to find joy in repetition.

This ending is foreshadowed in Kunshu's smile as he suffers the taunts of the neighborhood children. It is in the thought of becoming not just a puppet, but a father-puppet—"the son's big puppet," to quote the title—which allows him to bring joy even to children who are not his own. It is this thought that makes the automaton stutter, not out of rigidity, but out of tenderness. Here, in the conclusion of this dissertation, I return deliberately to Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick's call for a reparative mode of reading, a return to intimate relationality and love despite the alienating effects of capitalistic labor.[239] In my reading, Huang creates not a dispassionate comic gaze, in which a viewer stands outside the comic situation, but an engaged literature that begins to theorize laughter itself towards the ends of community. The spectrum from a smile to the giggles of a non-verbal child, from the self-mocking thought to collective laughter, are as much Huang's subject of study as an unequal society in Cold War Taiwan. He answers Bergson, over the distance of space and time, that there is both pain and joy in automatism, and the nonsense of becoming a "Sandwich-man" in a corner of the world where no such word existed can be both a living nightmare and a loving game.

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[239] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*. 123-152.

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APPENDIX

Figures for Introduction

Figure 1: Still from *Skinny and Fatty Go to Nonsan Training Camp* (1959), dir. Kim Hwarang

Figure 2. Still from *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* (1967), dir. Wu Fei-chien.

Figures for Chapter 1

Figure 1. *Arirang* magazine, October 1958. "Two Pairs of 'Dry Bones and Fatty' Appear at Mallip'o Beach." The photograph shows the film comedy duo, Dry Bones and Fatty (Yang Sŏkch'ŏn and Yang Hun), looped together by a lifesaver at bottom; top from right to left shows writer Cho Hŭnp'a, writer Chŏng Pisŏk, and cartoonist Kim Yonghwan, suggesting that Cho and Chŏng are a second skinny-fat comedy duo, and that Kim is an interloper.

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Figure 2: The *Zhongyang Ribao Half-Week Cartoon Supplement*, edited by brothers Liang Yu-ming and Liang Chung-ming, published this spread in July of 1950. Chiang Kai-shek is figured at bottom center, General Macarthur is on the ladder wearing a fireman's hat, and the two Koreas languish at top right.

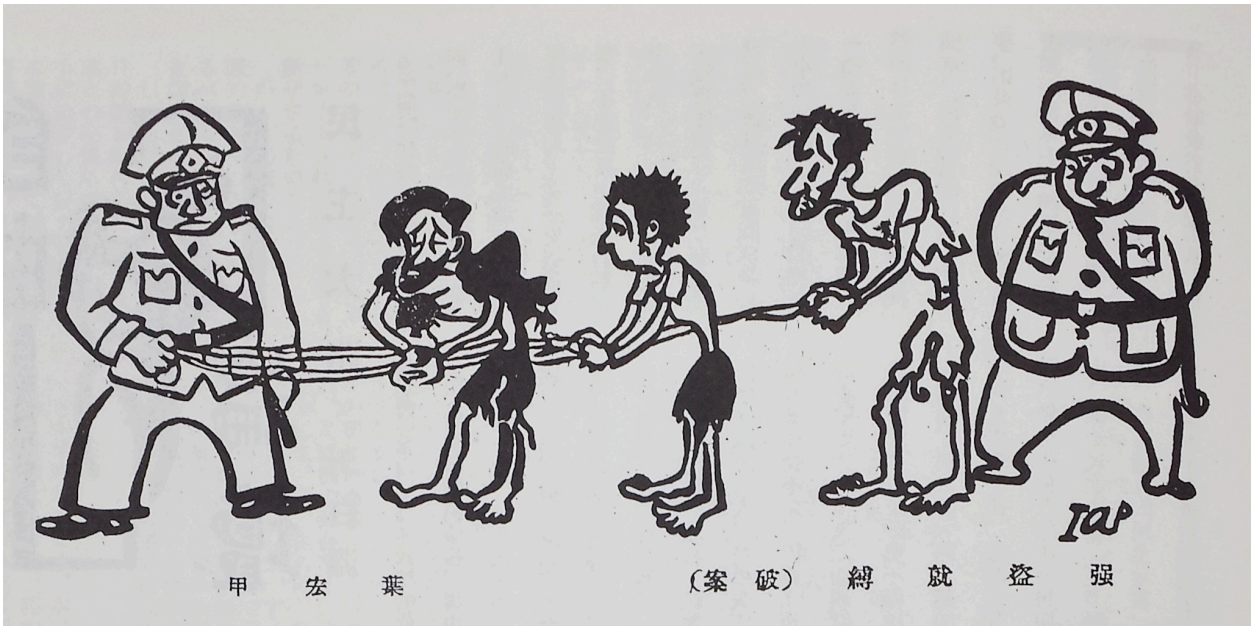

Figure 3: Cartoon in *Hsin Hsin Monthly*, v.3 in 1946. At this point, the editorial introduction to the magazine was still written in Japanese, but the caption here is rendered in Chinese.

Figure 4: "And besides, I have no capital." A San Ko contemplating his next move.

Figure 5: A San Ko pulls his “bank” business with an oxcart in traffic.
Child 1: Look, what is that?
Child 2: Looks like it's a Matsu Welcome Parade!

Figure 6: Ta Shen P’o mourns A San Ko at full blast power.

Figure 7: January 1, 1947, *Tonga Ilbo.* "The 38th Parallel Blues."

Figure 8: *Arirang,* April 1955, "April Fool's Relay."
Frame 7: That thing [penis? mustache?] also disappeared!
Frame 15: Go to the store out front and get some food on credit!

Okay!
Welcome
Kiss kiss

Head have no?!

Kwisin have yes—no good!

Figure 9: *Arirang*, April 1955, "April Fool's Relay."

Figure 10: *Arirang*, April 1955, "April Fool's Relay."

Figure 11: Advertisement for *Kopau*, *Arirang* magazine, February 1959. Top banner: "A film comedy with the contemporary sensibility to nakedly describes the phenomenon of mass humanity!"

Figure 12: Right, still from *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Travel Taiwan*, 1959 (dir. Lee Hsing). Left, "Dry Bones and Fatty: Elementary school students," from *Myŏngrang* magazine, January 1959.

Figure 13: *Myongrang* magazine, April 1958 issue. An illustration depicting the "Empty Belly March" from "Dry Bones and Fatty's Hong Kong Travelogue" 홀쭉이 * 뚱뚱이 香港漫遊記

Figure 13: *Arirang* magazine, April 1959 issue. "Dry Bones and Fatty" cartoon strip, episode 1. The two are shown in the header panel trying to deliver greetings to their readers, but Fatty is experiencing some performance anxiety.

Figures for Chapter 2

Figure 1. Dancing the twist in *The Marine Who Never Returns* (1963), dir. Lee Man-hee

Figure 2. Tracking shot of a dance line in *The Marine Who Never Returns* (1963), dir. Lee Man-hee

Figure 3. Tracking shot showing corpses in a wartime warehouse in *The Marine Who Never Returns* (1963), dir. Lee Man-hee. The sister's body is highlighted in the brightest part of this frame, top left.

Figure 4. The motorcycle long take from *Dangerous Youth* (1969), dir. Hsin Chi.

Figure 5. Brother Wang jumps out of the chase in *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Travel Taiwan* (1959), dir. Lee Hsing.

Figure 6. The monster slams into the comedy chase in *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* (1967), dir. Wu Fei-chien.

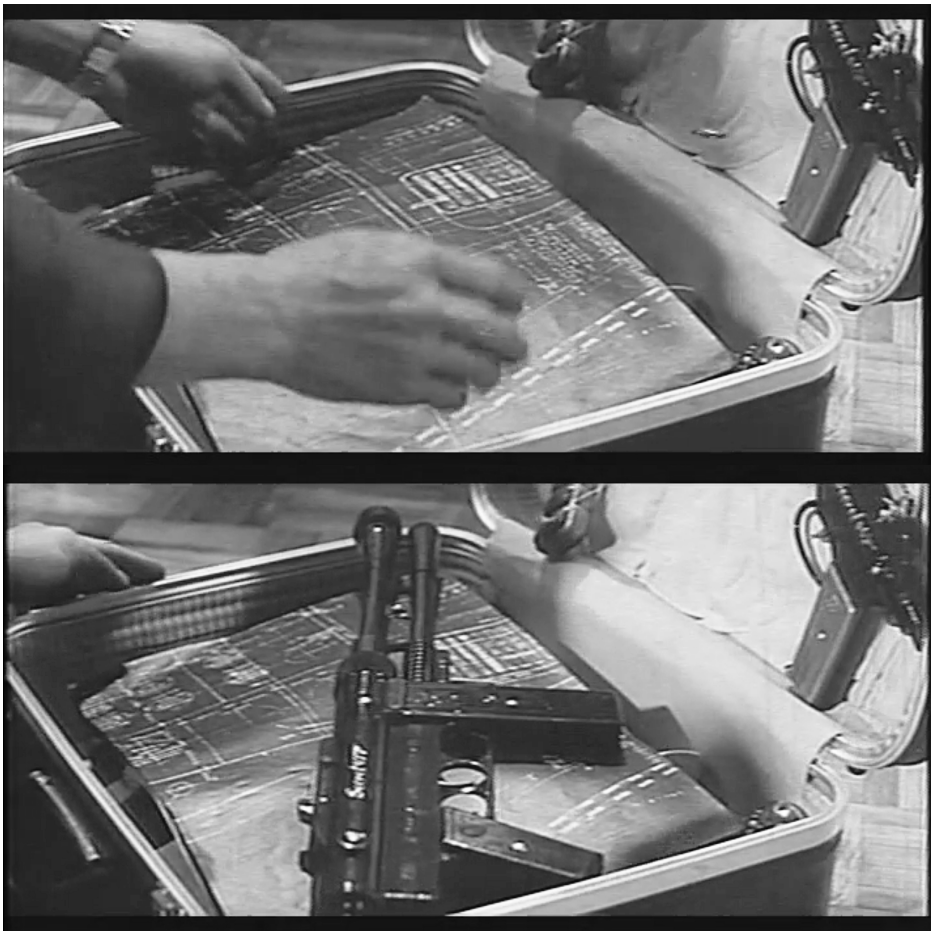

Figure 7. The "007 suitcase" is discovered and unpacked, including the realistic looking toy gun in a secret compartment. From *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* (1967), dir. Wu Fei-chien.

Figure 8. Doubled duos at the end of *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* (1967), dir. Wu Fei-chien. The real agents 008 and 009 are at right, while Brother Wang and Brother Liu sit at left.

Figure 9. Mummified Devil Network agents in *Brother Wang and Brother Liu 007* (1967), dir. Wu Fei-chien.

Figure 10. From the "Catch a Spy Special Feature" in *Sunday Seoul* magazine, Februray 23, 1969 edition. Yi Sugŭn's full disguise is pictured top middle, and at bottom left his disguise (toupee, glasses, mustache) falls off in a tussle.

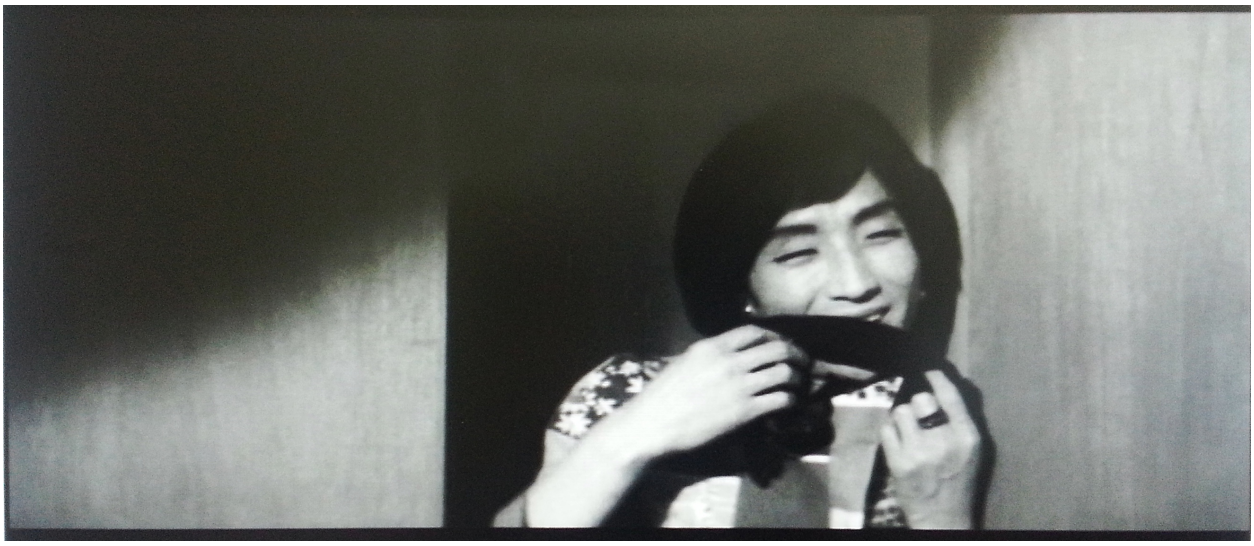

Figure 11. A drunk cross-dressed Salsari (played by Sŏ Yŏngch'un) in *Salsari Mollati-chi?* (1966), dir. Kim Hwarang

Figures for Chapter 3

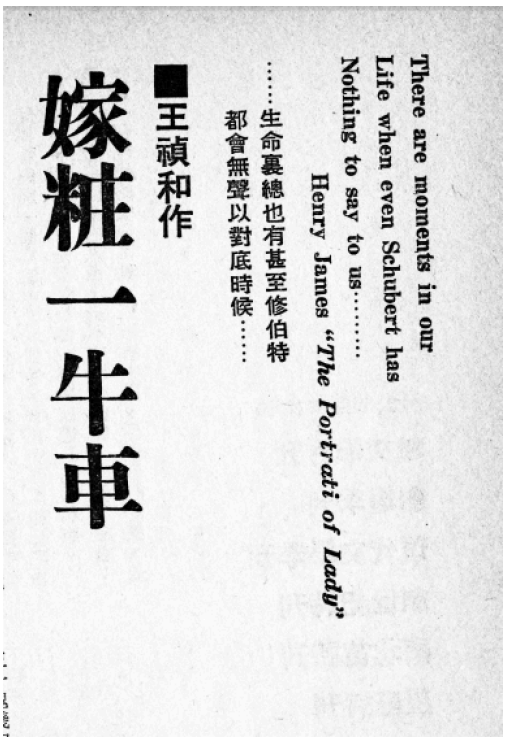

Figure 1. Title page of "An Oxcart Dowry" from *Wenxue Jikan* v. 3, April 1967.

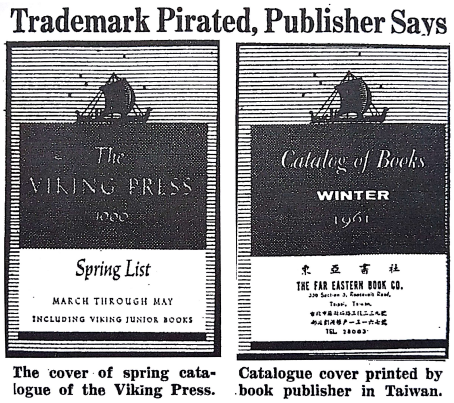

Figure 2. June 5, 1962. Image featured in *The New York Times.*

Figures for Chapter 4

Figure 1. Reporter H, "Eŭngjŏpsil [The Reception Room]," *Tonga Ilbo*, November 28, 1930, sec.

Figure 2. Kim Yonghwan, "K'ochubu Nŏnsaensŭ [= K'ochubu Nonsense]," *Myŏngrang*, March 1957.

Figure 3: Kim Yonghwan, "K'ochubu Nŏnsaensŭ [= K'ochubu Nonsense]," *Myŏngrang*, March 1957.

漫畵調「넌센스」劇笑

映画

Figure 4: Reporter Yŏng, "Manhwajo 'nŏnsaensŭ' Sogŭk: 'Yoja Ka Tŏ Chowa' [= Cartoon-Style 'Nonsense' Comedy: 'I Prefer Being a Woman']," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 15, 1965.